

Volume 3

ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA  
Of  
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Canto 3: Araṇya-Kāṇḍa

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

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#### NOTE:

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

The present volume no. 3 has the Third Canto of the Book: viz. Aranya Kand.

The rest of the volumes in this series are as follows:-

Volume 1: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 1: Baal Kand

Volume 2: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 2: Ayodhya Kand

Volume 4: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 4: Kishkindha Kand

Volume 5: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 5: Sundar Kand

Volume 6: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 6: Lanka Kand

Volume 7: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 7: Uttar Kand

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### Araṇya-Kāṇḍa

Original Text in Hindi + English Transliteration + Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes:—

(1) Invocation : Shloka line nos.1-4

(2) Indra's son Jayant assumes the form of a crow to prick Sita's feet in an attempt to test Lord Ram's abilities and powers; Lord Ram punishes him by blinding him in one eye : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

(3) Lord Ram leaves his hermitage at Chitrakoot and goes to meet sage Atri; the conversation between Sita and Atri's wife Anusuiya, and between the Lord and the sage; Lord Ram takes leave of sage Atri and moves on with his journey into the wild forests : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Doha no. 6.

(4) Lord Ram slays the demon Viradh and grants him deliverance; the Lord visits sage Sarbhanga who feels blessed and attains emancipation and salvation by the grace of the Lord : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 9.

(5) A large number of sages accompany Lord Ram in his journey through the forest; the Lord meets sage Sutikshan and blesses him : Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 11.

(6) Accompanied by sage Sutikshan, Lord Ram arrives at the hermitage of sage Agastya; the affectionate meeting and the conversation between the sage and the Lord; on the advice of the sage, Lord Ram goes to stay for a while at Panchavati; on the way he meets and establishes a cordial relationship with Jatayu, the vulture king : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 13.

(7) Lord Ram teaches Laxman on certain metaphysical and spiritual principles; the episode of Suparnakha, the sister of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, trying to tempt Lord Ram, and the Lord punishing her by getting her nose and ears cut off; she

appeals to demon commanders Khar and Dushan to take revenge; in the ensuing battle, they, as well as the whole detachment of demon army they commanded, were killed : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 20.

(8) Supernakha goes to instigate Ravana who approaches another trusted aide named Marich to force the latter to become a golden deer so that Sita could be abducted by Ravana to settle scores with Lord Ram for having insulted his sister; Lord Ram confides with Sita and tells her of the necessity of concealing her real identity by taking shelter with the Fire God and leave only her shadow behind so that the Lord can accomplish his mission of eliminating the demons; Marich killed by Lord Ram : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21—to Doha no. 27.

(9) Meanwhile, Ravana assumed the form of a mendicant to abduct Sita; he was intercepted by Jatayu, the vulture, who fought valiantly with Ravana; Jatayu fell down wounded when Ravana cut off his wings; Lord Ram returns to his hermitage to find Sita missing; the two brothers then start their long search for her; Lord Ram meets the wounded Jatayu who tells the Lord about Ravana abducting Sita; Jatayu dies in the lap of Lord Ram and attains deliverance, emancipation, salvation and beatitude : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 32.

(10) Moving ahead, Lord Ram is confronted by the demon Kabandha whom the Lord provided liberation and deliverance from this mortal world; Lord Ram arrives at the hermitage of Sabari; the conversation between the two; Lord Ram outlines the nine forms of Bhakti to her; Sabari attains emancipation, salvation and beatitude by dying in the presence of the Lord: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Doha no. 36.

(11) On the advice of Sabari, Lord Ram and Laxman move towards lake Pampa where they are to meet Sugriva, the prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, and who would assist the Lord in finding and freeing Sita from the clutches of the demons; the Lord arrives on the banks of lake Pampa to take some rest and refresh himself : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 41.

(12) Sage Narad comes to pay his obeisance to Lord Ram; the conversation between the Lord and the sage during which the Lord answers Narad's question as to why the Lord did not allow him to marry, and then the Lord goes on to enumerate the virtues of saints : Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Doha no. 46.

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA  
of  
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

## Canto 3: Araṇya-Kāṇḍa

### Preface

In the previous Canto nos. 1 and 2, i.e. ‘Baal Kand’ and ‘Ayodhya Kand’, we have read the Story of “Ram Charit Manas” from the very beginning till the point of time when Bharat returned to Ayodhya with Lord Ram’s wooden sandals, installed them on the throne of the kingdom in a symbolic gesture of the Lord Ram’s anointment as the King, and then he himself retired to the outskirts of the city, at a place called Nandigram, to spend his time living an austere life of a hermit, doing penances and keeping strict vows, waiting for the time when Lord Ram returns home from the forest to actually ascend the throne and be anointed as the King-Emperor.

Now we move on with the narrative, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canto of the Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’, known as “Aranya Kand”, we go back to where Lord Ram lived in Chitrakoot and read what happened after Bharat departed from there.

This third Canto, the ‘Aranya Kand’, is so-called because the word “Aranya” means ‘dense forested areas’. Hence, this Canto describe that part of the Story of the Ramayana when Lord Ram, accompanied by Sita and Laxman, left Chitrakoot shortly after Bharat’s departure and entered the denser, wilder and intractable parts of the forest, an area called Dandak, which was virtually infested by cruel demons as it was remote and secluded, and lay far beyond the inhabited areas of the forest where great sages, hermits and ascetics used to ordinarily reside, as was the case with Lord Ram’s previous hermitage at Chitrakoot.

The narrative commences with an episode when Jayant, the wicked son of Indra, the king of gods, assumed a form of crow and pricked Sita in her feet to test the powers and abilities of Lord Ram, to see if Lord Ram would actually be able to avenge this mischief and punish Jayant. It was a sort of a prelude to test if Lord Ram did have the necessary skills and the resources and the powers and prowess to take on the might of the ferocious demons whom even the gods feared. Lord Ram eventually punished Jayant but spared his life when the latter pleaded and asked for forgiveness.

Soon after this incident, the Lord decided to proceed with his mission of eliminating the demons, a mission for which the Supreme Being had come to this world in the form of Lord Ram in the first place, and then left Ayodhya and had gone to the forest.

Lord Ram, accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Laxman, therefore, left to move further south and went to the areas of the forest beyond the Vindhya Range of

mountains. The Lord first visited the great sage Atri to meet and bless the sage, and receive the sage's blessings in return. Here, the sage's wife Ansuiya blessed Sita and advised her on some principles of Dharma.

Moving ahead, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman entered that part of the forest which was infamously called the 'Dandak forest', or the 'Dandakaranya'. It was that part of the forest beyond the Vindhya mountain range which was infested by blood-thirsty and flesh-eating savages, wild creatures, ogres and demons who devoured animals and humans alike. This section of the forest was extremely uninhabitable, inhospitable, intractable, unpredictable and dangerous; the sunlight rarely penetrated its thick canopy of wild growing trees and creepers; the ground below was a virtual trap with thick undergrowth and roots of trees that covered the area like a blanket. Its horrors have been outlined by sages to Lord Ram in Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 119, verse nos. 18-21.

Lord Ram met sages Sharbhanga, Sutikshan and then Agastya in this region of the wilderness. On the advice of Agastya, the Lord entered the deeper recesses of the 'Dankak forest' and took up residence in a spot called 'Pancha Vati', meaning a place surrounded by five trees. It was located on the banks of river Godavari. During his residence here, Lord Ram used to preach Laxman on different aspects of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism.

Now, if the things would have gone the normal way and the Lord had no other objective of coming to the forest other than to obey his father's orders, he would have peacefully spent the remaining part of his fourteen years of forest sojourn here, and retraced his way back home to Ayodhya at the end of the assigned period. But it was not to be so—for Lord Ram had to devise a mechanism to find an excuse to challenge the might of the demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka, so that in the ensuing confrontation the Lord would be able to eliminate the demons and remove this scourge to free the world from the tyranny unleashed by them.

Hence, in order to give effect to the Great Plan of Lord Ram, the Gods, Fate and Providence too lend their helping hands by manipulating things and circumstances so that the Plan could be actually implemented. So, what happened?

One female demon named Supernakha, who was Ravana's sister, became infatuated by the charm of Lord Ram, and unable to restrain her passions, she assumed the form of a beautiful maiden and approached the Lord with a proposal of marriage. Delighted at this opportunity, for it gave Lord Ram a chance to challenge Ravana's might by provoking his ego, the Lord got her nose and ears cut by Laxman in order to punish her for this evil mentality. Supernakha went and complained to her brother Ravana, and this set in motion a chain of events that would culminate in the epic War of Lanka and the elimination of the cruel demons.

Ravana decided to avenge his sister's insult, so he first sent his trusted commanders, Khar and Dushan, who attacked Lord Ram with a huge army of demons. The Lord eliminated all of them. This stunned Ravana and made him shiver internally. But Ravana was made of a sterner stuff, and he was not to be cowed down so easily. Keeping quiet at this point would send a wrong signal down the rank and file of the demon race that their king, who had the unchallenged reputation of not bowing before

anyone, making them think that Ravana is a coward as he has become afraid of an ordinary human being known as Lord Ram, the disinherited prince of Ayodhya who lives without any support in the forest ruled by the demons. It would be a matter of great shame and humiliation for Ravana, and the very thought hurt his ego and aroused his sense of self-respect and honour.

So therefore, Ravana decided to directly intervene. He went and forced one of his lieutenants, named Marich, to assume the form of a golden deer so that Sita could be abducted and taken to the island of Lanka, Ravana's capital city in the middle of the southern ocean, to avenge his sister's insult.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram confided with Sita about the Grand Plan and asked her to hide her true form by taking refuge with the Fire God, and leave her shadowy image that would be abducted by Ravana.

In accordance with the fiat of Fate and the plans of Destiny, Marich assumed the form of a golden deer and roamed around the hermitage of Lord Ram. Sita asked the Lord to go and fetch the deer so that she could tame it. The Lord went in pursuit of the deer, and ultimately had to kill Marich as he refused to oblige the Lord by allowing himself to be caught alive.

Ravana, meanwhile, succeeded in abducting the shadowy form of Sita in the absence of Lord Ram, and taking her away to Lanka in the belief that he is taking away the 'real Sita'. When Lord Ram returned to his hut and discovered that Sita was not there, and knowing fully well that it was a part of the Grand Plan put into place by his consent, as well as the role he had to play now onwards on his own part to accomplish the mission successfully, the Lord acted so perfectly like any other ordinary human being would when his wife is kidnapped in an alien land that he started wailing and grieving for her. On being comforted by Laxman who encouraged the Lord not to lose courage and hope, and instead of lamenting it would be wiser for them to set out in search of Sita, the two brothers proceeded ahead into the denser parts of the forest in the south direction.

As it happened, while Ravana was headed to Lanka on his chariot, he was confronted by an old vulture named Jatau, who was an old acquaintance of king Dasartha, the father of Lord Ram. Jatau recognized Sita and asked Ravana to set her free, which of course the demon king refused. In the battle that followed, Ravana was severely injured, and in frustration he chopped off the wings of the poor vulture. Jatau fell down helpless on the ground, remembering Lord Ram. Lord Ram and Laxman passed that way and saw Jatau lying bleeding on the ground. Jatau told Lord Ram that Ravana has taken Sita away, and he has gone in the south direction. Jatau died in the laps of the Lord who lovingly comforted the old vulture and caressed him affectionately. It was indeed a rarest of rare death that Jatau died, as Lord Ram performed his last rites himself as he would have done for his own father!

Moving ahead, Lord Ram and Laxman went to the hermitage of an old tribal woman named Sabari. She was a great devotee of the Lord and had been waiting for him for a long time after her guru, one sage Matanga, had advised her, at the time of his departure from the hermitage, to stay put and wait for Lord Ram's arrival one day, as meeting the Lord would grant deliverance, emancipation and salvation to her soul.

Sabari welcomed Lord Ram and Laxman most affectionately and warmly, worshipped the Lord, and offered the two brothers forest plums as refreshment. Lord Ram preached her the famous nine ways in which Bhakti (devotion) can be practiced. After meeting the Lord, Sabari left her mortal coil (i.e. died) by burning her gross body in the sacred fire in the presence of the Lord, thereby entitling her soul to attain eternal bliss and beatitude.

When Lord Ram enquired from Sabari before her death if she had any idea where Sita could be found, she had advised Lord Ram to move on to a lake known as 'Pampa' where he would meet Sugriv, the prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha. Sugriv would help the Lord in finding and retrieving Sita.

Hence, Lord Ram and Laxman proceeded in the direction of the Pampa lake as advised by Sabari. On reaching lake Pampa and finding its environ exceptionally fascinating and endowed with pristine beauty of Mother Nature, the Lord decided to halt there for a while and relax before moving forward on his onward journey. Here sage Narad came to meet Lord Ram and pay his obeisance to the Lord; a brief discourse was held between the two.

This brings us to the end of "Aranya Kand", the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canto of Ram Charit Manas.

What happened next will be narrated in the next Canto no. 4, called 'Kishkindha Kand'.

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Canto 3: Araṇya-Kāṇḍa

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तृतीय सोपान  
(अरण्यकाण्ड)

ŚrīRāmaCaritaMānasa  
tṛtīyaḥ sōpāna  
(araṇya-kāṇḍa)

श्लोक

मूलं धर्मतरोर्विवेकजलधेः पूर्णेन्दुमानन्ददं  
वैराग्याञ्जुजभास्करं ह्यघघनध्वान्तापहं तापहम् । १ ।  
मोहाङ्गमोधरपूगपाटनविधौ स्वःसञ्भवं शङ्करं  
वन्दे ब्रह्मकुलं कलङ्कशमनं श्रीरामभूप्रियम् ॥ २ ॥

ślōka.

mūlaṁ dharmatarōr-vivēkajaladhēḥ pūrṇēndu-mānandadaṁ  
vairāgyāmbuja-bhāskaraṁ hyaghaghana-dhvāntāpahaṁ tāpaham. 1.  
mōhāmbhōdharapūgapāṭanavidhau svaḥsambhavaṁ śaṅkaraṁ  
vandē brahmakulaṁ kalaṅka-śamanaṁ śrīrāma-bhūpapriyam. 2.

[There are two sets of Sanskrit verses, known as the ‘Shloka’, with which Aranya Kand starts. These verses are dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Ram respectively, and are a sort of prayer honouring the glory of these two deities and invoking their blessings. These two verses have two stanzas with two lines each.

The first verse, the present one, is dedicated to Lord Shiva, and the next verse which follows herein below is dedicated to Lord Ram.]

Shloka:

‘He who is the root of the great Tree of Dharma (as he nourishes and sustains it, and gives it firmness and stability); he who is like the full moon that gives joy to the ocean

symbolized by wisdom and erudition; he who is like the sun to make the symbolic lotus representing the virtues of renunciation and dispassion to bloom; he who certainly eliminates the darkness and gloom created by sins and their terrifying consequences; he who removes the sufferings caused to a creature by the three types of torments (viz. Daihik, Bhautik and Adhyatmik)<sup>1</sup> in this world; --- (1)

--- He who acts like the wind that blows away clouds symbolized by Moha (delusions, attachments, infatuations caused by ignorance of the reality of this mortal, material world); he who is himself an embodiment of auspiciousness and also causes it to happen; he who is the destroyer of all taints that may mar the greatness of the Brahmin race (or the race which has descended from the creator Brahma but due to certain worldly causes have lost its primary glory to become tarnished by so many faults and shortcomings); and he who is very dear to Lord Ram even as he loves Lord Ram himself<sup>2</sup>—verily indeed, I offer my greatest reverence and deepest respect to that most adorable, most revered and most honourable Lord Shiva!’ (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The three types of sufferings that a creature is subjected to in this world are the following: Daihik—i.e. sufferings related to one’s body; Bhautik—i.e. sufferings caused by countless external factors of this world; and Adhyatmik—i.e. spiritual sufferings, such as lack of internal peace and worry about one’s destiny.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Shiva and Lord Ram shared a unique bond of mutual love, affection and respect for each other. Lord Shiva spends his time meditating on Lord Ram and using the Lord’s holy name, “Raam”, as his Mantra (spiritual formula) of choice to do Japa (repetition of a divine Mantra to attain one’s spiritual objective as well as to attain bliss and peace), a practice that gives him eternal beatitude and bliss—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 111.

In fact, this very Story of Lord Ram, known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’, which we are reading at present has its origin in the heart of Lord Shiva, as he conceived it while meditating on his beloved Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30.

Lord Shiva would never tolerate anyone doubting the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram as is proved by the strong exception he took when his consort, goddess Uma, had expressed her doubt about the reality of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 114—to Doha no. 115.

Since Sati, Lord Shiva’s consort, had once assumed the form of Sita to test if Lord Ram could detect her true identity, she was abandoned by Shiva for having violated the principles of Dharma by assuming the form of Lord Ram’s wife Sita, a transgression of etiquette, good conduct, morality and decorum that became unpardonable and intolerable for Shiva to condone in anyway whatsoever—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 57.

Lord Shiva’s love and devotion for Lord Ram was reciprocated by the latter in equal terms, for Lord Ram had himself declared that there is no one as dear to him as is Lord Shiva—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 2.]

सान्द्रानन्दपयोदसौभगतनुं पीताम्बरं सुन्दरं

पाणौ बाणशरासनं कटिलसत्तूणीरभारं वरम् । ३ ।

राजीवायतलोचनं धृतजटाजूटेन संशोभितं

सीतालक्ष्मणसंयुतं पथिगतं रामाभिरामं भजे ॥ ४ ॥

sāndrānanda-payōdasaubhagatanum pītāmbaram sundaram  
pāṇau bāṇaśarāsanam kaṭilasattūṇīrabhāram varam. 3.  
rājīvāyata-lōcanam dhṛta-jatājūṭēna sanśōbhitaṁ  
sītālakṣmaṇasanyutaṁ pathigataṁ rāmābhirāmaṁ bhajā. 4.

[Having praised and offered his obeisance to Lord Shiva first in the previous verse, Tulsidas now proceeds with doing the same with Lord Ram in the present verse.]

‘He who is an embodiment of complete joy, happiness, beatitude and blissfulness; he who has a dark-complexioned body that is as charming and heart-captivating as the rain-bearing cloud (that is seen after hot summer days, as this cloud brings cheer and happiness to the soul of all living beings who are suffering from the relentless heat of summer and its scorching sun)<sup>1</sup>; he who wears a yellow-coloured silken cloth known as ‘Pitambar’ (which is wrapped around the Lord’s body, creating a sharp, eye-catching and fascinating contrast with his dark complexion); he who holds a bow and arrow in his hands (to indicate to his devotees that he is always ready and vigilant to protect them); he who has a quiver full of an endless supply of arrows tied to his waist<sup>2</sup>; --- (3)

--- He who has eyes that are wide (and bewitchingly beautiful) like the large petals of a lotus flower; he who has a large crown of matted hairs adorning his head<sup>3</sup>; he who looks majestic and most wonderful while walking on the path to the forest along with Sita and Laxman; and who bestows eternal and unbound bliss, joy, happiness, beatitude and felicity to one and all—verily indeed, I offer my worship, my profound respect and my greatest of reverence to Lord Ram!’ (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>To wit, the mere sight of Lord Ram grants immense joy to a creature and exhilarates his heart just like the case of one sighting rain-bearing clouds after the scorching heat of summer. Even as these clouds bring hope and succour to the world suffering from hot summer, the mere sight or remembrance of Lord Ram who has a dark complexion brings cheer to the heart of his devotees as well as to all those who are suffering from the torments of this mortal world.

<sup>2</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 209.

<sup>3</sup>We must remember that the form of Lord Ram which is being described here is the one that the Lord had while he was in the forest. This particular observation—viz. “matted hairs on his head”, surely points out to this fact, because once the Lord is crowned as the King of Ayodhya, it is obvious that he won’t have matted hairs on his head. The dress code being described here relates to the form of Lord Ram as a hermit. This is also endorsed by the next statement—that says “Lord Ram looks wonderful walking on the path to the forest”.]

सो०. उमा राम गुन गूढ़ पंडित मुनि पावहिं बिरति ।  
पावहिं मोह बिमूढ़ जे हरि बिमुख न धर्म रति ॥

sōraṭhā.

umā rāma guna gūṛha paṇḍita muni pāvahiṁ birati.  
pāvahiṁ mōha bimūṛha jē hari bimukha na dharma rati.

[Lord Shiva who is narrating this divine and holy Story of Lord Ram to his consort, goddess Uma<sup>1</sup>, resumes his narration as follows—]

‘Listen Uma! The glories and divinity of Lord Ram are profound and stupendous. It plays a dual role—because, on the one hand, those who are wise, learned, enlightened and self-realised, people who are experts in the knowledge associated with spiritualism and metaphysics, such as the ones who are called Pandits and Munis (sages), such people obtain a sense of renunciation, detachment and dispassion from this mortal gross material world by hearing the Lord’s story (as it grants them a feeling of spiritual blessedness, and makes them feel detached from the false charms associated with this world).

[To wit, by hearing the divine Story of Lord Ram, such wise and enlightened people derive immense joy and feel blessed.]

But on the other hand, those who have turned their backs to Lord Hari (Lord God; those who are agnostics and non-believers), as well as those who do not follow the path of Dharma (i.e. those who do not follow the principles as laid down in the scriptures relating to leading an auspicious way of life in order to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for their souls; those who do not believe in the existence of the ‘soul’ itself, but belief that the material world is the only thing that matters)—such people get entangled in a web of delusions and trapped in a snare of doubts as they express their reservations about the authenticity of the Story and Lord Ram himself.

[This is because they are of a low intellect and wicked heart; they are ignorant and lack any wisdom or understanding of spiritual matters, for they find glee and joy in ridiculing the scriptures, enjoy pricking holes and being skeptical even on matters beyond their grasp and comprehension. Such people would ridicule the Story of Lord Ram and call it mere imagination and hearsay.]<sup>2</sup> (Sortha)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Shiva has reiterated these two facts while concluding the narration of the divine Story of Lord Ram known as described in the present Book “Ram Charit Manas”—apropos: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129.

Even Tulsidas reiterates it in the final verses of Ram Charit Manas while ending the narration of this divine Story—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 130.

In this context, refer also to the following introductory verses in Ram Charit Manas that reiterate the same idea: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 39; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 43.]

चौ०. पुर नर भरत प्रीति में गाई । मति अनुरूप अनूप सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

अब प्रभु चरित सुनहु अति पावन । करत जे बन सुर नर मुनि भावन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pura nara bharata prīti mair̥ṁ gāī. mati anurūpa anūpa suhāī. 1.  
aba prabhu carita sunahu ati pāvana. karata jē bana sura nara muni bhāvana. 2.

[Now we shall read the Story as penned by Goswami Tulsidas. He picks up the thread of the Story from where he ended it in the previous Canto, i.e. Ayodhya Kand, and resumes the narration as follows—]

Tulsidas says: ‘I have already described (in the previous Chapter) the depth and profundity of the love and devotion that Bharat and the citizens of Ayodhya had for Lord Ram, which was indeed most beautiful and glorifying, as best and as finely as I could in accordance with my abilities and understanding. (1)

Now, listen to the narration of the story of Lord Ram that describes the deeds that the Lord did while living in the forest, deeds that were charming and purifying (for the soul), and which granted joy to the heart of the forest-dwelling sages, hermits and other pious souls, as well as to the gods in heaven. (2)

एक बार चुनि कुसुम सुहाए । निज कर भूषन राम बनाए ॥ ३ ॥

सीतहि पहिराए प्रभु सादर । बैठे फटिक सिला पर सुंदर ॥ ४ ॥

ēka bāra cuni kusuma suhā'ē. nija kara bhūṣana rāma banā'ē. 3.  
sītahi pahirā'ē prabhu sādara. baiṭhē phaṭika silā para sundara. 4.

Once, Lord Ram plucked flowers of his choice with his own hands, and made decorative ornaments, such as a garland, head gear, armlets, anklets etc., from them<sup>1</sup>. (3)

The Lord adorned Sita with these flowery ornaments with due honours. Thereafter, the couple sat down on a rock made of crystal. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Once in a while, Lord Ram would do something to break the monotony of harsh life in the forest, and make Sita and Laxman feel happy and keep their spirits high. This has been mentioned earlier too while we were reading about how the three lived in Chitrakoot—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 8 that precede Doha no. 141.]

So therefore, off and on, Lord Ram would collect flowers and make ornaments from them with which he would adorn Sita to cheer her up.]

सुरपति सुत धरि बायस बेषा । सठ चाहत रघुपति बल देखा ॥ ५ ॥  
जिमि पिपीलिका सागर थाहा । महा मंदमति पावन चाहा ॥ ६ ॥

surapati suta dhari bāyasa bēṣā. saṭha cāhata raghupati bala dēkhā. 5.  
jimi pipīlikā sāgara thāhā. mahā mandamati pāvana cāhā. 6.

During this particular pastime, Indra's wicked son (named Jayant, who had inherited the gene of being crooked and evil from his father) assumed the form of a crow in order to test the might and prowess of Lord Ram<sup>1</sup>. (5)

Just like a humble ant that foolishly would wish to weigh and judge the might of the great ocean<sup>2</sup>, this highly stupid fellow (Indra's son) too wanted to fathom the might and powers of Lord Ram. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We come across another incident where even Lord Shiva's wife, Sati, felt the urge to test the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram when she defied Shiva's repeated request not to indulge in evil mechanism against Lord Ram, for she assumed the form of Sita to see if the Lord could detect her true identity. Of course the Lord did it, and it made Sati feel mightily embarrassed and regretful. This unfortunate incident led Lord Shiva to abandon her. This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 59.

<sup>2</sup>What would such a stupid Ant do? It would jump in the ocean in the belief that it would swim across the water or go to its bottom to see what lies underneath the surface. And what happens then? This ignorant creature gets lost as soon as it enters the water of the mighty ocean, is instantly swallowed up and meets its death.]

सीता चरन चोंच हति भागा । मूढ़ मंदमति कारन कागा ॥ ७ ॥  
चला रुधिर रघुनायक जाना । सींक धनुष सायक संधाना ॥ ८ ॥

sītā carana cōṅca hati bhāgā. mūṛha mandamati kārana kāgā. 7.  
calā rudhira raghunāyaka jānā. sīṅka dhanuṣa sāyaka sandhānā. 8.

Indra's son, disguised as a 'crow', pricked at the sole of Sita's feet and fled. This foolish and lowly fellow did this stupid thing because he had assumed the form of a 'crow', and true to this form he acted like a crow would<sup>1</sup>. (7)

When Lord Ram observed blood flowing out of the wound, he picked up an ordinary reed lying nearby<sup>2</sup>, and using it as an arrow the Lord mounted it on his bow and took aim.

[To wit, Lord Ram decided to teach the culprit a lesson of his life.] (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The idea is that when we assume false identities and become presumptive, we are influenced by them and feel obliged to fall in the trap of acting in accordance with the new identity under the false notion that it would protect us from punishment and getting caught as no one would recognize who we actually are. Sati had committed the same mistake earlier as cited in the note appended to the previous verse.

It is common observance how a cunning crow would wait nervously, looking askance here and there, hopping and fidgeting around while seeking an opportunity to suddenly snatch some eatable and flee from the spot for fear of being caught and getting punished for its mischief. So, Indra's son too acted in this way like a crow would. He hopped around nervously for a while, and was so much on edge that as soon as it got an opportunity to prick at Sita's feet, it committed the nuisance and fled from there immediately.

<sup>2</sup>A very interesting question arises here—why did Lord Ram use a 'reed' to act as an arrow, instead of a real arrow which surely must have been handy? Well, the answer is as interesting. The all-knowing Lord Ram knew who this crow actually was: that he was the son of Indra, the king of gods. The Lord did not want to kill him, for one, the Lord is merciful and compassionate, and if he killed Indra's son it would bring immense sorrow not only to Indra but also to the entire community of the gods. The Lord did not want to do anything to annoy the gods and their king Indra at this juncture, as he needed their help in the daunting and difficult task of eliminating the demons that was still pending.

Secondly, neither Indra nor the gods were at fault; they cannot be subjected to wholesale sorrow and grief for the mischief committed by one single individual. Had the Lord chose to use an arrow, it would have surely killed Jayant. So instead of an actual arrow the Lord chose a soft twig for it would not harm Indra's son as severely as an arrow would.

Besides this, the arrow would fly fast like a supersonic cruise missile, zooming in and overtaking Indra's son quickly, and felling him down even before the stupid fellow realized what was happening. On the other hand, the humble reed, being flexible and light, and lacking the aerodynamic features that an arrow naturally possesses, flew slowly, pursuing Jayant from behind but failing to overtake him, giving ample time to the latter to fly ahead of it. This will be evident shortly when we read that the reed followed Jayant wherever he went, but did not actually catch up with him to hurt him physically.

There is also a third dimension to the question as to why Lord Ram decided to spare Indra's son's life but give him some token punishment. Jayant had the good fortune to see Lord Ram and Sita from close quarters, and this in itself had its own rewards, for seeing the Lord and Sita was an auspicious moment for Indra's son, and it could not go in vain, and he could also not be denied the rewards that accompany it.

Further, by pricking Sita's feet, Indra's son had automatically 'touched' it, and in order to prick the feet he had to 'bow his head before her'. Touching Sita's holy feet and bowing before her was tantamount to paying his obeisance to the 'mother goddess', and this act had to be duly rewarded. Sita understood the significance of this development, and she forgave him. Proof? Sita did not get startled or annoyed when she was pricked; she continued sitting quietly and maintained her composure, without raising a hue and cry. It implied that she did not get angry at her tormentor. After all, she must have endured numerous pricks and cuts while walking barefoot on the forest path, so how does one single puncture matter to her; she had become accustomed to

such little pricks and cracks on the sole of her feet which obviously had become hardened enough over time to bear such little cuts and wounds without causing much concern to her. When blood started oozing out of the wound, Lord Ram looked up at Sita and found that she was sitting quietly. This was a hint for Lord Ram that she, like a loving mother ordinarily would, had not taken offence at this little mischief caused by her son. Son? Yes, since Sita was a manifestation of the Mother Goddess, the entire creation was deemed to be her off-spring, including Jayant, and since Lord Ram was the Supreme Being, he was the Father of this creation, including Jayant too.

Lord Ram thought seriously for a moment and decided that it would be proper for him to give some token punishment to Indra's son so that he learns a lesson and does not repeat the same mistake again in his life, but not to inflict capital punishment on him. Surely this falls within the rights and privileges of a father to discipline his errant and wayward son in order to make the latter mend his ways and improve himself. But while deciding on the quantum and type of punishment to be given to Jayant, the Lord took into consideration all the different factors listed herein above, and came to the conclusion that he would spare Jayant's life, but at the same time give him an exemplary punishment that would a long way to teach the world a lesson of what are the consequences of being evil and wicked.]

दो०. अति कृपाल रघुनायक सदा दीन पर नेह ।

ता सन आइ कीन्ह छलु मूरख अवगुन गेह ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

ati krpāla raghunāyaka sadā dīna para nēha.

tā sana ā'i kinha chalu mūrakha avaguna gēha. 1.

Lord Ram is always merciful and compassionate towards those who are humble, weak and meek, for the Lord has great affection for them.

It is such a height of irony that this wicked fellow (i.e. Indra's son) would come to do mischief and employ deceit and crookedness to harm such a kind Lord. This shows how stupid, ignorant and vile he was, for indeed he was an embodiment of wickedness and evil that he would even think of doing what he did. (Doha no. 1)

चौ०. प्रेरित मंत्र ब्रह्मसर धावा । चला भाजि बायस भय पावा ॥ १ ॥

धरि निज रूप गयउ पितु पाहीं । राम बिमुख राखा तेहि नाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prērita mantra brahmasara dhāvā. calā bhāji bāyasa bhaya pāvā. 1.

dhari nija rūpa gaya'u pitu pāhīm. rāma bimukha rākhā tēhi nāhīm. 2.

After mounting the reed on his bow, Lord Ram invoked some divine Mantras (mystical formula) that transformed the humble reed into a versatile weapon having special powers akin to the invincible arrow used by the creator Brahma (brahmasara) that is especially empowered to subdue its enemy.

Seeing this 'arrow' zooming in on him, the terrified crow scrambled to escape, and ran as fast as it could. (1)



He (Indra's son) discarded his false form of a crow, and once again returned to his original form of being Indra's son. He ran to his father, Indra, but after learning what his wicked son had done and realizing that he had turned hostile to Lord Ram, Indra refused to give him shelter<sup>1</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>With respect to what has been said in this verse, refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas that reiterate this fact in different contexts: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252; (c) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 23; (d) Lanka Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

भा निरास उपजी मन त्रासा । जथा चक्र भय रिषि दुर्बासा ॥ ३ ॥

ब्रह्मधाम सिवपुर सब लोका । फिरा श्रमित व्याकुल भय सोका ॥ ४ ॥

bhā nirāsa upajī mana trāsā. jathā cakra bhaya riṣi durbāsā. 3.  
brahmadhāma sivapura saba lōkā. phirā śramita byākula bhaya sōkā. 4.

Jayant lost all hopes of succour (as his own father, Indra, disowned him and refused him any kind of help because he had offended Lord Ram). This caused intense fear and consternation in his mind and heart (Mana) just like sage Durbasa had once got terrified by the Chakra (the discus; a serrated circular wheel-like sharp weapon used by Lord Vishnu) that pursued him relentlessly, forcing Durbasa run helter-skelter for his life<sup>1</sup>. (3)

After being rebuked by his father and shown the door, Jayant ran to the abode of Brahma, the creator, and then to the abode of Lord Shiva to seek their help.

He ran everywhere he could think of to save himself from the reed-turned-into-an-arrow that kept pursuing him so much so that he became tired by continuous running around, and his condition was worsened by agitation he felt due to the fear of his life. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The story goes thus: Ambrish was a great devotee of the Lord and faithfully kept fast on Ikadashi days (the 11th day of the first fortnight of the moon). The scriptures prescribe that the fast of the Ikadashi should be broken the next day on Dwadashi but before the third or Trayodashi by offering food to a Brahmin who comes first on the day of Dwadashi. Incidentally, sage Durbasa, known for his hot temper and wrathful nature, came, and was invited by the king to accept meals. The sage accepted but went out to do his rituals from which he did not return on time. Meanwhile, the auspicious time was soon due to expire, so in his predicament, Ambarish was advised by Brahmin advisors to put a leaf of Tulsi (basil plant) in his mouth to break the fast. When Durbasa returned, he became so enraged that he cursed Ambarish to take birth ten times. Not contented, he produced a demoness called Kritya (कृत्या) and ordered her to eat the king. It was too much for the Lord to bear—so he ordered his 'Chakra' (discus) which cut the demoness' head and rushed at Durbasa. He ran in panic from place to place in the three Lokas, but no one gave him shelter. At last, he sought forgiveness from Vishnu who ordered him to go and ask for

forgiveness from Ambarish. Durbasa came and fell at the king's feet. Then Vishnu said that he accepts the curse himself (in place of Ambarish) and shall take birth as a human on this earth (as an incarnation) ten times, while at the same time he relieved his devotee Ambarish of the curse.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 218; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265

This story is narrated in Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ, 9.4, 5.]

काहूँ बैठन कहा न ओही । राखि को सकइ राम कर द्रोही ॥ ५ ॥

मातु मृत्यु पितु समन समाना । सुधा होइ बिष सुनु हरिजाना ॥ ६ ॥

kāhūṁṁ baiṭhana kahā na ōhī. rākhi kō saka'i rāma kara drōhī. 5.  
mātu mṛtyu pitu samana samānā. sudhā hō'i biṣa sunu harijānā. 6.

No one asked him to even sit down for a while to relax, for who could dare to give shelter to someone who is opposed to Lord Ram and turns hostile to the Lord? [The answer is: None would dare to do so.] (5)

For a person who has turned against Lord Ram, his or her mother becomes a personified form of death, and the father assumes the role of a fire that spares no one.

[To wit, an opponent of Lord Ram cannot expect any support and help from his or her own parents who otherwise would go out of their way to protect their offspring even if the latter has committed a grave crime.]

Oh devotees of Lord Hari (harijānā)<sup>1</sup>! You must listen carefully and understand (“Jānā”) that for such an unfortunate person, even the life-giving nectar turns poisonous and refuses to give comfort to him. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word used in the text is “harijānā”. Now, this can be interpreted variously: One apparently refers to a devotee or follower of Lord Hari, one of the many names of Lord Vishnu who had manifested himself as Lord Ram\*1.

The other connotation is ‘a vehicle or a mount of Lord Hari’. In this sense, the word would refer to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, and therefore the narrator would be the saintly crow Kaagbhusund who had narrated the divine story of Lord Ram to Garud as described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Doha no. 125.]

मित्र करइ सत रिपु कै करनी । ता कहँ बिबुधनदी बैतरनी ॥ ७ ॥

सब जगु ताहि अनलहु ते ताता । जो रघुबीर बिमुख सुनु भ्राता ॥ ८ ॥

mitra kara'i sata ripu kai karanī. tā kahamṁ bibudhanadī baitaranī. 7.  
saba jagu tāhi analahu tē tātā. jō raghubīra bimukha sunu bhrātā. 8.

Even a fast and reliable friend of such an unfortunate person would become so hostile towards him that the so-called friend would transform into an equivalent to seven enemies.

Not only this, even the holy river Ganges, called the ‘river of the gods’ (bibudhanadī), transmews into the horrifying river known as Baitarni (baitarani) that leads to the door of hell<sup>1</sup>. (7)

Oh brother<sup>2</sup>, listen (sunu bhrātā)! The whole world transforms into a raging fire for someone who is opposed to Lord Ram. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The Baitarni river, also pronounced as “Vaitarni”, is a legendary river of hell that is presided over by Yama, the god of hell who is responsible to punish sinful souls, and its counterpart in the heaven is the holy river Ganges which is the river of the gods.

The Baitarni river is very horrifying; it is hot, has blood, bones, hairs and shreds of corpses flowing down its stream, and a foul smell emanates from it. According to legend, it was created when Lord Shiva wept bitterly upon the death of his wife Sati who had jumped in the sacrificial fire at her father Daksha’s place. What led to Sati to die this way is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 65.

<sup>2</sup>The term “bhrātā”, meaning a brother, is an affectionate address which the narrator of this divine story uses for his listner.]

नारद देखा बिकल जयन्ता । लागि दया कोमल चित संता ॥ ९ ॥

पठवा तुरत राम पहिं ताही । कहेसि पुकारि प्रनत हित पाही ॥ १० ॥

nārada dēkhā bikala jayantā. lāgi dayā kōmala cita santā. 9.  
paṭhavā turata rāma pahim tāhī. kahēsi pukāri pranata hita pāhī. 10.

Fortunately for Jayant, sage Narad saw him in this precarious condition—that he was extremely agitated and tormented beyond measure. Since the sage had a very compassionate and kind heart, he felt pity for Indra’s son and developed mercy for him in his heart. (9)

When Narad learnt about the cause of Jayant’s fear, he sent the latter immediately to Lord Ram with an advice to go and surrender before the Lord and ask for forgiveness, to fall as the Lord’s feet and pray for mercy. This is the only way Jayant would find any succour for himself. (10)

आतुर सभय गहेसि पद जाई । त्राहि त्राहि दयाल रघुराई ॥ ११ ॥

अतुलित बल अतुलित प्रभुताई । मैं मतिमंद जानि नहिं पाई ॥ १२ ॥

ātura sabhaya gahēsi pada jāī. trāhi trāhi dayāla raghurāī. 11.  
atulita bala atulita prabhutāī. mairi matimanda jāni nahim pāī. 12.

Jayant anxiously, but fearfully as well (as he did not know what kind of fate waited for him), went to Lord Ram and fell down at the Lord’s feet, crying out: ‘Oh merciful and kind Lord Ram (dayāla raghurāī), save me, save me (trāhi trāhi). (11)

You have unmatched powers and equally unmatched glories, but due to my low intellect and weak wisdom I could not know of it.

[Said Jayant: “Oh Lord, I am a stupid fellow who has no sense of probity and propriety. But thou art great and merciful. I beg for forgiveness and seek succour from thee. Oh Lord, prithee forgive me.”] (12)

निज कृत कर्म जनित फल पायउँ । अब प्रभु पाहि सरन तकि आयउँ ॥ १३ ॥  
सुनि कृपाल अति आरत बानी । एकनयन करि तजा भवानी ॥ १४ ॥

nija kṛta karma janita phala pāya'um̐. aba prabhu pāhi sarana taki āya'um̐.  
13.

sunī kṛpāla ati ārata bānī. ēkanayana kari tajā bhavānī. 14.

I have got the fruit (punishment) of what I did. [My torments are caused by my own doings.]

Nevertheless, now I have come to surrender myself and seek refuge at the Lord's holy feet. [So therefore oh Lord, show mercy on me and spare my life.]' (13)

Lord Shiva told his consort Uma<sup>1</sup>: ‘Listen Bhavani (bhavānī)! When the merciful and gracious Lord Ram heard this most pitiful prayer of Jayant and saw how terrified he was, the Lord took pity on him. But to teach Jayant a lesson the Lord let him go after making him lose sight in one eye<sup>2</sup>.’ (14)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We must remember that the primary narrator of the story of Ram Charit Manas was Lord Shiva, and his listener was his consort Uma, also known as Bhavani; it was on her request that he had narrated this story—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Doha no. 109 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Ram spared Jayant from capital punishment by just making him blind in one eye. This development, ‘blinding in one eye as a punishment for what Jayant did’, has great symbolic significance.

The two eyes which a person has symbolically stand for the two ways he sees the world—one is an auspicious, good and noble way, and the other is the opposite of it, i.e. seeing the world with an evil, bad and wicked way. By taking out one of the eyes of Jayant, Lord Ram gave a message to the world that he would never tolerate wickedness, evilness and vices in anyone, and such a person is bound to suffer sooner or later. By blinding Jayant in one eye, the Lord symbolically blocked his vision by which he used to see the world with a wicked, evil and crooked mind. The other eye that was left untouched by the Lord would now make Jayant see the better side of things, the goodness in the world, without interference from the other eye that was habituated to seeing negative things and corrupting his mind.

But how did the Lord do it? Obviously, since the reed shot by Lord Ram could not go in vain, the Lord ordered it to dissipate its energy by softly puncturing Jayant's one eye, making him blind in it, but spared his life.]

सो०. कीन्ह मोह बस द्रोह जद्यपि तेहि कर बध उचित ।  
प्रभु छाड़ेउ करि छोह को कृपाल रघुबीर सम ॥ २ ॥

sōraṭhā.

kīnha mōha basa drōha jadyapi tēhi kara badha ucita.  
prabhu chārē'u kari chōha kō krpāla raghubīra sama. 2.

Though he (Indra's son) had antagonized Lord Ram due to delusions and a wicked mind arising out of his ignorance and stupidity, and therefore it would not have been improper (i.e. it would be justified) if he had been subjected to capital punishment, yet Lord Ram took pity on him, and out of his compassion the Lord spared his life and let him go.

Say, who else is as kind, compassionate, merciful and gracious as Lord Ram?

[To wit, had Lord Ram wanted, he could have easily, and without feeling guilty, punished Jayant severely. This punishment could have taken many forms, but the Lord just made him blind in one eye and let him go. Losing sight in only one eye is not much of a problem, because there are countless people who lead a normal life if one of their eyes is lost due to some disease.] (Doha no. 2)

चौ०. रघुपति चित्रकूट बसि नाना । चरित किए श्रुति सुधा समाना ॥ १ ॥  
बहुरि राम अस मन अनुमाना । होइहि भीर सबहिं मोहि जाना ॥ २ ॥  
सकल मुनिन्ह सन बिदा कराई । सीता सहित चले द्वौ भाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

raghupati citrakūṭa basi nānā. carita ki'ē śruti sudhā samānā. 1.  
bahuri rāma asa mana anumānā. hō'ihī bhīra sabahim mōhi jānā. 2.  
sakala muninha sana bidā karāī. sītā sahita calē dvau bhāī. 3.

While dwelling in Chitrakoot, Lord Ram (who was the Lord of the illustrious family of king Raghu of Ayhodhya: "raghupati") did many mystical deeds of different kinds that were like nectar for those who heard them (because the listener realized that the doer of these deeds is not an ordinary human being but the Supreme Being himself, and that he, the listener, therefore is so fortunate and blessed that he lives during such a time when the Supreme Lord of the world too lived on earth, albeit anonymously, to bless it and its creatures). (1)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram realized that sooner rather than later the people would come to know who he actually was (i.e. it would be difficult to hide the Lord's true identity from the world for too long), and as a consequence a large crowd would start coming to him to see him and have his blessings<sup>1</sup>. (2)

So therefore Lord Ram decided to leave Chitrakoot and move on to a different part of the forest.

With this objective, the Lord took leave of the many sages who lived there, and then the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) departed with Sita from there. (3)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This eventuality would lead to revelation of Lord Ram's true identity, and if that happened the elimination of the demons would become well nigh impossible, because once they come to know that the Supreme Being is coming himself to rein them in, it is a definite possibility that the demons would scatter all around the world to go into hiding, concealing themselves individually at widely scattered locations from where it would be literally impossible to fish them all out and get rid of them at one go. On the other hand, if top secrecy was maintained, the plan would go according to design, and this meant provoking the demons into confrontation with the Lord on some pretext, and then trouncing them in their den at Lanka where all of them would be concentrated to fight the Lord, thinking him to be an ordinary human prince who had durst challenge their might, and therefore needed to be taught a lesson.]

Therefore, in order to accomplish success in the grand mission of eliminating the scourge of the cruel demons, it was necessary to maintain top secrecy and complete discretion like any other military campaign where secrecy, prudence, intelligent handling of contingencies, and good planning are crucial factors for success.]

अत्रि के आश्रम जब प्रभु गयऊ । सुनत महामुनि हरषित भयऊ ॥ ४ ॥  
 पुलकित गात अत्रि उठि धाए । देखि रामु आतुर चलि आए ॥ ५ ॥  
 करत दंडवत मुनि उर लाए । प्रेम बारि द्वौ जन अन्हवाए ॥ ६ ॥

atri kē āśrama jaba prabhu gaya'ū. sunata mahāmuni haraṣita bhaya'ū. 4.  
 pulakita gāta atri uṭhi dhā'ē. dēkhi rāmu ātura cali ā'ē. 5.  
 karata daṇḍavata muni ura lā'ē. prēma bāri dvau jana anhavā'ē. 6.

When Lord Ram reached the hermitage of sage Atri<sup>1</sup>, the great sage (mahāmuni) was exhilarated when he heard about the Lord's arrival. (3)

Atri got up immediately, and with thrill running down his body, he dashed forward to receive the Lord<sup>2</sup>.

No sooner did Lord Ram see that the sage was running forward to meet him, the Lord himself eagerly moved with brisk steps in the direction of the sage to receive him<sup>3</sup>. (5)

No sooner sage Atri saw the two brothers prostrating before him, but he immediately lifted them and hugged them, bathing the two brothers with tears of affection that streamed out of his eyes<sup>4</sup>. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Sage Atri is an ancient sage credited with the composition of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mandal of the Rig Veda Samhita. His name appears in other places in the Rig Veda Samhita also (10/137/4 for instance). His disciples assumed his name as their surname and came to be known as Aatreyas.]

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

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

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

During his forest sojourn, Lord Ram had visited him after leaving his hermitage in Chitrakoot. Sage Atri had preached Lord Ram the nuances of Dharma (according to the Ramayana by Valmiki, Aranya Kand, 117).

He was an authority on Dharma (tenets of righteousness, probity and propriety) and has been quoted in the Manusmriti (3/16) and the epic Mahabharata (in its Anushaashan Parva, 65/1).

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

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

<sup>2</sup>There are other instances also where a great sage dashed forward with a thrilled body to receive Lord Ram as soon as the news of the Lord’s arrival reached him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 10 (sage Sutikshan); (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Not only sages, even ordinary people would dash forward to have a divine view of Lord as soon as they learnt of his coming—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 220 (citizens of Janakpur); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 110 (residents of villages on the banks of river Yamuna which Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had crossed); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 114; (iv)

Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 121 (residents of all the villages and hamlets that fell on the way of the Lord while he was going to the forest).

<sup>3</sup>Another example of this happening was when Lord Ram and Laxman rushed forward to meet sage Vasistha who had accompanied Bharat to Chitrakoot—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 243.

<sup>4</sup>This is observed whenever Lord Ram met any great sage as narrated in Ram Charit Manas—e.g. (a) sage Bharadwaj—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 106; (b) sage Vasistha—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 243; (c) sage Sutikshan—refer: Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3, and 20-23 that precede Doha no. 10; (d) sage Agastya—refer: Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 12.]

देखि राम छबि नयन जुड़ाने । सादर निज आश्रम तब आने ॥ ७ ॥  
करि पूजा कहि बचन सुहाए । दिए मूल फल प्रभु मन भाए ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi rāma chabi nayana jurānē. sādara nija āśrama taba ānē. 7.  
kari pūjā kahi bacana suhā'ē. di'ē mūla phala prabhu mana bhā'ē. 8.

Seeing the most bewitchingly charming image (form) of Lord Ram, the sage gazed at him with eyes riveted on the Lord (i.e. the sage looked straight into the eyes of Lord Ram and for some moments stood transfixed, as if hypnotized, and as if he was establishing a direct bridge that helped him to have access to the divine nature of Lord Ram and communicate with him at a sublime and transcendental plane—"nayana jurānē")<sup>1</sup>.

Recovering himself soon thereafter, sage Atri reverentially escorted Lord Ram (along with Sita and Laxman) to his hermitage. (7)

The sage then offered worship to the Lord and spoke sweetly to him even as he offered some refreshments in the form of edible roots and fruits which were loved by the Lord who enjoyed them (thoroughly)<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When Lord Ram met sage Valmiki, a similar development of the sage looking transfixed directly into the eyes of Lord Ram has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Whenever Lord Ram went to meet a sage who had established a hermitage, he was shown similar respect and offered refreshments in a similar way—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 107 (sage Bharadwaj); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 125.

We shall read soon in this Canto that when Lord Ram went to meet Sabari, an old lady who had been awaiting the Lord's arrival on the orders of her guru who had advised her to do so in order to attain deliverance from this mortal world, she too would offer worship and fruits to the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35.]



सो०. प्रभु आसन आसीन भरि लोचन सोभा निरखि ।  
मुनिबर परम प्रबीन जोरि पानि अस्तुति करत ॥ ३ ॥

sōraṭhā.

prabhu āsana āsīna bhari lōcana sōbhā nirakhi.  
munibara parama prabīna jōri pāni astuti karata. 3.

When Lord Ram was seated, sage Atri observed his beauteous form as much as his eyes wanted to enjoy them.

The exalted sage (munibara), who was very enlightened and wise (parama prabīna), joined the palms of his hands to offer prayers to Lord Ram (as narrated in the verses herein below). (Sortha no. 3)

छं०. नमामि भक्त वत्सलं । कृपालु शील कोमलं ॥ १  
भजामि ते पदांबुजं । अकामिनां स्वधामदं ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

namāmi bhakta vatsalaṁ. kṛpālu śīla kōmalaṁ. 1.  
bhajāmi tē padāmbujaṁ. akāmināṁ svadhāmadam. 2.

‘Oh Lord who is so fond of and graceful towards your devotees—I bow reverentially before you. You are merciful and kind by nature, as well as of a sweet, gentle and compassionate disposition. (1)

I worship your lotus-like holy feet which grants attainment of your divine abode to your selfless devotees. [To wit, your devotees who worship your holy feet selflessly are vouchsafed a place in your holy abode.] (2)

निकाम श्याम सुंदरं । भवाञ्जुनाथ मंदरं ॥ ३ ॥  
प्रफुल्ल कंज लोचनं । मदादि दोष मोचनं ॥ ४ ॥

nikāma śyāma sundaraṁ. bhavāmbunātha mandaraṁ. 3.  
praphulla kañja lōcanaṁ. madādi dōṣa mōcanaṁ. 4.

Your dark form (physical appearance; body) is exceptionally beautiful and bewitchingly charming. You are like the great Mandrachal Mountain to churn the ocean of transmigration<sup>1</sup>.

[To wit, if one wishes to make the best of life in this world and free oneself from the endless cycle of birth and death and its attendant sufferings and horrors even while living an ordinary life and going about one’s ordained duties as destined for him by his destiny in the mundane mortal world, if one wishes to obtain spiritual bliss and peace despite being surrounded by sufferings and pain, then in all sooth one would find what one wants in if one takes shelter in your holy feet and worships you. You can provide the creature all that he desires, all that would be in his best interests.] (3)

Your eyes are (large and beautiful) like an open lotus flower. You free the creature (i.e. your devotees who have taken shelter with you) from the negative qualities of Mada (arrogance; vanity; pride) and other such vices. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This metaphor refers to an ancient event narrated in the Purans according to which the celestial ocean was churned by the Gods and the Demons in some ancient time in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal life and bliss. To do the churning, they made the Mandrachal Mountain as the churning rod, and the legendary Seshnath as the rope with which to turn this mountain.]

प्रलंब बाहु विक्रमं । प्रभोऽप्रमेय वैभवं ॥ ५ ॥

निषंग चाप सायकं । धरं त्रिलोक नायकं ॥ ६ ॥

pralamba bāhu vikramaṁ. prabhō'pramēya vaibhavaṁ. 5.  
niṣaṅga cāpa sāyakaṁ. dharaṁ trilōka nāyakaṁ. 6.

Oh Lord (prabhō)! Your long arms have such stupendous strength and your glory is so immeasurable and profound that the mind and the intellect cannot fathom and comprehend them. (5)

You are the Lord and Leader of the world, the one who holds a bow (in his hands) and carry a quiver full of arrows (tied to his waist). (6)

दिनेश वंश मंडनं । महेश चाप खंडनं ॥ ७ ॥

मुनींद्र संत रंजनं । सुरारि वृंद भंजनं ॥ ८ ॥

dinēśa vanśa maṇḍanaṁ. mahēśa cāpa khaṇḍanaṁ. 7.  
munīndra santa raṅjanaṁ. surāri vṛnda bhaṅjanaṁ. 8.

You are like an ornament for the Solar Race. You are the one who had broken the great Bow of Lord Shiva<sup>1</sup>. (7)

You provide joy and happiness to sages, hermits and saints. You are a friend of the Gods, and destroy or eliminate their enemies (or their tormentors), the demons<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This refers to the story where Lord Ram had broken the Bow of Lord Shiva at Janakpur that was declared as a precondition for marrying Sita by her father King Janak. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Doha no. 264.

<sup>2</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 186.]

मनोज वैरि वंदितं । अजादि देव सेवितं ॥ ९ ॥

विशुद्ध बोध विग्रहं । समस्त दूषणापहं ॥ १० ॥

manōja vairi vanditaṁ. ajādi dēva sēvitaṁ. 9.  
viśud'dha bōdha vigrahaṁ. samasta dūṣaṇāpahāṁ. 10.

You are adored and worshipped by Lord Shiva who is an enemy (or the destroyer) of Kamdeo (the patron God of passion and lust)<sup>1</sup>.

You are served by the creator Brahma, the most ancient of the Gods, as well as by all other Gods. (9)

Verily, your form is an embodiment of pure consciousness (i.e. you are a personified form of cosmic Consciousness). You are the one who destroys or eliminates all faults and vices in a creature as well as all evils in the world. (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

नमामि इंदिरा पतिं । सुखाकरं सतां गतिं ॥ ११ ॥  
भजे सशक्ति सानुजं । शची पति प्रियानुजं ॥ १२ ॥

namāmi indirā patim. sukhākaraṁ satāṁ gatiṁ. 11.  
bhajē saśakti sānujaṁ. śacī pati priyānujaṁ. 12.

Oh the Lord (husband) of goddess Laxmi (i.e. Lord Vishnu)<sup>1</sup>— I bow reverentially before you! You are a mine of joy, happiness and delight, and the only true destination that is so eagerly sought by noble, holy and pious souls (satāṁ gatiṁ). (11)

Oh dear younger brother (“priyānujaṁ”)<sup>2</sup> of Indra, the husband of Sachi (and the King of Gods; “śacī pati”)! I worship and adore you alongside the personified form of cosmic Shakti (Mother Nature and its dynamism; represented by Sita, Lord Ram’s divine consort) and your younger brother (Laxman who is regarded as an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary thousand hooded celestial serpent). (12)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This form of address for Lord Ram is appropriate because he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being.

<sup>2</sup>This refers to Lord Vaaman who was a dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and said to be the younger brother of Indra, the King of Gods, because he was born as a son of Aditi, the mother of the Gods, and as a younger brother of Indra who was the senior-most God.]

त्वदङ्घ्रि मूल ये नराः । भजन्ति हीन मत्सराः ॥ १३ ॥  
पतन्ति नो भवार्णवे । वितर्क वीचि संकुले ॥ १४ ॥

tvadaṅghri mūla yē narāḥ. bhajanti hīna matsarāḥ. 13.  
patanti nō bhavārṇavē. vitarka vīci saṅkulē. 14.

A person who frees himself from such vices as ‘Matsarya’ (“matsarāḥ”; jealousy, ill-will and malice) and worships your holy feet, verily such a person does not fall in the tumultuous ocean representing this mortal world (known commonly as the “Bhava-sagar”; “bhavārṇavē”) that consists of surging, buffeting wild waves symbolising countless doubts, uncertainties, debates, wranglings and confusions that are so characteristic of life in this delusory world. (13-14)

विविक्त वासिनः सदा । भजन्ति मुक्तये मुदा ॥ १५ ॥  
निरस्य इन्द्रियादिकं । प्रयांति ते गतिं स्वकं ॥ १६ ॥

vivikta vāsinaḥ sadā. bhajanti muktayē mudā. 15.  
nirasya indriyādikaṁ. prayānti tē gatiṁ svakaṁ. 16.

Those who live in seclusion and strive to attain Mukti (spiritual liberation, deliverance) by practicing self-control over their sense organs and abstaining from all temptations even as they worship you cheerfully and willingly (as also with due devotion and faith)—verily, they do obtain the exalted stature of self-realisation (and enlightenment that is a natural corollary to it). (15-16)

तमेकमद्भुतं प्रभुं । निरीहमीश्वरं विभुं ॥ १७ ॥  
जगद्गुरुं च शाश्वतं । तुरीयमेव केवलं ॥ १८ ॥

tamēkamadbhutaṁ prabhuṁ. nirīhamīśvaraṁ vibhuṁ. 17.  
jagadguruṁ ca śāśvataṁ. turīyamēva kēvalaṁ. 18.

I offer my obeisance to the Lord who is most mysterious, unique and outstanding in this entire creation (tamēkamadbhutaṁ), who is all able and almighty (prabhuṁ), who is the Lord of everything in existence and the one who has no desires whatsoever (nirīhamīśvaraṁ), who is all-pervading and all-encompassing as well as the majestic and omnipotent Lord of the world (vibhuṁ), [17]---

---who is the Guru (guide, teacher and preceptor) of the entire world (jagadguruṁ), who is true and eternal (śāśvataṁ), who has a transcendental existence known as “Turiya” (turīyamēva) and lives in his true form which is the ‘Self’ or the pure transcendental Consciousness that has no parallel (kēvalaṁ). [18] (17-18)

भजामि भाव वल्लभं । कुयोगिनां सुदुर्लभं ॥ १९ ॥  
स्वभक्त कल्प पादपं । समं सुसेव्यमन्वहं ॥ २० ॥

bhajāmi bhāva vallabhaṁ. kuyōgināṁ sudurlabhaṁ. 19.  
svabhakta kalpa pādapaṁ. samaṁ susēvyamanvahaṁ. 20.

I worship and offer my obeisance (bhajāmi) to the Lord who is fond of and endeared by having loving emotions that are sincere (as he does not like pretensions and deceit; “bhāva vallabhaṁ”), who is beyond reach for those who are not worthy of accessing the Lord (as they are indulgent in this gross world and devoid of piety and other fine qualities and noble virtues that entitles one to be eligible to attain nearness to the Lord; “kuyōgināṁ sudurlabhaṁ”), [19]---

---who is like a personified form of the Kalpa Tree (the evergreen tree of the Gods that is supposed to grant all wishes) for his devotees (as the latter can obtain all that they desire by merely praying to the Lord and taking shelter with him; “svabhakta kalpa pādapaṁ”), and who is worthy of worshipping and serving cheerfully, and with delight at all times (samaṁ susēvyamanvahaṁ). [20] (19-20)

अनूप रूप भूपतिं । नतोऽहमुर्विजा पतिं ॥ २१ ॥  
प्रसीद मे नमामि ते । पदाब्ज भक्ति देहि मे ॥ २२ ॥

anūpa rūpa bhūpatiṁ. natō'hamurvijā patiṁ. 21.  
prasīda mē namāmi tē. padābja bhakti dēhi mē. 22.

Oh Lord who is matchlessly beautiful and bewitchingly charming (anūpa rūpa), and who is the Lord of the earth (bhūpatiṁ)! I bow reverentially before Lord Ram who is the Lord (husband) of Janki (Sita) (natō'hamurvijā patiṁ)! (21)

Lord, be pleased with me (prasīda mē); I most reverentially bow before you (mē namāmi tē). Please grant me devotion for your lotus-like holy feet (padābja bhakti dēhi mē). (22)

पठन्ति ये स्तवं इदं । नरादरेण ते पदं ॥ २३ ॥  
व्रजन्ति नात्र संशयं । त्वदीय भक्ति संयुताः ॥ २४ ॥

paṭhanti yē stavam idam. narādarēṇa tē padam. 23.  
vrajanti nātra saṁśayam. tvadīya bhakti sanyutāḥ. 24.

Those people who recite this hymn with devotion and faith, verily, they are blessed with having devotion for you, and they obtain your exalted supreme abode: there is no iota of doubt about it.' (23-24)

दो०. बिनती करि मुनि नाइ सिरु कह कर जोरि बहोरि ।  
चरन सरोरुह नाथ जनि कबहुँ तजै मति मोरि ॥ ४ ॥

dōhā.

binatī kari muni nā'i siru kaha kara jōri bahōri.  
carana sarōruha nātha jani kabahum<sup>ṃ</sup> tajai mati mōri. 4.

After offering prayers to Lord Ram, sage Atri bowed his head in reverence before the Lord, and with palms of his hands joined he said once again (kaha kara jōri bahōri): 'Oh Lord (nātha)! Let my mind and intellect never abandon the thoughts and remembrance of your lotus-like holy feet.<sup>1</sup>' (Doha no. 4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Similar submissions were made by others also as narrated in Ram Charit Manas: viz. (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 341; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 342 (king Janak); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 107 (sage Bharadwaj); (c) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 49 (sage Vasistha).]

चौ०. अनुसुइया के पद गहि सीता । मिली बहोरि सुसील बिनीता ॥ १ ॥  
रिषिपतिनी मन सुख अधिकाई । आसिष देइ निकट बैठाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

anusu'iyā kē pada gahi sītā. milī bahōri susīla binītā. 1.  
riṣipatinī mana sukha adhikāī. āsiṣa dē'i nikaṭa baiṭhāī. 2.

After sage Atri had honoured Lord Ram, Sita met the sage's wife Anusuiya<sup>1</sup> and held (or clasped) her feet (to show respect to her). Then she expressed her reverence for Anusuiya once again as the two showed respect and courtesy to each other. (1)

The wife of the sage (riṣipatinī) was immensely gladdened in her heart; she blessed Sita and made her sit close to her. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Anusuiya is so-called because she did not have any kind of malice, jealousy and envy against anyone.

In sage Valmiki's version of the story of Ramayana, sage Atri himself gives a brief introduction of the glories of Anusuiya to Lord Ram—apropos: Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 117, verse nos. 9-13.

It is as follows: "Once there was a severe drought for ten years when everything began to wither and die due to lack of rains. During that testing time, Anusuiya had employed her mystical powers that she had acquired by the virtue of doing strict Tapa (austerity and penances) to overcome the adversities created by disturbed cycle of seasons in order to reproduce and sustain trees that bore fruits and flowers which helped in the rejuvenation of life.

She had also brought river Ganges in the area where their hermitage was located near Chitrakoot, which, by the way, lay on the fringes of the infamous Dandakaranya forest, the area of the wild forest which was a stretch of nothing but formidable wilderness, intractable and uninhabited, and infested by ferocious creatures such as the blood-thirst demons and other evil spirits. When Ganges reached there, it came to be known as river 'Mandakini'.

The story of how and why it happened has been narrated in Shiva Puran, Chaturtha Koti Rudra Sanhita, Canto nos. 3 and 4. Briefly it is as follows:

Once upon a time there was a severe drought, leading to famine and mass sufferings. Sage Atri felt very sad at this development, and moved by the plight of the world he decided to do Tapa (penance and austerity) in order to alleviate the suffering of all the creatures. In this state, the sage entered into a trance, known as Samadhi, and remained unmoving. His wife Anusuiya was constantly by his side to serve him and take care of him as best as she could. She discarded all food and drink just like her husband had done as he entered into the trance-like state during Tapa.

Highly impressed by the noble cause for which the couple were enduring such hardships and doing Tapa, the Gods, great Sages and the holy river Ganges came to visit them and see their pious efforts. While everyone else paid their obeisance and went their ways, Ganges and Lord Shiva stayed back. The deity representing river Ganges was especially very impressed by Anusuiya's pious nature, noble heart and her devotion to her husband sage Atri, and so the deity thought to herself that if she could in some way help this pious and holy lady it would be a very good deed that she (river Ganges) would be doing.

After a long period of 54 years, sage Atri woke up from his meditative state (i.e. from Samadhi), and asked his wife, Anusuiya, to give him some water to drink. Anusuiya took the sage's water-pot and went out in search of water, wondering from where to fetch some water for the sage. {Remember: there was a prolonged drought.}

The deity of river Ganges decided that it was the most appropriate time to help Anusuiya. So, she revealed herself in a physical form before the hermitess and told her that she (Ganges) was very please by her penances and austerities, and wished to know how she could be helped. Anusuiya asked for some water, at which the personified form of the deity of river Ganges asked the hermitess to dig a small pit in the ground. When it was done, the deity entered it, and transformed herself into water.

Anusuiya filled her pot with that water and requested the deity to remain there till she goes and gives the water to sage Atri, and then bring him to that place. When sage Atri drank this water, he was astonished by its nectarine qualities, sweet, cool and rejuvenating. When asked, Anusuiya told Atri everything. The sage then came to visit the sacred spot where the holy river Ganges had revealed herself.

Seeing the hole from where Anusuiya had fetched water for him, sage Atri recognized it was river Ganges; he paid his obeisance to the holy river and asked the latter not to leave that place, and stay there forever. River Ganges replied that if the sage would offer the good effects of his doing worship of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati (Shiva's consort) for merely one year to river Ganges in exchange of her living there, she would oblige him. The sage agreed. And in this way, river Ganges came to be present in that spot for all times to come, and became known as 'Mandakini'. This episode also shows the stupendous spiritual rewards one gets by worshipping Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati in as much as merely one year's rewards compelled river Ganges to stay put and entitled her to purify a place which had never seen water before. {This story is narrated in Shiva Puran, Canto 4, in its Rudra Sanhita.}

It is obvious from the above narration that sage Atri's hermitage was located in the vicinity of where river Mandakini sprouted on earth. This is explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 132.

In the Purans (ancient mythological histories) there are a number of stories that emphasize on her glories and spiritual prowess. One such story relates to the Trinity Gods, Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva, having to become her sons when they tried to test her modesty and chastity by attempting to cheat her. This son

had three heads and six arms, each head standing for one of the Gods. This son came to be known as Lord Dattatreya.

According to the Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, a slight different version of this episode is narrated in its Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 7-8 wherein it is said that the Supreme Being himself revealed in the form of sage Atri. Now let us see what it says—

“Verse no. 7 = [Sage Shandilya asked—] ‘Why is it (Brahm) known as Lord Dattatreya?’ [Refer last stanzas of verse no. 6 of section 1 of Canto 3 of this Upanishad.] (7).

“Verse no. 8= [Sage Atharvaa replied—] ‘It is because sage Atri did very severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to wish for a son. Pleased by his sincerity and devotion, the splendorous and self-illuminated ‘Bhagwan’ (Lord God; the Supreme Being) blessed the sage and offered himself as his son. Thereafter, the Lord himself revealed as a son to sage Atri and his wife Anusuiya. In this way he (the Lord) became famous as Lord Dattatreya (8).”

It is said that Anusuiya was the daughter of Kardama Prajapati, sage Vasistha’s wife, Arundhati, was her sister, and sage Kapil was her brother. According to mythological accounts, sage Atri and his wife Anusuyia were childless, and having a desire to have a son they prayed and did severe penance. All the three gods of the Hindu Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder appeared before the couple and requested them to ask for a boon. Upon the couple’s request, all the three Gods became their sons. Brahma became the sage known as Chandra representing the Moon God, Vishnu became the wise and enlightened sage Dattatreya, and Shiva became the angry sage Durvasa.

There is another story related to her as follows: Anusuiya had a close friend. Sage Markandeya had cursed her due to some reason that she would become a widow as soon as the sun rose. That lady came to Anusuiya weeping and sought her help. Anusuiya invoked her spiritual powers and blocked the sun from rising in the sky. This caused ten days to be converted into one extended night. Upset at the development, as without sunrise the whole cycle of day and night would be thrown out of gear, the three gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, came to her and granted the boon that her friend’s husband won’t die the next day. Then Anusuiya withdrew her ban so that the sun could rise on the eleventh morning.]

दिव्य बसन भूषण पहिराए । जे नित नूतन अमल सुहाए ॥ ३ ॥

कह रिषिबधू सरस मृदु बानी । नारिधर्म कछु ब्याज बखानी ॥ ४ ॥

dibya basana bhūṣaṇa pahirā'ē. jē nita nūṭana amala suhā'ē. 3.

kaha riṣibadhū sarasa mṛḍu bānī. nāridharma kachu byāja bakhānī. 4.

Anusuiya honoured Sita by adorning her with robes and ornaments that not only were magnificent and had heavenly charm, but they also remained always fresh and clean. (3)

Then, the honourable wife of the sage (“riṣibadhū”; i.e. Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri) spoke sweetly to Sita and proceeded to enumerate some of the sterling values and principles of good conduct that a loyal and chaste housewife ought to follow in her life. (4)



मातु पिता भ्राता हितकारी । मितप्रद सब सुनु राजकुमारी ॥ ५ ॥  
अमित दानि भर्ता बयदेही । अधम सो नारि जो सेव न तेही ॥ ६ ॥

mātu pitā bhrātā hitakārī. mitaprada saba sunu rājakumārī. 5.  
amita dāni bhartā bayadēhī. adhama sō nāri jō sēva na tēhī. 6.

[Anusuiya began her discourse thus—] ‘Listen oh princess (“rājakumārī”; Sita)! A woman’s mother, father, brother, and others who are her well-wishers— all of them can give joy and happiness to her only to a limited extent. (5)

On the other hand, her husband can grant her unbound joy and happiness, as well as protect her, and look after her and all her needs.

Surely therefore, a woman who does not serve her husband is certainly most lowly, fallen and dumb-witted (for she does not realize where her true interests and welfare lie). (6)

[Note—This is the first point to be noted by an intelligent lady. Anusuiya further elaborates on this principle as narrated herein below.]

धीरज धर्म मित्र अरु नारी । आपद काल परिजिअहिं चारी ॥ ७ ॥  
बृद्ध रोगबस जड़ धनहीना । अंध बधिर क्रोधी अति दीना ॥ ८ ॥  
ऐसेहु पति कर किँ अपमाना । नारि पाव जमपुर दुख नाना ॥ ९ ॥

dhīraja dharma mitra aru nārī. āpada kāla parikhi'ahim cārī. 7.  
br̥d'dha rōgabasa jaṛa dhanahīnā. andha badhira krōdhī ati dīnā. 8.  
aisēhu pati kara ki'ēm' apamānā. nāri pāva jamapura dukha nānā. 9.

The virtues of courage, patience, resilience and fortitude, the ability to stand fast in following the principles of Dharma (right conduct and thought; observing propriety and probity), a true friend, and the integrity and faithfulness of one’s wife—these four are tested only during adverse times<sup>1</sup>. (7)

[In the following two verses, a woman is advised to serve her husband loyally and diligently irrespective of his physical disabilities and other shortcomings.]

A husband who has become old and feeble, who is suffering from some disease (acute or chronic), who may be poor, blind, deaf, subject to bouts of anger, or most humble and lacking in worldly glories --- (8)

--- If a woman insults or humiliates even such a husband in any way, then she would have to suffer numerous torments and face countless miseries that are equivalent to being subjected to many horrors of hell, the abode of Yama, the god of hell\*.

[\*This verse can be read in another way too: “If a woman insults or humiliates even such a husband in any way, then she would be condemned to hell, the abode of

Yama, where she would have to suffer numerous torments and face countless miseries.”]<sup>2</sup> (9)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>To wit, when the time is favourable for a person, everyone becomes favourable for him too. During comfortable times when the things are going as expected, there is hardly any chance to test how firm and steadfast a person is in observing the principles of Dharma, as well as how courageous, patient, calm and resilient he is in the face of challenges.

Similarly, when the going is good, he would be surrounded by many friends, but when the tide of time turns against him, majority of his so-called friends would shun him, and only those who are his ‘real’ friends would come to his aid and stand by him.

This same principle applies to a person’s wife. It is during adverse times and unfortunate periods in his life when everyone else would abandon him, it is only his wife who would sacrifice everything for her husband’s happiness, and she would stand by him like a rock, sharing his pains and joys equally. If she fails to do this, if she fails to support her husband during the time when everyone else has abandoned him, then surely she is fallen, lowly and dumb-witted, and a most unfortunate woman worthy of contempt and loathing.

This is the second point to be noted by an intelligent lady.

<sup>2</sup>The idea here is that a wife should serve her husband most faithfully and diligently, without considering his physical condition or social standing. For her, the husband assumes the form of a lord and master, as well as an embodiment of Lord God, and therefore he must be served obediently and faithfully like a person would serve a lord, a master, and god. Failure to do so makes a wife worthy of contempt and scorn in this world. The world would accuse her of being selfish and fallen from her duties. On the contrary, if she serves her husband in spite of his shortcomings, she would be feted by the world and shown honour.]

एकइ धर्म एक ब्रत नेमा । कायँ बचन मन पति पद प्रेमा ॥ १० ॥

जग पतिव्रता चारि बिधि अहहीं । बेद पुरान संत सब कहहीं ॥ ११ ॥

ēka'i dharma ēka brata nēmā. kāyam' bacana mana pati pada prēmā. 10.  
jaga patibratā cāri bidhi ahahīm. bēda purāna santa saba kahahīm. 11.

For an honourable lady (worthy of praise and acclaim in this world), there is only one principle of righteousness and auspiciousness that she must follow, there is only one vow she is expected to observe, and there is only one duty that she must diligently and faithfully do—and it is to be devoted to serving her husband and have an abiding affection for him (literally, ‘for his feet’: “pati pada prēmā”) by all means at her disposal, such as by her deeds, her words, and her mind and thoughts.

[To wit, an honourable lady is one who is absolutely devoted to her husband, serving him and worshipping his feet like she would do for a deity. All her actions, all her words, and all her thoughts are focused in serving her husband without any distraction or diversion.]<sup>1</sup> (10)

There are four types or categories of loyal wives<sup>2</sup> as unanimously proclaimed by the Vedas and Purans (ancient scriptures), as well as all people who are wise and saintly. (11)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This is the third point to be noted by a good wife.

<sup>2</sup>This is the fourth point to be noted by her. What these four categories are, and how are wives classified according to their virtues, character and natural temperament, has been enumerated in the verses that follow herein below. It would act as a general guideline for a woman to strive to be a member of the best class of wives.]

उत्तम के अस बस मन माहीं । सपनेहुँ आन पुरुष जग नाहीं ॥ १२ ॥  
 मध्यम परपति देखइ कैसें । भ्राता पिता पुत्र निज जैसें ॥ १३ ॥  
 धर्म बिचारि समुझि कुल रहई । सो निकिष्ट त्रिय श्रुति अस कहई ॥ १४ ॥  
 बिनु अवसर भय तें रह जोई । जानेहु अधम नारि जग सोई ॥ १५ ॥

uttama kē asa basa mana māhīm. sapanēhum āna puruṣa jaga nāhīm. 12.  
 madhyama parapati dēkha'i kaisēm. bhrātā pitā putra nija jaisēm. 13.  
 dharma bicāri samujhi kula raha'ī. sō nikiṣṭa triya śruti asa kaha'ī. 14.  
 binu avasara bhaya tēm raha jō'ī. jānēhu adhama nāri jaga sō'ī. 15.

The best sort of a woman is one who firmly believes in her heart and mind (“Mana”) that except her husband there is no other male worthy of her affection and attention in any manner in this world<sup>1</sup>. (12)

The second and medium category of a woman is one wherein she looks at another male with the thought that she is looking at her brother, father or son, depending upon his age and position, and circumstances and the situation in which she has to interact with him<sup>2</sup>. (13)

The third and lowly category for a woman is one in which she follows the norms of conduct as is expected from her in accordance with the practices observed by other females of her family simply out of compulsion to do so, to avoid being singled out for ridicule and scorn (and not because she voluntarily observes them out of her own free will)—then such a lady is regarded as fallen and contemptible by the scriptures<sup>3</sup>.

[To wit, she abstains from wrong conduct out of fear for being ridiculed by her own family members for breaking the norms of the family and bringing bad reputation to it.] (14)

The fourth and the worst category that makes a woman completely fallen, sinful and contemptible is that when she is forced to observe restraint on her wayward nature, suppress her passions and wild instincts just because she hadn't got a chance to do what she wants to do, and out of fear of being caught in her secret encounters, indulgences and dalliances<sup>4</sup>. (15)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This is the best category, the highest rank a woman can have. It is gold standard to judge a woman's integrity and virtues. The word ‘male’ must be

understood in the right context here, for it refers to someone with whom she enjoys physical contact, and with whom she shares her passions. To wit, she must treat every other male except her husband dispassionately and in a neutral way; she must never develop any kind of physical contact with any other male but her husband that may arouse passions in her. She will do best by neglecting all other males except her husband.

<sup>2</sup>The first category is too rigid and almost impractical in real-world situations. So the next best and a workable solution is given in this verse. To wit, since it is not possible to lead a life of total seclusion and being isolated from all human interaction in this world, wherein a woman is completely shielded from all males and interacting with them in any manner whatsoever, hence the best solution for her is to treat all males except her husband as she would treat her own brother, father or son. This is a practical solution and can be easily implemented by any woman of good virtues.

<sup>3</sup>The difference between the second category and this third category is obvious and clear. In the second category mentioned in verse no. 13 come those women who willingly follow principles of etiquette and decency by treating anyone except her husband in the same way as she would treat her own brother, father or son. This attitude at once eliminates any kind of accusation of wrong doings on her part; it pre-empted all mischief mongering, gossip and taints being cast on her character; it removes the possibility of anyone doubting her integrity, chastity and modesty.

But this third category is completely different. Here we come across a woman who keeps an external façade of being nice and virtuous only under compulsion and out of fear for being scorned at for breaking the rules of the family she lives in if she is found violating its norms. To wit, she is not being virtuous and observing right behaviour willingly and out of her nature, but out of compulsion to do so to prevent from being censored by members of her own family.

<sup>4</sup>The difference between a woman described in verse no. 14 and verse no. 15 is very fine. The woman described in verse no. 14 abstains from wrong conduct out of fear for being ridiculed by her own family members for breaking the norms of the family and bringing bad reputation to it, but this last category of woman, the one described in verse no. 15, is one who is not bothered whether her conduct would bring infamy to the family or not, the only reason she does not do any evil deed is because she hasn't got a chance to do so, or out of fear of being caught in the act.

This simply means that if she gets a chance, she would grab it and go wild.]

पति बंचक परपति रति करई । रौरव नरक कल्प सत परई ॥ १६ ॥

छन सुख लागि जनम सत कोटी । दुख न समुझ तेहि सम को खोटी ॥ १७ ॥

pati bañcaka parapati rati karaĩ. raurava naraka kalpa sata paraĩ. 16.

chana sukha lāgi janama sata kōṭī. dukha na samujha tēhi sama kō khōṭī. 17.

[This verse is an extension of what is said in verse no. 15 herein above regarding a fallen woman who is waiting for a chance to indulge in passions and dalliances.]

If a woman betrays her husband and establishes a union with another male, such as the husband of another woman (whom she treats as her lover or a paramour) —then such a vile, sinful and depraved lady goes and falls in the worst kind of hell to suffer torments for seven ages. (16)

How stupid and dumb-witted is she because she sacrifices her integrity, her character, her reputation, her virtues and values for momentary pleasures, and does not realize that this reckless act of hers would condemn her to live a life of suffering, torments and grief for a thousand births. (17)

बिनु श्रम नारि परम गति लहई । पतिव्रत धर्म छाड़ि छल गहई ॥ १८ ॥  
पति प्रतिकूल जनम जहँ जाई । बिधवा होइ पाइ तरुनाई ॥ १९ ॥

binu śrama nāri parama gati laha'ī. patibrata dharma chāḍi chala gaha'ī. 18.  
pati pratikūla janama jaham'jā'ī. bidhavā hō'i pā'i tarunā'ī. 19.

A woman can easily attain the best of destinations without making and especial effort for it if she simply follows the principles laid down for a virtuous wife and how she ought to serve and be dedicated to her husband (as narrated in the verses herein above). (18)

On the contrary, if a woman is disloyal to her husband and becomes perverse in any manner, then she would suffer the horrifying consequences of it by being widowed even during her younger days, with its accompanying sufferings, pain and grief.' (19)

सो०. सहज अपावनि नारि पति सेवत सुभ गति लहइ ।  
जसु गावत श्रुति चारि अजहुँ तुलसिका हरिहि प्रिय ॥ ५ ( क ) ॥  
सुनु सीता तव नाम सुमिरि नारि पतिव्रत करहिं ।  
तोहि प्रानप्रिय राम कहिउँ कथा संसार हित ॥ ५ ( ख ) ॥

sōraṭhā.

sahaja apāvani nāri pati sēvata subha gati laha'ī.  
jasu gāvata śruti cāri ajahum'tulasikā harihi priya. 5 (a).  
sunu sītā tava nāma sumiri nāri patibrata karahim.  
tōhi prānapriya rāma kahi'um' kathā sansāra hita. 5 (b).

[Anusuiya continued—] 'A woman is regarded as impure from her very birth<sup>1</sup>, but she becomes purified and redeemed by serving her husband diligently and faithfully, entitling her to attain an auspicious destination for herself (i.e. to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation at the time of her death).

All the four Vedas proclaim this fact. To cite an example, it is well known that 'Tulsi', who was loyal and faithful to her husband, became very dear to Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Lord God) due to this virtue of hers<sup>2</sup>. (Sortha no. 5-a)

Listen Sita, you are most pure and holy, and other women invoke your name and use your example to serve their own husbands.

There is no doubt that Lord Ram (your husband) is very dear and close to your heart. What I have said herein above is meant for the good of the rest of the world, to act as a guide for all other women.<sup>2</sup># (Sortha no. 5-b)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This observation was also made by Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, as mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 211.

<sup>2</sup>There is a reference to this story Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 123—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124.

The story in brief is this: Tulsi is the holy Basil plant which is regarded as very sacred by the followers of Lord Vishnu (i.e. the Vishnu cult called the Vaishnavs). Its botanical name is *Ocimum sanctum*. It is said to have been born out of the tears of bliss and happiness of Lord Vishnu at the time when the pitcher containing the Amrit, the ambrosia of bliss and eternity, had emerged from the ocean when the latter was churned by the gods and the demons. The leaves of this plant are used to sanctify food offered to Lord Vishnu, and the dried wood of the tree is used for fire sacrifices, during cremation rites and also for making beads of the prayer rosary. In a personified form, Tulsi is regarded as a goddess very dear to Vishnu.

According to another legend, there was a demon named Jalandhar who had a chaste wife named Brinda (pronounced as 'Brindaa'), the daughter of the demon Kaalnemi. Lord Shiva had tried his best to kill the demon but failed due to the spiritual powers gained by his wife Brinda by the virtue of vows of exemplary chastity and loyalty that she had towards her husband, the demon Jalandhar. To wit, it was Brinda's spiritual powers that protected the demon Jalandhar from death, because if he died then Brinda would have become a widow, which was not possible due to her stringent adherence to her religious vows that acted as an umbrella against her being a widow.

Since there was no other way to kill this cruel demon except to violate the vows of chastity and loyalty of Brinda towards her husband, the demon Jalandhar, and since it was obligatory for Lord Vishnu to take care of peace and welfare of the rest of the world, and to maintain law and order in creation for which he was duty-bound as its protector and sustainer, the Lord had no choice but to devise a device to somehow deflect Brinda from her vows so that the cruel demon Jalandhar could be slayed. Therefore, Lord Vishnu had disguised himself as the demon to violate the honourable lady's chastity, and she was inadvertently made to commit a sin which resulted in the withdrawal of the protective shield against widowhood that she had hitherto enjoyed. This enabled Lord Shiva to kill the demon Jalandhar.

But when Brinda realized that she had been deceived by Vishnu, she vehemently cursed the Lord to become a stone. Vishnu accepted the curse with respect because he knew that Brinda was immaculate and was not at fault, but it was necessary to violate her vows so that her cruel demon husband could be killed for the larger good of this creation. So instead of counter-cursing or showing his wrath, Vishnu blessed her and said that even in his form as a stone he would still have the greatest of respect for her and keep her over his head as a token of her good intentions and strictness with which she had followed her vows. Vishnu thus became a stone known as 'Shaligraam', and Brinda became the 'Tulsi plant' (the holy Basil plant) whose leaves are always placed on the top of the Shaligraam to worship Lord Vishnu in this form.

Lord Vishnu had blessed her with the boon that in the form of 'Tulsi' she would be absolutely necessary to sanctify all food offered to the Lord, that no worship of Lord Vishnu would be complete without the inclusion of Tulsi leaves, and he would wear her on top of his Shaligram-form.

This episode is briefly mentioned in Tulsidas' *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand, Doha no. 123 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede it.

The Shaligram is a rounded piece of smooth stone, generally black in colour that is found on the banks of the holy river Narmada. Shaligram has a great symbolic value—it denotes the formless shape of the Supreme Being, a form that has no specific features as a hand or a head. It is more like an egg in its shape, symbolizing the cosmic egg from which the rest of the creation has emerged.

Worship of Lord Vishnu as the cosmic Lord who is without attributes and forms is done in the Shaligram in a symbolic manner. But for this worship, leaves of the Tulsi plant (Basil plant) are an absolute necessity to mark this event and the fact that the magnanimous Lord had to do something that was wrong but necessary for the larger welfare and interest of his creation because that was also his duty and responsibility. The Lord was ready to suffer ignominy and the curse of becoming a stone that rolls and tosses about in the current of the river, literally condemned to lead a life that is virtually as gross and inane as a worthless stone, just in order to uphold the requirements of Dharma that the wrongdoer must be punished even if it means one has to suffer himself in the process. But the Lord knew that Brinda was immaculate and irreproachable, so he blessed her that since she had accepted him as her husband, the Lord is ready to accept her as his eternally beloved one.

For the Lord, accepting and elevating Brinda to the same pedestal as his celestial divine consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was a kind and loving gesture towards Brinda that she is not only pardoned for cursing the Lord to become a stone but also accepted by him as his most beloved one who is deemed to be so close and essential for the Lord that his worship would never be completed with her symbolic presence in the form of the Tulsi leaves.

The story is referred to in Doha no. 395 and 188 in the book *Dohawali* written by saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas.

According to the *Shiv Puran*, *Rudra Sanhita*, Khanda 5 (Uddha Khanda), Cantos 36-40, there was a demon named Shankha-chud, and his chaste wife was called Tulsi. Lord Shiva as well as the great goddess of death Mahakaali had tried their best to slay this demon, but were unsuccessful. It was then that Lord Vishnu had made Tulsi fall from grace by some trick so that ultimately Shiva, as Rudra, was able to kill him. When Tulsi came to know about the trick played upon her by Vishnu, she cursed him to become a stone. Lord Shiva counter-cursed her that she would become a river known as 'Gandaki'. But Lord Vishnu intervened and forgave her, and said that he willingly accepts her curse as well as her as his symbolic consort. So it happened that Vishnu became a stone known as 'Shaaligram' that is found in this river, and Tulsi became a tree that grew on its bank. The leaves of this 'Tulsi' tree is regarded as the only thing that is acceptable to Lord Shaaligram—a metaphoric way of saying that Lord Vishnu can only be pleased by the touch of Tulsi.

<sup>2</sup>Anusuiya clarifies here that there should be no misgivings or misunderstanding regarding what she had said regarding a virtuous woman and her characters, for she does not at all mean to cast any doubts on Sita's character, for it is well known that she is an embodiment of all virtuousness, and has a stellar and untarnished reputation. What she said was by way of a general advice for the women of the world at large.

#At the time of departure of Sita from her parental home at Janakpur for her in-laws home at Ayodhya, her mother and her close friends\*1, as well as her father, king Janak\*2, had advised her on different principles of good and noble conduct which she must remember and follow as they would not only give her good name and fame but also stand her in good stead.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, \*1 = Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 334.

\*2 = Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 339.}]

चौ०. सुनि जानकीं परम सुखु पावा । सादर तासु चरन सिरु नावा ॥ १ ॥

तब मुनि सन कह कृपानिधाना । आयसु होइ जाउँ बन आना ॥ २ ॥

संतत मो पर कृपा करेहू । सेवक जानि तजेहु जनि नेहू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunī jānakīm parama sukhu pāvā. sādara tāsu carana siru nāvā. 1.

taba muni sana kaha kṛpānidhānā. āyasu hō'i jā'um' bana ānā. 2.

saṁtata mō para kṛpā karēhū. sēvaka jāni tajēhu jani nēhū. 3.

When Sita (the daughter of king Janak; “jānakīm”) heard what Anusuiya had said, she felt exceptionally glad and contented (especially Anusuiya’s closing observation that whatever she has said regarding the way a virtuous wife ought to live and behave is meant to act as a guideline for the ladies of the world in general, but they are not directed at Sita at all, for her immaculate character, her matchless integrity, her unquestioned virtuousness, and her sterling loyalty towards her husband, Lord Ram, are beyond reproach, and stand as a beacon for others to follow).

Sita then bowed her head reverentially<sup>1</sup> before the hermitress (Anusuiya), and took her leave. (1)

After Sita returned to join her husband Lord Ram, who was a treasury of mercy, kindness, grace and compassion (kṛpānidhānā), the Lord said to sage Atri: ‘Oh Lord, if I have thy permission, I can proceed to some other forest<sup>2</sup>. (2)

Oh sage, please be kind to have thy grace upon me forever, and considering me to be thine humble servant, I prithee to never discard thy affection for me ever.’ (3)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In Indian culture, specially amongst the followers of Hinduism, it is a standard practice to show their respect to others who are senior to them in any way, such as age, knowledge, occupation, stature and station in life etc., by some gestures, and they can be summed up as follows—(a) Bowing before the person who is to be shown respect; (b) Touching the other person’s feet, or even touch-and-hold them for a while, either by bending down or by kneeling before that person; (c) Joining the palms of the hands in front of one’s chest, a gesture called ‘doing Pranaam’; (d) Prostrating before that person by lying on the ground before him like a stick, preferably with hands stretched out in front of the head to touch the other person’s feet; (e) Listening to what that person says with a lowered eye and bowed head.



Sita has bowed and touched Anusuiya's feet twice, once at the time of meeting her\*1, and now at the time of taking leave of her. This gesture is another standard practice: to show respect at the time of meeting a senior person, and at the time of departing from his presence. {\*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5 herein above.}

<sup>2</sup>We must remember that Atri was a senior resident sage in the forest surrounding Chitrakoot. He had been present in the conference with Bharat at Lord Ram's hermitage, and it was he who had acted as a guide to show Bharat the spot where to put the sacred waters from different holy places that he had brought for the purpose of anointment of Lord Ram.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 132 (sage Valmiki's advice to Lord Ram); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 308 (Lord Ram's advice to Bharat); (iii) Doha no. 309—to Doha no. 310.}

So, before leaving Chitrakoot for good, Lord Ram decided to visit the hermitage of sage Atri to seek his blessings and permission to proceed with his mission.]

धर्म धुरंधर प्रभु कै बानी । सुनि सप्रेम बोले मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ४ ॥  
जासु कृपा अज सिव सनकादी । चहत सकल परमारथ बादी ॥ ५ ॥  
ते तुम्ह राम अकाम पिआरे । दीन बंधु मृदु बचन उचारे ॥ ६ ॥

dharma dhurandhara prabhu kai bānī. suni saprēma bōlē muni gyānī. 4.  
jāsu kṛpā aja siva sanakādī. cahata sakala paramāratha bādī. 5.  
tē tumha rāma akāma pi'ārē. dīna bandhu mṛdu bacana ucārē. 6.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram, the Lord who was an expert adherent of the laws of Dharma (righteousness and goodness in thoughts, deeds and words) (dharma dhurandhara prabhu)<sup>1</sup>, the sage (Atri) replied most affectionately as follows --- (4)

'He whose grace and kindness is ever sought by Lord Shiva as well as the celestial sages known as Sankadi, he who is eagerly sought by spiritual seekers as well as wise ones who wish to attain emancipation and salvation, --- (5)

--- Oh Lord Ram, thou art 'he' who loves everyone selflessly as well as the one who is loved by those who are themselves selfless and free from getting entangled in the web of attachments and delusions (tē tumha rāma "akāma pi'ārē")—verily indeed and in all sooth, it is 'that Ram' who is a friend of those who are humble and distressed (dīna bandhu) who has spoken such kind, sweet and graceful words to me (mṛdu bacana ucārē)! (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 126 (sage Valmiki's declaration); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 254 (sage Vasistha).]

अब जानी मैं श्री चतुराई । भजी तुम्हहि सब देव बिहाई ॥ ७ ॥  
जेहि समान अतिसय नहिं कोई । ता कर सील कस न अस होई ॥ ८ ॥

aba jānī mairi śrī caturā'ī. bhajī tumhahi saba dēva bihā'ī. 7.  
jēhi samāna atisaya nahim kō'ī. tā kara sīla kasa na asa hō'ī. 8.

I have now understood the wisdom of goddess Laxmi (śrī caturā'ī) who has chosen thee to be her Lord, and who worships thee to the exclusion of all other gods. (7)

The majestic Lord Ram like whom there is no one else in this creation, say why wouldst such a gracious Lord not have this exemplary kind of politeness, grace and good manners? (8)

केहि बिधि कहौं जाहु अब स्वामी । कहहु नाथ तुम्ह अंतरजामी ॥ ९ ॥  
अस कहि प्रभु बिलोकि मुनि धीरा । लोचन जल बह पुलक सरीरा ॥ १० ॥

kēhi bidhi kahauṁ jāhu aba svāmī. kahahu nātha tumha antarajāmī. 9.  
asa kahi prabhu bilōki muni dhīrā. lōcana jala baha pulaka sarīrā. 10.

Now oh my Lord (svāmī), say, how can I tell thee to leave (and go away from here)? Tell me oh Lord, for thou art all-knowing (antarajāmī), and therefore thy knowest that what I say is true, and said from the inner-most core of my heart.

[To wit oh Lord, I am absolutely honest when I say that it is not possible for me to harden myself enough to tell you to 'go' from here, as it would be tantamount to wrenching out the very core of my heart that has tender feelings for you. I am not pretentious, and you know it because you are 'all-knowing' and a resident of every creature's heart as the Atma, the soul of every living being.] (9)

Saying this, the sage collected his resilience and patience to look steadily at Lord Ram even as tears gushed out of his eyes and his body became thrilled. (10)

छं०. तन पुलक निर्भर प्रेम पूरन नयन मुख पंकज दिए । १ ।  
मन ग्यान गुन गोतीत प्रभु मैं दीख जप तप का किए ॥ २ ॥  
जप जोग धर्म समूह ते नर भगति अनुपम पावई । ३ ।  
रघुबीर चरित पुनीत निसि दिन दास तुलसी गावई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

tana pulaka nirbhara prēma pūrana nayana mukha paṅkaja di'ē. 1.  
mana gyāna guna gōtita prabhu mairi dīkha japa tapa kā ki'ē. 2.  
japa jōga dharma samūha tēm nara bhagati anupama pāva'ī. 3.  
raghubīra carita punīta nisi dina dāsa tulasī gāva'ī. 4.

Sage Atri's body was filled with thrill, he was overwhelmed with a resurgence of affection for Lord Ram, and his eyes were riveted on the lotus-like face of the Lord. (Chanda line no. 1)

He wondered what great, good and meritorious deeds he had done, what kind of great Japa (repetition of a holy Mantra, a spiritual formula) and Tapa (penance and austerity) he had done which have rewarded him with the boon that entitled him to see and have a communion with the Supreme Lord who is beyond the reach of the mind and the intellect, who cannot be accessed even by the wisest as he transcends knowledge and gnosis, and who is beyond the reach and perception of any of the sense organs of a creature. (Chanda line no. 2)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, a person gets the reward of 'Bhakti' (devotion for Lord God) as a reward of doing Japa (repetition of the Lord's holy name during one's meditation and other spiritual practices), Yoga (meditation) as well as by doing all other kinds of auspicious and righteous deeds that would help him accumulate merit points in the spiritual field. (Chanda line no. 3)

Tulsidas says that this is the reason why he sings the glories and the deeds done by Lord Ram by way of narrating the Lord's divine story known as 'Ram Charit' every day and night of his life.<sup>1</sup> (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Tulsidas says that singing Lord Ram's glories and narrating the Lord's story fills his mind with the thoughts of the Lord, and at the same time he derives immense joy in his heart. This enables him to develop and nourish devotion and affection for Lord Ram in his inner-self. Since Bhakti, which is a combination of both devotion and affection for the Lord, for affection makes devotion more robust and sustainable, is the fruit of all spiritual practices and other auspicious efforts of a living being, this method of singing and narrating Lord Ram's story that incorporates the Lord's glories and divinity in it would naturally help the narrator and the singer develop Bhakti for the Lord in his heart, and at the same time keep his mind pure and sanctified by focusing it on the thoughts of the Lord.

This is an easy means to attain peace and bliss, it is an easy means to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation, it is an easy means to attain beatitude and felicity, as compared to other means, such as Japa, Yoga and Tapa etc., which have their own sets of problems, are difficult to practice comprehensively and to perfection.]

दो०. कलिमल समन दमन मन राम सुजस सुखमूल ।

सादर सुनहिं जे तिन्ह पर राम रहहिं अनुकूल ॥ ६ ( क ) ॥

dōhā.

kalimala samana damana mana rāma sujasa sukhamūla.

sādara sunahim jē tinha para rāma rahahim anukūla. 6 (a).

The praising of the glories and divinity of Lord Ram is a panacea that is like a root of happiness and bliss. It is able to destroy the taints and evil effects associated with Kali Yug (the present era marked by perversity and depravation), and it helps one to

exercise control over one's mind (in a practical way because the mind is kept occupied in the thoughts of Lord Ram, and hence focused, which in turn prevents it from wandering here and there on nonsense things like a delinquent vagabond).

Indeed, Lord Ram remains ever graceful towards and happy with a person who would reverentially hear the Lord's glories and divine stories being narrated. (Doha no. 6-a)

सो०. कठिन काल मल कोस धर्म न ग्यान न जोग जप ।

परिहरि सकल भरोस रामहि भजहिं ते चतुर नर ॥ ६ ( ख ) ॥

sōraṭhā.

kaṭhina kāla mala kōsa dharma na gyāna na jōga japa.

parihari sakala bharōsa rāmahī bhajāhim tē catura nara. 6 (b).

The present era known as 'Kali Yug' is a veritable treasury of sins, vices and evil.

During this corrupted era, there is no Dharma (i.e. it is not possible to practice good conduct and thought during this era), Gyan (knowledge of the spiritual Truth; metaphysical, spiritual and theological knowledge incorporated in the scriptures), Yoga (doing meditation with its associated practices such as Dhyan or contemplation) and Japa (concentrating the mind on the Divinity by repetition of Mantras)<sup>1</sup>.

Hence, one would be well advised that during such testing and adverse times a wise and intelligent is he who would discard all other means to attain his spiritual objectives (of getting eternal peace and bliss, as well as deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his soul) solely by relying on worshipping Lord Ram (and having devotion for the Lord). (Sortha no. 6-b)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The evil nature of Kali Yug on the one hand, and on the other hand the easy way to overcome its torments which have been briefly said herein above, have however been enumerated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to Garud in detail in: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 103.]

चौ०. मुनि पद कमल नाइ करि सीसा । चले बनहि सुर नर मुनि ईसा ॥ १ ॥

आगें राम अनुज पुनि पाछें । मुनि बर बेष बने अति काछें ॥ २ ॥

उभय बीच श्री सोहड़ कैसी । ब्रह्म जीव बिच माया जैसी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

muni pada kamala nā'i kari sīsā. calē banahi sura nara muni īsā. 1.

āgēṁ rāma anuja puni pāchēṁ. muni bara bēṣa banē ati kāchēṁ. 2.

ubhaya bīca śrī sōha'i kaisī. brahma jīva bica māyā jaisī. 3.

After bowing at the lotus-like (i.e. holy) feet of sage Atri and having received his permission, Lord Ram, who is the Lord of the gods, of the human race, as well as of the sages and other pious souls, proceeded to other (denser and more wilder) parts of the forest (in the general direction of the south)<sup>1</sup>. (1)

Lord Ram walked in the front, leading the way, while Laxman followed him in the rear. Both were attired in the habit of hermits, and looked magnificent in this image<sup>2</sup>. (2)

In between them walked Sita, who was a manifestation of goddess Laxmi, who is also known as ‘Sri’. She looked admirable and resembled Maya that stands between Brahm (the Supreme Being) and Jiva (the creature, the living being who has taken birth in this mortal world)<sup>3</sup>. (3)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This episode of Lord Ram leaving Citrakoot, then going to visit sage Atri where Sita meets Anusuiya, and then the Lord taking final leave of the sage to move ahead on his journey to the deeper parts of the forest has also been narrated in: Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 76-92 – to – Aranya Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup>The beauteous image of Lord Ram and Laxman dressed as hermits had mesmerized everyone who saw them while they were on their outward journey to the forest and were passing by villages and hamlets that fell on the way. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 116.

<sup>3</sup>An exactly similar description is found earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 123.

In this imagery, Lord Ram represents, as he truly was, Brahm, the Supreme Being; Laxman represents the Jiva; and Sita stands symbolically for the Maya—which separates Brahm from the Jiva. This term ‘Maya’ has a broad meaning, but briefly it refers to the many delusions and worldly attachments that separate the individual creature from the Supreme Lord. By corollary it means that if Maya is removed, a direct connect is established between the Supreme Being and the individual living being.

This image of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman walking one behind the other, and how carefully they walked so that neither Sita nor Laxman would either step on the marks of Lord Ram’s foot made on the soil on the ground, nor on each other’s footmarks, and how dignified was their walking in a single file that had invoked many wonderful images, besides the one described herein above, in the hearts and minds of wise poets and learned bards, has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 123.]

सरिता बन गिरि अवघट घाटा । पति पहिचानि देहिं बर बाटा ॥ ४ ॥

जहँ जहँ जाहिं देव रघुराया । करहिं मेघ तहँ तहँ नभ छाया ॥ ५ ॥

saritā bana giri avaghaṭa ghāṭā. pati pahicāni dēhiṁ bara bāṭā. 4.  
jaham̐ jaham̐ jāhiṁ dēva raghurāyā. karahiṁ mēgha taham̐ taham̐ nabha  
chāyā. 5.

Rivers and streams, forests and thickets, mountains and hills, as well as valleys and meadows—all of them recognized their Lord, and hence they did their best to give him the right of way and make his journey as comfortable as they possibly could<sup>1</sup>. (4)

Wherever and in whichever direction Lord Ram, who was the Lord God himself in a human form (*dēva raghurāyā*), went, the clouds extended their shade over him in all such places<sup>2</sup>. (5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The gods showered flowers to make a virtual soft carpet of petals on the ground over which Lord Ram and his two companions Sita and Laxman walked; the earth contributed her effort by making the soil soft and removing all thorns and stones from the path; the rivers and streams not only flowed with sweet and cool water so that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman could find refreshment, but they would also become shallow and their water calm if the need arose for the Lord and his two companions to cross them; the hills and mountains became charming to behold and highlighted the easy path to the other side; the forests were filled with trees laden with fruits and flowers, and all obstacles such as entangling creepers and thick roots of trees and all sorts of undergrowths were prevented from obstructing the Lord's movement.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.

<sup>2</sup>A narration that expresses a similar idea is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113. The clouds shaded the Lord from the heat of the sun.]

मिला असुर बिराध मग जाता । आवतहीं रघुबीर निपाता ॥ ६ ॥  
तुरतहिं रुचिर रूप तेहिं पावा । देखि दुखी निज धाम पठावा ॥ ७ ॥  
पुनि आए जहँ मुनि सरभंगा । सुंदर अनुज जानकी संग ॥ ८ ॥

milā asura birādha maga jātā. āvatahīm raghubīra nipātā. 6.  
turatahīm rucira rūpa tēhīm pāvā. dēkhi dukhī nija dhāma paṭhāvā. 7.  
puni ā'ē jaham' muni sarabhaṅgā. sundara anuja jānakī saṅgā. 8.

While wending his way through the forest, Lord Ram met the blood thirsty ogre named Viradha who was coming his way. The Lord slayed him immediately. (6)

The soul of Viradha instantly left the mortal body of an ogre and assumed a divine form that was charming, which was his original form before he had become a demon. Finding him sorrowful and sorry for all his misdeeds, Lord Ram sent him to his abode in the heaven.<sup>1</sup> (7)

Moving ahead on the path of the wild forest, Lord Ram, along with his wife Sita (*jānakī saṅgā*) and his charming younger brother Laxman (*sundara anuja*), arrived at a place where he met sage Sharbhanga (also pronounced as Sarbhanga)<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>By slaying Viradha, Lord Ram liberated his soul from the cage of the body that was like that of a flesh eating demon, thereby granting his soul deliverance.

The story of who the demon Viradha was, and his deliverance by Lord Ram has been narrated in quite detail in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 17-46.

According to this version, Viradha had a horrifying form. His mouth had sharp fang-like teeth; he had a dark and colossal body; his voice was so thunderous and chilling that it made those who hear him shudder in their flesh and their blood froze; he had a large trident resting on his left shoulder which had the dead bodies of many human beings spiked through and hung from it. At the time when Lord Ram saw him, he was munching away merrily on carcasses of many wild elephants, lions and bulls. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 18-19.}

After being killed by Lord Ram, Viradha himself told the Lord briefly about himself as follows: In his previous life Viradha was called 'Vidyadhar', literally one was an embodiment of Vidya, knowledge. Once upon a time he was cursed by sage Durvasa who had a reputation of having exceptionally bad temper, and getting upset at the least provocation, and then cursing his offender without a second thought. When Lord Ram killed Viradha's gross physical body, his soul was liberated from its trap. Viradha resumed his previous form of Vidyadhar and profoundly thanked Lord Ram for granting him liberation and deliverance. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 38.}

The story of Viradha has also been narrated in detail in Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto nos. 2-4.

According to this version, Viradha has himself told Lord Ram that his name was Viradha, and he was a son of a demon named 'Jaba', and his mother was 'Shatahradaa'. He had propitiated Lord Brahma (the creator) and had obtained boons that he won't be killed by any weapon, nor would they be able to cut any part of his body. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto no. 3, verse nos. 4-6.}

He was a savage as he used to roam around freely in the wild forest eating flesh of sages and hermits. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto no. 2, verse no. 13.}

After his death, Viradha told Lord Ram that in his previous life he was a Gandharva (a sort of a junior level god who are supposed to be musicians of heaven and have the duty to keep the heaven decorated and spruced up) named 'Tumburu'. He was so infatuated with an Apsara (beautiful and virgin damsels in heaven who were courted by Indra and other senior gods), named Rambha, that once he could not reach Kubera, the treasurer of the heaven, when summoned by the latter because of his dalliance with this Apsara. This infuriated Kuber who cursed the Gandharva to become an ogre. When he pleaded for mercy and forgiveness, Kuber gave him a respite by saying that when his demonic body would be killed by Lord Ram, a manifestation of the Supreme Being, he would be freed from the evil effects of the curse and come back to paradise. Hence, upon being slayed by Lord Ram, Viradha resumed his original form and went to heaven. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto no. 4, verse nos. 16-20.}

Although our Book 'Ram Charit Manas' does not give any hint as to why Lord Ram slayed Viradha except saying that the latter came in the Lord's path, but both Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas and Valmiki's Ramayana tell us that Viradha attacked Lord Ram and lunged forward to grab Sita at which the Lord was compelled to kill him. {Refer: (a) Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 8-9; (b) Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 30-34.}

The ferocious battle between Lord Ram and Viradha has been described in (a) Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto no. 3, verse nos. 10-26—to Canto 4, verse nos. 1-12; and (b) Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 27-34.

In all probability, Viradha and his likes, such as ‘Kabandha’\*1, who roamed about in the wilderness of the Dandak forest, were, according to the description we have of them of their physical characteristics, habits, nature and ferocity, monsters, savages, gorillas, ogres and fiends of different kinds. They were completely cut-off from civilization, fed on flesh and drank blood of animals and humans alike, and the wilderness was their natural habitat. They usually lived a solitary and independent life, unlike the other demons who were organized in groups that owed their allegiance to Ravana, the king of Lanka, and acted as his soldiers and spies posted in outposts on the mainland north of the island of Lanka\*2.

{\*1 = Like Viradha, we read about another such ogre named ‘Kabandha’ who also roamed around independently in the Dandak forest, feasting on flesh and blood of creatures. Like Viradha, he also was a Gandharva in his previous life, and had become a flesh eating savage due to sage Durbasa’s curse. He had attacked Lord Ram and was subsequently slayed by the Lord as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 33.

\*2 = Some examples of the other kinds of fierce ogres, whom we would call ‘demons’ in general terms, and who lived in groups and acted as outpost commanders of Ravana’s demon army as mentioned herein above, are (a) Marich and Subahu who led a detachment of demon army that had fought with Lord Ram and subsequently vanquished while the Lord and his younger brother Laxman were protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra (as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 210); and (b) Khar and Dushan who fought with Lord Ram and were subsequently slayed by the Lord (as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Doha no. 20).}

<sup>2</sup>Sage Sharbhanga lived in deep forest meditating on Lord Ram whom he knew to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He had his hermitage on the banks of river Godavari, and was a disciple of sage Gautam.

According to Valmiki’s Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto no. 4, verse nos. 20-21, it was the demon Viradha who, after leaving his ogre-like body and assuming a divine form, and before going to the heaven, had advised Lord Ram to proceed in the direction of where sage Sharbhanga lived.

After meeting and being blessed by Lord Ram, sage Sharbhanga left his mortal coil by burning it in the sacred fire lit by the virtue of the powers of his Tapa (penance; austerity) and went to heaven—apropos: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9; (b) Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Aranya Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-12; (c) Valmiki’s Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto no. 5, verse nos. 39-43.

There is one miraculous thing that one cannot miss, and it is that Viradha had never disturbed him though he lived in the same area of the forest where the demon too roamed around. As we have noted herein above, it was Viradha himself who had advised Lord Ram to go in the direction of Sharbhanga’s hermitage. So apparently, Viradha had great respect for sage Sharbhanga. This also shows how one is influenced in the present life by what he was in his previous life—for Viradha was a Gandharva in his previous life, and while cursing him to become a demon Kuber had also told him that his deliverance would be when Lord Ram kills him (refer: Valmiki’s Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto no. 4, verse nos. 16-20).



So, secretly Viradha had developed great respect for all those sages who were devotees of Lord Ram and worshipped the Lord. This is why he selectively spared all such great sages, and it included sages such as Sharbhanga and Agastya etc. who lived in the forest where Viradha wandered.]

दो०. देखि राम मुख पंकज मुनिबर लोचन भृंग ।  
सादर पान करत अति धन्य जन्म सरभंग ॥ ७ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi rāma mukha paṅkaja munibara lōcana bhr̥ṅga.  
sādara pāna karata ati dhan'ya janma sarabhaṅga. 7.

When sage Sharbhanga saw the lotus-like beautiful face of Lord Ram, he was so enthralled by the sight that his eyes remained riveted on the Lord as if a bee was hovering over the lotus flower with its mind completely lost in the thoughts of drinking the nectar that the flower contains.

Sage Sharbhanga's birth was indeed and without any doubt blessed, and he was worthy of praise and applause as he too, like the bee, remained blissfully engaged in deriving immense spiritual beatitude and peace by reverentially watching the divine beauty of Lord Ram's face. (Doha no. 7)

चौ०. कह मुनि सुनु रघुबीर कृपाला । संकर मानस राजमराला ॥ १ ॥  
जात रहेउँ बिरंचि के धामा । सुनेउँ श्रवन बन ऐहहिं रामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha muni sunu raghubīra kṛpālā. saṅkara mānasa rājamarālā. 1.  
jāta rahē'um' biran'ci kē dhāmā. sunē'um' śravana bana aihahiṁ rāmā. 2.

Sage Sharbhanga said to Lord Ram: 'Listen oh merciful Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the illustrious family of king Raghu (sunu raghubīra kṛpālā)! Thou art the majestic Swan (rājamarālā) that floats in the symbolic lake of Lord Shiva's heart (saṅkara mānasa). (1)

I was about to depart for the 'Brahma Loka' (the abode Brahma, the Creator) when I heard that Lord Ram was in the vicinity in this forest<sup>1</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, it is narrated that sage Sharbhanga had successfully done so severe Tapa (penance and austerity) that he had become eligible to go to heaven. Indra, the king of heaven, had come himself aboard a shining chariot to escort the sage to heaven. But when the sage heard that Lord Ram is in the vicinity, he decided to postpone his departure till he meets the Lord and is blessed by the latter—apropos: Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 28-30.

The question as to how Sharbhanga came to know that Lord Ram was somewhere in his vicinity has been answered as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 8 herein below.]

चितवत पंथ रहेउँ दिन राती । अब प्रभु देखि जुड़ानी छाती ॥ ३ ॥  
नाथ सकल साधन मैं हीना । कीन्ही कृपा जानि जन दीना ॥ ४ ॥

citavata pantha rahē'um̐ dina rātī. aba prabhu dēkhi jurānī chātī. 3.  
nātha sakala sādhana mair̐ hīnā. kīnhī kṛpā jāni jana dīnā. 4.

[So I decided to abandon my plans to ascend to the abode of Brahma, and—] I had been eagerly waiting for your arrival since the time I got this information (about you being in the vicinity), looking out on the path with keen eyes, day and night, to spot you as soon as you are coming my way.

Now, oh Lord, that I have seen you, my bosom is filled with exhilaration, and feel absolutely contented and fulfilled. (3)

On revered Lord (nātha)! I lack any kind of spiritual resources and religious merits that could have entitled me to have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have your divine sight and holy communion.

So therefore, without doubt, it has been made possible only out of your merciful and compassionate nature, for you have chosen to show your grace upon me as you felt I am your humble servant and deserve your kindness. (4)

सो कछु देव न मोहि निहोरा । निज पन राखेउ जन मन चोरा ॥ ५ ॥  
तब लगि रहहु दीन हित लागी । जब लगि मिलौ तुम्हहि तनु त्यागी ॥ ६ ॥

sō kachu dēva na mōhi nihōrā. nija pana rākhē'u jana mana cōrā. 5.  
taba lagi rahahu dīna hita lāgī. jaba lagi milaur̐ tumhahi tanu tyāgī. 6.

Oh Lord (dēva)! Thou havest not done anything especially for me; thou havest done me no favour.

Thou havest actually honoured thine own vows whereby thou art committed to give solace, succour, bliss, joy and deliverance to thine humble servants.

It is this exceptionally gracious nature of thee that hast made thou overwhelmingly endeared to thine devotees<sup>1</sup> so much so that the latter have literally lost their hearts to thee as if thou havest stolen them. (5)

Oh Lord, I prithee that thou wait for a while for the sake of this humble being (i.e. for my sake) till the moment I leave mine mortal coil (my gross body) and meet thee (in my original form known as the Atma, which is pure consciousness and my true self, that would be freed from the cage of this gross body of mine as soon as I abandon it so as to set it free and enable it to have a divine communion with you at a subtle, sublime and transcendental level of the Consciousness)<sup>2</sup>. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 208; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 314. These verses reiterate the very idea expressed by sage Sharbhanga as they tell us the reason why Lord Ram is so dear to his devotees.

<sup>2</sup>Sage Sharbhanga essentially prays to Lord Ram to wait for some time till he leaves his gross mortal body and meets the Lord in his divine form, i.e. as the Atma or the soul of a living being that is the latter's truthful identity. This 'Atma' is pure consciousness and eternal as opposed to the person's body which is gross and mortal. This would grant liberation to the soul of Sharbhanga from his gross body, and when he is thus blessed by Lord Ram he would attain deliverance from this mortal world as his soul would find eternal rest and peace.

How is this kind of death of sage Sharbhanga most desirable for a creature to have, and a rarity? It is because his soul would find deliverance, emancipation and salvation with Lord Ram standing to witness, to guard and ensure that these spiritual rewards are obtained by Sharbhanga without a hitch.

It is a rarest of rare kind of death for one to have, with Lord Ram, a manifested form of the Supreme Being, standing before the dying person to enable the latter to have the Lord's divine sight during his last moments as it enables the dying person to focus his mind on the Lord in a practical way and in physical terms; rarely would this happen to a dying person. This fact is endorsed at three other places in Ram Charit Manas—viz. (a) the death of Jatau, the vulture, as narrated in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 31; (b) the death of Sabari who too left her mortal coil like Sharbhanga has done now as narrated in Aranya Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 36; and later on (c) the death of Baali in Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 10.]

जोग जग्य जप तप ब्रत कीन्हा । प्रभु कहँ देइ भगति बर लीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥

एहि बिधि सर रचि मुनि सरभंगा । बैठे हृदयँ छाड़ि सब संग्गा ॥ ८ ॥

jōga jagya japa tapa brata kīnhā. prabhu kaham̐ dē'i bhagati bara līnhā. 7.  
ēhi bidhi sara raci muni sarabhaṅgā. baiṭhē hṛdayam̐ chāḍi saba saṅgā. 8.

Whatever merits and rewards that sage Sharbhanga had accumulated by the virtue of his lifelong practices of doing Yoga (meditation), Yagya (fire sacrifices), Japa (regular repetition of Mantras), Tapa (austerities and penances), Vrata (observation of vows) etc.—he offered all of them to Lord Ram, and in the bargain received from the Lord the divine blessing of having 'Bhakti' or devotion for the Lord<sup>1</sup>. (7)

In this way, after freeing his heart from all attachments with this gross world as well as his mortal body (hṛdayam̐ chāḍi saba saṅgā), the sage arranged a funeral pile himself near the bank of the river (Godavari where he lived; "sara raci"), and ascended it to sit down in a meditative posture on it (baiṭhē).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha nos. 129, 130 and 131 (as affirmed by sage Valmiki).

It is to be remarked here that 'Bhakti' is the best fruit for all spiritual endeavours, and Lord Ram has himself endorsed its importance and supremacy. This is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Doha no. 78; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 87; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 12-14 that precede Doha no. 122.]

दो०. सीता अनुज समेत प्रभु नील जलद तनु स्याम ।  
मम हियँ बसहु निरंतर सगुनरूप श्रीराम ॥ ८ ॥

dōhā.

sītā anuja samēta prabhu nīla jalada tanu syāma.  
mama hiyaṁ<sup>ṁ</sup> basahu nirantara sagunarūpa śrīrāma. 8.

Sitting atop his funeral pile, sage Sharbhanga made this final prayer to Lord Ram: ‘Oh Lord who has a dark-complexioned form like that of the rain-bearing clouds of the rainy season. I pray to you that you, along with Sita and your younger brother Laxman, should reside in my heart in your ‘Saguna form’ for all times to come.’<sup>1</sup> (Doha no. 8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>An exactly similar sort of boon has been sought by sage Sutikshan in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 11.

Later on, Jatau would pray in a similar way—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chanda line nos. 15-16 that precede Doha no. 32.

Primarily there are two forms of the Supreme Being—viz. one that is known as ‘Saguna’, and the other that is called ‘Nirguna’. As the terms themselves suggest, the ‘Saguna’ form of the Lord is one that has physical characteristics and attributes, is visible, thereby making this form easily understood and identifiable, bringing it within reach of the faculties of the mind of an ordinary person so much so that he can easily relate himself with the Lord. On the other hand, the ‘Nirguna’ form has no attributes; it is very abstract, invisible, and beyond the comprehension of the mind and intellect of an ordinary person who is not too highly enlightened and well versed in the essence of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism so as to relate himself with this kind of form of the Lord. The ‘Nirguna’ form of the Supreme Being is very difficult to focus and meditate on, as it concerns pure Cosmic Consciousness that is an extremely esoteric subject understood only by a few privileged experts and highly enlightened persons. It is definitely beyond the reach of the common man.

Hence, the ‘Saguna’ form of the Supreme Being, as represented by Lord Ram, is preferred by devotees as opposed to the Lord’s ‘Nirguna’ form.]

चौ०. अस कहि जोग अग्नि तनु जारा । राम कृपाँ बैकुंठ सिधारा ॥ १ ॥  
ताते मुनि हरि लीन न भयऊ । प्रथमहिं भेद भगति बर लयऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi jōga agini tanu jārā. rāma kṛpām<sup>ṁ</sup> baikuṇṭha sidhārā. 1.  
tātē muni hari līna na bhaya'ū. prathamahim<sup>ṁ</sup> bhēda bhagati bara laya'ū. 2.

After making his submission, sage Sharbhanga burnt his mortal body in the fire of Yoga (that is said to be self-ignited by friction created by rubbing the vital airs present inside one’s body, which process heats the airs to such an extent that the body begins to burn).

Then, by the grace of Lord Ram, the sage went to Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu (which is the primary form of Lord Ram)<sup>1</sup>. (1)

The reason why the sage's Atma (soul) did not merge with the Parmatma (the Supreme Soul) represented by Lord Ram to become one with and inseparable from the latter<sup>2</sup> was that the sage had sought the boon of 'Bhakti for the Saguna form of the Lord<sup>3</sup>' (instead of wishing attainment of Moksha that would have entitled his soul, which was primarily pure consciousness living in his gross body, at his individual level, to merge with its primary form known as the Cosmic Consciousness which is an all-pervading, universal, eternal and infinite supreme entity). (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu as is clear on different occasions—viz. Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 148 (as revealed before Manu and Satrupa); (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 192 (as revealed before mother Kaushalya); (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 10 (as revealed before sage Sutikshan).

<sup>2</sup>We have stunning as well as astonishing examples of this kind of supreme deliverance of the soul, known as the ultimate 'Moksha', whereby it leaves the gross body of a creature to merge with the Supreme Soul, here represented by Lord Ram, being attained by someone for whom we would least expect it to happen. One is the demon Kumbhakaran, the younger brother of Ravana, and the other is Ravana himself! {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 (Kumbhakaran); (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103 (Ravana).}

Now, the question is: why did these two great demons attain 'Moksha' whereby their soul found an eternal resting place by merging with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram, but sage Sharbhanga did not find this privilege?

The answer is given here itself: Sharbhanga wanted "Bhakti" and wished that Lord Ram's "Saguna" form should reside in his heart forever. On the other hand, Kumbhakaran and Ravana had no such wish, but still since they had faced the Lord, and had the honour of seeing his divine form from close quarters, besides thinking of him, albeit as an enemy, every moment while they were alive, they became entitled to a reward, and this was to grant their souls eternal rest and peace. This point has been clarified in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.

<sup>3</sup>Refer to: Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede it herein above.

In this context, there are other verses too that espouse a similar idea—viz. Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 64 (with reference to Sati); (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 112 (with reference to king Dasrath).

रिषि निकाय मुनिबर गति देखी । सुखी भए निज हृदयँ बिसेषी ॥ ३ ॥

अस्तुति करहिं सकल मुनि बृन्दा । जयति प्रनत हित करुना कंदा ॥ ४ ॥

riṣi nikāya munibara gati dēkhī. sukhī bha'e nija hṛdayam̃ bisēṣī. 3.  
astuti karahir̃ sakala muni bṛndā. jayati pranata hita karunā kandā. 4.

The community of sages and hermits who had gathered on the occasion<sup>1</sup> felt exceedingly glad and exhilarated when they observed the exalted destiny that sage Sharbhanga had achieved<sup>2</sup>. (3)

All the sages and pious souls who had gathered around the funeral pyre of sage Sharbhanga offered their prayers to Lord Ram, saying: ‘Hail the Lord and glory be to him for he always ensures the welfare of those who submit themselves before his divine majesty, which of course he is expected to do, because, truly, it is the Lord’s inherent nature to be merciful, compassionate and kind on others.’ (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We have read a short while ago that sage Sharbhanga has told Lord Ram that he was planning to go to the abode of the creator Brahma, but decided not to do so when he heard that the Lord was in the vicinity, in same forest where he lived—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8.

This clearly means that Sharbhanga was planning to leave this mortal world and ascend to heaven when he decided that all his spiritual pursuits and religious duties were complete, and that since all he had wished to achieve in this life had been successfully achieved by him, therefore it was the right time for him to leave this mortal world and die an honourable and voluntary death. He was certainly destined to go to heaven as a reward for his meritorious life that was spent in spiritual and religious observances. When this noble decision of his became known to others in the community of sages and hermits, they all gathered around him to bid him a warm farewell. Obviously some amongst these assembled sages and hermits, especially those who used to move from one part of the forest to another to visit other peers, or to escape the wrath of the demons and ogres who roamed around, must have surely known that Lord Ram has arrived in these parts of the forest. So they must have shared this information with sage Sharbhanga.

This probability satisfactorily answers two questions: one, how did sage Sharbhanga know that Lord Ram was in the vicinity; and two, how come sages and hermits had been present at the time Sharbhanga left his mortal body after meeting Lord Ram as mentioned in the present verse we are reading.

Valmiki’s Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-6 list the wide range of sages and hermits of different denominations, belonging to different categories, spiritual status, sects and lineages, who had gathered on this occasion.

<sup>2</sup>The assembled sages and hermit felt exceedingly glad to see the fate of sage Sharbhanga—i.e. the way he had died. He had assembled his own funeral pile, ascended it voluntarily, focused his mind on the Supreme Being, lit a self-ignited fire by the powers of Yoga, and then calmly and happily burnt his gross body cheerfully in this sacred fire as if he was making the ultimate sacrifice of offering himself as an oblation to the Fire God. The best part of this exercise was that it was witnessed by Lord Ram himself. What better and more privileged an end to one’s life journey in this gross mortal world can be then when he dies with the Supreme Being himself blessing him and ensuring that he gets deliverance. This is the reason why the sages and other pious souls, who had gathered around sage Sharbhanga’s funeral pyre, felt so glad and happy for the latter and his fate.]

पुनि रघुनाथ चले बन आगे । मुनिबर बृंद बिपुल सँग लागे ॥ ५ ॥

अस्थि समूह देखि रघुराया । पूछी मुनिन्ह लागि अति दाया ॥ ६ ॥

puni raghunātha calē bana āgē. munibara bṛnda bipula sam̐ga lāgē. 5.  
asthi samūha dēkhi raghurāyā. pūchī muninha lāgi ati dāyā. 6.

Once again (puni), Lord Ram (the exalted Lord of the illustrious family of king Raghu of Ayodhya; “raghunātha”) resumed his journey onwards into the (deeper and remoter) parts of the forest.

The large number of sages and other pious souls (who had collected at the site of sage Sharbhanga’s deliverance) accompanied the Lord on his onwards journey. (5)

At a certain place, the Lord saw a mound of human bones, which made the Lord feel great sorrow and have empathy for the sages, hermits and ascetics who lived in those parts of the forest (for the Lord could easily guess that these bones were of these pious souls who were killed and devoured by the ogres and demons infesting that part of the forest).

The Lord then enquired about the heap of bones from the sages and other pious souls who were accompanying him. (6)

जानतहूँ पूछिअ कस स्वामी । सबदरसी तुम्ह अंतरजामी ॥ ७ ॥

निसिचर निकर सकल मुनि खाए । सुनि रघुबीर नयन जल छाए ॥ ८ ॥

jānatahūṁ pūchi'a kasa svāmī. sabadarasī tumha antarajāmī. 7.  
niscara nikara sakala muni khā'ē. suni raghubīra nayana jala chā'ē. 8.

They replied: ‘Oh Lord, say, thou knowest everything, then why art thou asking us about these bones, for thou art able to see and know everything even without being told about them (sabadarasī tumha). There is no need for thee to ask us about anything, for thou art privy to the inner thoughts and feelings of every living being (tumha antarajāmī)<sup>1</sup>? (7)

[Lord, say, doth thou wot naught to whom these bones belong, and how come so many of these bones are heaped here? Sure thou knowest all about it. But still, since it’s thy wish that we tell thee about this pile, then surely we shalt obey thee.]

This pile of bones belong to the sages, hermits, ascetics and other such pious souls who had been killed and devoured by the demons roaming here.’

Tears (of grief, sorrow, pity and empathy) filled the eyes of Lord Ram, the brave Lord of king Raghu’s line (raghubīra)<sup>2</sup>, when he heard about the bones and the unfortunate fate of those to whom these belonged. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The sages mean to say that Lord Ram already knows everything about this horrifying sight of a pile of bones, to whom they belonged, and how come they are heaped here in a mound. Then, why should the Lord ask them about it? The sages were showing courtesy to Lord Ram, and at the same time politely asking him to protect them from the horrors of the demons and ogres who were responsible for these bones.

<sup>2</sup>The use of the word “raghubīra”, the ‘brave Lord of Raghu’s line of kings of Ayodhya’, is very significant and remarkable here. It clearly implies that this repulsive sight of human bones heaped in a mound would be sufficient to provoke Lord Ram and ignite his anger against the tormentors of sages and other pious souls so much that the ‘brave Lord’ would decide to teach these rascals a lesson. The sight once again reminded Lord Ram about the basic purpose of his coming to earth from heaven in the form of a human being, which was to eliminate the scourge of the cruel demons and free the world from their horrors. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Doha no. 185; (iii) Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187.}

The word “raghubīra” means that the Lord is ‘capable, strong, brave and powerful enough’ to tackle this menace. The sight of human bones would not scare him, it would not terrorise him so that he abandons his plans to go deeper into the denser and remoter parts of the wilderness, but rather turn back on his heels out of fear of the demons and ogres, but it would instead stoke his indignation and remind him of the reputation of bravery for which his great family of kings of Ayodhya was well-known, that as the Lord of the realm it was his duty and responsibility to extend support and protection to the sages and others who were being so greatly tormented by cruel creatures, but were unable to defend themselves. This resolve of Lord Ram will be clear in the very next verse herein below.]

दो०. निसिचर हीन करउँ महि भुज उठाइ पन कीन्ह ।

सकल मुनिन्ह के आश्रमन्हि जाइ जाइ सुख दीन्ह ॥ ९ ॥

dōhā.

nisicara hīna kara'um̐ mahi bhuja uṭhā'i pana kīnha.

sakala muninha kē āśramanhi jā'i jā'i sukha dīnha. 9.

Lord Ram was so extremely disturbed and emotionally moved (by the sight of bones and what he heard about them) that he raised his arms to make a formal vow: ‘I shall free the earth from the scourge of the demons!’

After making this formal declaration, the kind Lord went ahead with his journey, and visited the hermitages of all the sages, hermits and ascetics who lived around the area (including those who were accompanying him after sage Sharbhanga’s deliverance), thereby giving them all immense joy (as well as blessing them and promising them his support in freeing them from future suffering at the hands of ogres and demons)<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 9)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also to: Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Aranya Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 19-24. We read here that after making a proclamation that he would eliminate the scourge of the cruel demons and ogres who had been tormenting the sages, hermits and other pious and innocent souls, Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, had visited the hermitages of all the sages and hermits who lived in that part of the forest. They offered the Lord their worship and warm hospitality. In this happy way, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had spent some years in that forest before moving on to their next destination.]



चौ०. मुनि अगस्ति कर सिष्य सुजाना । नाम सुतीछन रति भगवाना ॥ १ ॥

मन क्रम बचन राम पद सेवक । सपनेहु आन भरोस न देवक ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

muni agasti kara siṣya sujānā. nāma sutīchana rati bhagavānā. 1.

mana krama bacana rāma pada sēvaka. sapanēhu āna bharōsa na dēvaka. 2.

There was a great and learned (enlightened, self-realised, wise and simple-and-pure hearted—“sujānā”) sage named ‘Sutikshan’<sup>1</sup>. He was a disciple of another great sage named Agastya.

Sutikshan was fully devoted to the Lord God, and he worshipped the Lord with full dedication. (1)

He worshipped Lord Ram and was a dedicated servant (follower) of the Lord’s holy feet involving all aspects of his being— such as in all his emotions and thoughts (having their seat in his ‘Mana’, i.e. his heart and mind), in all his deeds and actions, and in all his words, so much so that he treated no one else as his revered Lord to whom he would offer his worship except Lord Ram, and similarly he relied solely on Lord Ram for fulfillment of all his spiritual and worldly needs (such as attainment of deliverance, emancipation, salvation, peace, bliss and happiness).

[To wit, sage Sutikshan always remembered Lord Ram; the Lord was in his thoughts and emotions. Whatever the sage did was done as a service to Lord Ram; he would offer all his actions to the Lord; he would not seek any credit or merit for anything he did; he dedicated all his spiritual and religious practices to Lord Ram. He would always sing the glories of the Lord; he would speak of Lord Ram and of no one else; Lord Ram’s holy name was always on his tongue.] (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The name of this great sage, i.e. Sutikshan or “sutīchana”, has two components—viz. ‘Su’ and ‘Tikshna’. “Su” means something that is auspicious, noble and good; and “Tikshna” means something that is sharp and fine.

Obviously the combination of these two words means that this sage was very wise and clear in his mind about what he was doing, to whom he was offering his worship, who was his Lord God, and what his spiritual destination was. For him, Lord Ram was the only aim of all his spiritual and religious pursuits, and he was firm in this conviction as is made clear in verse no. 2 herein above.]

प्रभु आगवनु श्रवन सुनि पावा । करत मनोरथ आतुर धावा ॥ ३ ॥

हे बिधि दीनबंधु रघुराया । मो से सठ पर करिहिं दाय ॥ ४ ॥

prabhu āgavanu śravana suni pāvā. karata manōratha ātura dhāvā. 3.

hē bidhi dīnabandhu raghurāyā. mō sē saṭha para karihahim dāyā. 4.

No sooner he heard of Lord Ram’s coming his way<sup>1</sup>, but he became exceedingly excited and ran eagerly forward to meet the Lord, filled with countless fanciful but auspicious ideas, even as he was overwhelmed with emotions that literally mesmerized his senses. (3)

Sage Sutikshan began wondering in astonishment: ‘Oh Creator (hē bidhi)! What a great good fortune and surprise it is for me that Lord Ram (the great Lord of the Raghus—“raghurāyā”), who is a great friend of those who are lowly and distressed (dīnabandhu), would be so kind, compassionate and merciful that he will show mercy upon me who am so dull and stupid! [I am truly amazed and stunned at my good luck.] (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram’s meeting with sage Sutikshan has also been narrated in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Aranya Kand, Canto 52, verse nos. 25-26, but here the narrative is very brief, curt, pithy and bland, as compared to the colourful and vivid way Tulsidas has described this meeting between Lord Ram and Sutikshan here.

Tulsidas’ narrative is remarkable in the sense that it is especially imbued with the sweetness of the virtue of devotion and love for Lord God that grants a devotee the privilege of having an experience of supreme bliss and ecstasy as will be evident to us in the narrative that follows herein below.]

सहित अनुज मोहि राम गोसाईं । मिलिहहिं निज सेवक की नाई ॥ ५ ॥  
मोरे जियँ भरोस दृढ़ नाहीं । भगति बिरति न ग्यान मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sahita anuja mōhi rāma gōsā’īm. milihahim nija sēvaka kī nā’īm. 5.  
mōrē jiyam̐ bharōsa dṛṛha nāhīm. bhagati birati na gyāna mana māhīm. 6.

[What a wonder that—] The revered Lord Ram will meet me alongside his younger brother (Laxman) as if I was the Lord’s dedicated servant.

[To wit, Lord Ram and Laxman will meet me as if they were meeting their own servant after a long-long time. The Lord and Laxman would instantly recognize that I am the Lord’s servant, and hence they would welcome me warmly and affectionately just like a master receives his favourite servant.] (5)

[Further expressing his amazement at his good luck, Sutikshan says—] It is all the more astonishing because I can’t claim to have steady faith in the Lord, or that my reliance on the Lord is firm and unshakable.

Further, my Mana (mind and heart) lacks the glorious virtues of Bhakti (devotion), Vairagya (renunciation and detachment from this material world), and Gyan (gnosis; knowledge of the scriptures and their metaphysical principles).

[To wit, since I lack these virtues that would have otherwise qualified me to have the privilege of a warm reception by Lord Ram, is it really true that the Lord would recognize me and warmly meet me just because I am his humblest servant? I wonder.]

नहिं सतसंग जोग जप जागा । नहिं दृढ़ चरन कमल अनुरागा ॥ ७ ॥  
एक बानि करुनानिधान की । सो प्रिय जाकें गति न आन की ॥ ८ ॥

nahim̐ satasaṅga jōga japa jāgā. nahim̐ dr̥ṣṭva carana kamala anurāgā. 7.  
ēka bāni karunānidhāna kī. sō priya jākēm̐ gati na āna kī. 8.

I haven't had sufficient communion with saints, nor have I done sufficient Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of the Lord's holy name) and Yagya (fire sacrifices), and neither can I claim to have strong and abiding affection in the holy lotus like feet of Lord Ram. (7)

But however, I rely on one statement or declaration of Lord Ram, who is an abode of mercy and compassion (karunānidhāna)—and it is that all those who have no other support in this world, and who rely on no one else except the Lord for their solace and succour (jākēm̐ gati na āna kī), are very dear to him (sō priya)<sup>1</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkidha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 3 (said to Hanuman); (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44 (said to Hanuman); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 48 (said to Vibhishan); (c) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 86—to Doha no. 87 (said to sage Kaagbhusund).]

होइहैं सुफल आजु मम लोचन । देखि बदन पंकज भव मोचन ॥ ९ ॥  
निर्भर प्रेम मगन मुनि ग्यानी । कहि न जाइ सो दसा भवानी ॥ १० ॥

hō'ihaim̐ suphala āju mama lōcana. dēkhi badana paṅkaja bhava mōcana. 9.  
nirbhara prēma magana muni gyānī. kahi na jā'i sō dasā bhavānī. 10.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, today mine eyes will get their due rewards when I see the Lord Ram's divine and holy form, and his lotus-like face, a sight that can help a living being cross the ocean symbolized by this mortal world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death, along with their horrible and agonizing consequences.

[To wit, today I will find abiding peace and solace for my soul. In spite of all my shortcomings, today I will have the honour of viewing Lord Ram's holy and divine form which grants liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to a creature.] (9)

[Lord Shiva, who was narrating the story to his consort Uma, said—] 'Oh Bhavani! In this aforesaid way, the enlightened and wise sage Sutikshan was overwhelmed with love and affection for Lord Ram. His ecstatic condition and the exhilaration that he experienced during those moments were so profound and sublime that they cannot be described in words (as words have great limitations of their own, and they can't do justice to a state of existence that transcends the gross and relates to the sublime). (10)

दिसि अरु बिदिसि पंथ नहिं सूझा । को मैं चलेउँ कहाँ नहिं बूझा ॥ ११ ॥  
कबहुँक फिरि पाछें पुनि जाई । कबहुँक नृत्य करइ गुन गाई ॥ १२ ॥

disi aru bidisi pantha nahim sūjhā. kō mair̥ calē'um̥ kahām̥ nahim būjhā. 11.  
kabahum̥ka phiri pāchēm̥ puni jā'ī. kabahum̥ka nr̥tya kara'ī guna gā'ī. 12.

[The following verses outline the ecstatic condition of sage Sutikshan, and describe the sublimity of spiritual blessedness that he experienced during those moments that had made him virtually lose awareness of his own body as well as of his surroundings.]

As he walked forward (to meet Lord Ram) in a trance, the sage did not know what time of the day it was, nor did he know the direction where he was headed, or of the path on which he walked.

He did not know who he was (i.e. he forgot who he was, what his name was), and where he was going. (11)

Sometimes he reversed his walk and went back, and at other times he would move forward. Sometimes he would start dancing in merriment and begin to sing (the glories of Lord Ram). (12)

अबिरल प्रेम भगति मुनि पाई । प्रभु देखैं तरु ओट लुकाई ॥ १३ ॥  
अतिसय प्रीति देखि रघुबीरा । प्रगटे हृदयँ हरन भव भीरा ॥ १४ ॥

abirala prēma bhagati muni pā'ī. prabhu dēkhaim̥ taru ōṭa lukā'ī. 13.  
atisaya prīti dēkhi raghubīrā. pragaṭē hr̥dayam̥ harana bhava bhīrā. 14.

The exalted sage had attained that rare state of spiritual blessedness that is attained by someone who has achieved steady, purest and the highest levels of love and affection for the Lord.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram had come very close, but when he observed that the sage was enjoying the fruits of bliss and ecstasy, the Lord did not want to disturb the sage, and so he concealed himself behind a tree to let the sage enjoy himself. (13)

After sometimes, when Lord Ram (raghubīrā) perceived that the emotions of love and affection in the sage's heart had become exceptionally profound and were bursting at the seams, the Lord who removes the fear of this mortal world from the heart of his devotees (harana bhava bhīrā) revealed his divine form in the sage's heart<sup>1</sup>. (14)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>What a wonderful idea is expressed here indeed. The pangs of pain and longing that one feels in one's heart due to excess of love and affection for someone whom one loves intensely will become unbearable after sometime. When Lord Ram realized that sage Sutikshan would become mad and lose his mind if he continued in his present state of ecstasy and trance, the Lord decided to fulfill the sage's desire by revealing his divine form in the latter's heart.

We must note here that till this moment sage Sutikshan had not seen Lord Ram in physical terms; he had heard of the Lord, but he had not actually seen him personally. He could only imagine how the Lord looked, but that was all. So now Lord Ram decided to make the sage see the Lord at a subtle plane in his heart.

There is a great message here—and it is that it is not necessary that a true devotee should know how the Lord looks like, or be acquainted with the Lord's divine form, that he is an expert in the knowledge of the scriptures that describe who the Lord is and how he looks like, but at the opportune time the Lord would himself bless his devotee with a vision of his holy Self. That would be the moment of 'Revelation'!]

मुनि मग माझ अचल होइ बैसा । पुलक सरीर पनस फल जैसा ॥ १५ ॥  
तब रघुनाथ निकट चलि आए । देखि दसा निज जन मन भाए ॥ १६ ॥

muni maga mājha acala hō'i baisā. pulaka sarīra panasa phala jaisā. 15.  
taba raghunātha nikaṭa cali ā'ē. dēkhi dasā nija jana mana bhā'ē. 16.

Stunned by this revelation, the blessed sage Sutikshan sat motionless in the middle of the path, his body thrilled and his hairs bristling just like the jackfruit (panasa phala) that has its tendrils (little hair like structures) standing on their end over its rind (outer surface). (15)

When the sage was thus lost in profound ecstasy and sat motionless in a trance-like state on the ground in the middle of the forest path, Lord Ram quietly went near him.

When the Lord observed the ecstatic emotional condition of the sage, who was the Lord's devotee, he (Lord Ram) felt very glad in his heart<sup>1</sup>. (16)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram loves his devotees more than anybody else, and the Lord has himself said so in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 16.

Hence, when the Lord realized how much love sage Sutikshan had for him, the depth and the purity of this love that was unmatched, it is but natural that Lord Ram would be very delighted, and that he would spontaneously bless sage Sutikshan abundantly.]

मुनिहि राम बहु भाँति जगावा । जाग न ध्यानजनित सुख पावा ॥ १७ ॥  
भूप रूप तब राम दुरावा । हृदयँ चतुर्भुज रूप देखावा ॥ १८ ॥

munihi rāma bahu bhāmṭi jagāvā. jāga na dhyānajanita sukha pāvā. 17.  
bhūpa rūpa taba rāma durāvā. hṛdayam' caturbhuja rūpa dēkhāvā. 18.

Lord Ram tried to wake up sage Sutikshan from his trance by adopting many means, but the sage was so deeply engrossed in enjoying the ecstasy, bliss and tranquility that he got by meditating on the divine form of Lord Ram which revealed in his heart<sup>1</sup> that he was completely oblivious of all external stimuli, and was immune to be affected by them.

[To wit, no matter how much Lord Ram tried to wake sage Sutikshan from his dream-like state of trance, but the sage remained motionless and lost in his thoughts. So profound was his ecstasy and the sense of bliss which he was enjoying at that time that no external stimuli affected or disturbed him in the least.] (17)

Finding no other way to wake up the sage, Lord Ram decided to momentarily remove his divine form of a king (i.e. the form of a human being) from the sage's heart, and replace it with the vision of the Lord's heavenly form that has four arms (which is the form of Lord Vishnu).

[When Lord Ram failed to break the trance of sage Sutikshan, the Lord devised a trick that finally worked. He removed his own image of a human being known as Lord Ram, who, however, was actually a manifestation of the Supreme Being himself, and replaced it with another image that was also that of the Lord but pertained to his primary and heavenly form that had four arms. This latter vision was of Lord Vishnu<sup>2</sup> who had come down to earth as a human being known by the name of Lord Ram to fulfill his promise made to Manu and Satrupa<sup>3</sup>, as well as to the gods, mother earth and sages in some ancient time<sup>4</sup>. This sudden change of vision came as a shock to sage Sutikshan, and he was jolted out of his dream-like state that transcended the gross physical world, into a wakeful state of consciousness that related to this gross physical world.] (18)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer to Chaupai line no. 14 herein above.

<sup>2</sup>We have read earlier that at the time when Lord Ram was born, he had first shown his heavenly form of Lord Vishnu, who has 'four arms', to his mother Kaushalya, but upon her request the Lord assumed the form of a human child who has only 'two arms'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 192 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 and 13-15 that precede it.

This clearly establishes a direct link between the form of the Supreme Lord as a prince of Ayodhya by the name of 'Lord Ram', and the Lord's cosmic form known as 'Lord Vishnu' that has four arms.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 220 where we read that amongst the three Gods of the Trinity, it is Lord Vishnu who has 'four arms'.

<sup>3</sup>This story of Manu and Satrupa is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 152.

<sup>4</sup>This episode is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187.]

मुनि अकुलाइ उठा तब कैसें । बिकल हीन मनि फनि बर जैसें ॥ १९ ॥  
आगें देखि राम तन स्यामा । सीता अनुज सहित सुख धामा ॥ २० ॥

muni akulā'i uṭhā taba kaisēm. bikala hīna mani phani bara jaisēm. 19.  
āgēm dēkhi rāma tana syāmā. sītā anuja sahita sukha dhāmā. 20.

The sage was very agitated with this sudden jolt that ended his state of profound bliss and ecstasy just like the case of a serpent who suddenly finds that its 'Mani' has been robbed from it<sup>1</sup>. (19)

No sooner sage Sutikshan woke up into the physical world, but he was equally astonished and stunned to see a miraculous sight in front of him—i.e. that of Lord Ram, who had a dark complexion, standing before him. The Lord, who was an abode or a personified form of the virtues of joy and bliss, was accompanied by Sita and his younger brother Laxman. (20)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>According to ancient belief, there is a species of serpents who have a luminescent sac on their hoods. This sac is a protuberance or a tumor type of outgrowth on the skin that is transparent and is filled with some luminescent secretion that oozes out from the cells of the skin of the serpent, and then collects in this sac. When the reptiles ventures out in the dark of the night to forage for food and search for its prey, the diffused light emanating from this sac illuminates the surrounding area, enabling the snake to see what it is seeking. Without this self-illuminated sac, the serpent won't be able to see anything, and consequently die of hunger.

The sac, with the luminescent secretion that it contains, is shaped like a gem that glows in the dark. Since it is very rare and difficult to find, it has great monetary value in the market, and is therefore much sought after by connoisseurs of rare things found in nature, as well as by collectors of antiquities and such unique things. So, this 'Mani' of the serpent is stolen by poachers who lay a trap. They place some bait which attracts the serpent who has such a sac, and while the poor creature is diverted elsewhere, they either kill it outright or simply hold the serpent down on the ground by some heavy thing and remove the sac from its hood by scooping it out with the help of a knife or a scalpel.

After losing this gem, the serpent becomes virtually blind, for it is the most precious thing for the poor creature. So the serpent becomes highly agitated and regretful at this loss. The unfortunate creature expresses its sorrows by repeatedly dashing its hood on the ground or some stone or any other hard thing nearby, till it bleeds to its death.

Reference to this particular type of serpent and the agony that he feels when someone steals the Mani on his hood as been made by Tulsidas elsewhere also while describing the extreme state of distress and sorrows suffered by a person or animal who is forced to part with, or is robbed of something that is most dear to one's heart. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33 (king Dasrath at the time of Kaikeyi's tantrums); (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 143 (horses of the chariot after they were forced to return after dropping Lord Ram on the path to the forest); (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154 (king Dasrath, just before his death).]

परेउ लकुट इव चरनहि लागी । प्रेम मगन मुनिबर बड़भागी ॥ २१ ॥

भुज बिसाल गहि लिए उठाई । परम प्रीति राखे उर लाई ॥ २२ ॥

parē'u lakuṭa iva carananhi lāgī. prēma magana munibara barābhāgī. 21.  
bhuja bisāla gahi li'ē uṭhā'ī. parama prīti rākhē ura lā'ī. 22.

This sight (of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman standing before him in flesh and blood, instead of merely seen as a divine vision) filled the sage with another bout of ecstasy and bliss so much so that, overwhelmed with emotions and stunned at this surprise of

Lord's personal appearance before him, the exalted sage Sutikshan fell down like a log at the holy feet of Lord Ram, and grasped the Lord's feet<sup>1</sup>.

The sage was exceptionally blessed and privileged, and this rare opportunity (of personally meeting Lord Ram) made him overwhelmed with emotions of love and affection for the Lord.

[To wit, these emotions swept sage Sutikshan off his feet and carried him aloft like the huge wave during a tide in an ocean that sweeps a person away and draws him deeper into the fold of the fathomless ocean.] (21)

Lord Ram reciprocated the sage's emotions by extending his long arms to lift the prostrated sage, and then clasping the latter to his bosom most affectionately and respectfully. (22)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are other instances where we see the same kind of expression of joy and ecstasy by a devotee when he or she meets Lord Ram. For example, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 211 (Ahilya); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 34 (Sabari); (c) Kishkindha Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3 (Hanuman); (d) Sundar Kand, (iv) Doha no. 32 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 4 that follows it (Hanuman).]

मुनिहि मिलत अस सोह कृपाला । कनक तरुहि जनु भेंट तमाला ॥ २३ ॥  
राम बदन बिलोक मुनि ठाढ़ा । मानहुँ चित्र माझ लिखि काढ़ा ॥ २४ ॥

munihi milata asa sōha kṛpālā. kanaka taruhi janu bhēṇṭa tamālā. 23.  
rāma badanu bilōka muni ṭhārḥā. mānahum' citra mājha likhi kāṛhā. 24.

The merciful, kind and gracious Lord Ram looked so adorable while meeting sage Sutikshan that the pair resembled a sight of a tree with a fair bark (literally, a tree with a golden hue) was meeting another tree that had a dark exterior (literally the Tamal tree—i.e. the black catechu plant)<sup>1</sup>. (23)

As sage Sutikshan gazed at the form of Lord Ram, he stood standstill as if mesmerized; he was completely motionless as if cast in the center of a portrait or picture<sup>2</sup>. (24)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In this metaphor, Lord Ram is likened to the black Tamal tree because he had a dark complexion, while sage Sutikshan is compared to the tree with a fair bark as he stood in sharp contrast against the colour of Lord Ram's body. Lord Ram was dark, while sage Sutikshan was fair.

<sup>2</sup>The imagery is magnificent here. The frame of the picture has the forest in the background, and in the foreground stands Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman. Sage Sutikshan occupies a centre-stage in this picture. The moments of sage Sutikshan gazing steadily at Lord Ram, and the Lord too looking affectionately at him, with Sita and Laxman standing at ease on the side, was forever cast as an immortal picture symbolized by the poet's memory. It was the sage who was the hero of the occasion.

This is what is meant here in the phrase “citra mājha likhi kāṛhā” –i.e. cast



this memory forever in the core of the heart of the poet, with the image of sage Sutikshan standing motionless before Lord Ram in the center of the frame, even as the Lord, Sita and Laxman looked at him affectionately from where they stood, and the beauty of the surrounding forest forming the charming general background to complete the picture.]

दो०. तब मुनि हृदयँ धीर धरि गहि पद बारहिं बार ।  
निज आश्रम प्रभु आनि करि पूजा बिबिध प्रकार ॥ १० ॥

dōhā.

taba muni hr̥dayam̐ dhīra dhari gahi pada bārahim̐ bāra.  
nija āśrama prabhu āni kari pūjā bibidha prakāra. 10.

By-and-by, sage Sutikshan managed to calm down the tumult in his heart and found his peace<sup>1</sup>. He repeatedly clasped the feet of Lord Ram to pay his obeisance to the Lord.

Then, he escorted the Lord into his hermitage where the sage worshipped him in different ways. (Doha no. 10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We have read in the episode of Ahilya that after being overwhelmed with surging waves of emotions of affection that had initially swept her off her feet, she had calmed down in her heart and gathered her wits together to pray to Lord Ram and say thanks to him for delivering her from the cursed life as a stone, as well as for granting her the reward of devotion—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 211.

Similarly, after the initial emotional storm and the euphoria of meeting Lord Ram had passed away and sage Sutikshan calmed down, he offered his obeisance to the Lord and affectionately escorted the latter to his hermitage where he once again offered worship to Lord Ram.]

चौ०. कह मुनि प्रभु सुनु बिनती मोरी । अस्तुति करौं कवन बिधि तोरी ॥ १ ॥  
महिमा अमित मोरि मति थोरी । रबि सन्मुख खद्योत अँजोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha muni prabhu sunu binatī mōrī. astuti karaun̐ kavana bidhi tōrī. 1.  
mahimā amita mōri mati thōrī. rabi sanmukha khadyōta am̐jōrī. 2.

Sage Sutikshan (a disciple of sage Agastya) prayed to Lord Ram as follows: ‘Oh Lord! Please hear my prayer. How am I to sing your praises and sufficiently express myself (because neither am I competent enough to do so, nor would whatever I may say be apt enough to sufficiently extol your glories with limitations that are inherent in the spoken word)? (1)

Your glories are immeasurable and your majesty is supreme, whilst my intellect and comprehension has severe limitations, and scant is likewise my wit. To draw a parallel, my abilities as far as extolling your glories and praising your majesty are like

a fire-fly when compared to the brightness of the sun! [So, say, how can I praise you, how can I sing your glories, and how am I to extol your virtues just like the fire-fly that cannot compare its brightness with that of the sun?] (2)

श्याम तामरस दाम शरीरं । जटा मुकुट परिधन मुनिचीरं ॥ ३ ॥  
पाणि चाप शर कटि तूणीरं । नौमि निरंतर श्रीरघुवीरं ॥ ४ ॥

śyāma tamarasa dāma śarīraṁ. jaṭā mukuṭa paridhana municīraṁ. 3.  
pāṇi cāpa śara kaṭi tūṇīraṁ. naumi nirantara śrīraghuvīraṁ. 4.

Your divine form is dark like a garland or string of blue lotuses. You wear a crown of matted hairs on your head, and attired in clothes that are like those of hermits. (3)

Oh Lord Raghubir (śrīraghuvīraṁ: the brave Lord of the line of king Raghu; Lord Ram)! You hold a bow and an arrow in your hands, and have a quiver tied to your waist. (4)

मोह विपिन घन दहन कृशानुः । संत सरोरुह कानन भानुः ॥ ५ ॥  
निशिचर करि वरूथ मृगराजः । त्रातु सदा नो भव खग बाजः ॥ ६ ॥

mōha vipina ghana dahana kṛśānuḥ. santa sarōruha kānana bhānuḥ. 5.  
niśicara kari varūtha mṛgarājaḥ. trātu sadā nō bhava khaga bājaḥ. 6.

You are like the fire that burns or destroys the wild forest representing Moha (worldly delusions; attachments and infatuations; indulgences and temptations).

You are like the sun to make the garden of lotuses representing sages, seers and hermits bloom and feel cheerful.

[The lotus flower opens its petals in the day when the sun is seen in the sky. In this analogy, the exalted sages, saints, seers and hermits feel exhilarated and delighted when they remember Lord Ram and meditate upon him.] (5)

For the hordes of elephants representing demons and other evil ones, you are verily like the lion.

[Though the elephant is larger in size and stronger physically than the lion, the latter is easily able to overcome and kill the former. Likewise, Lord Ram is easily able to subdue and vanquish the scourge of the demons despite their being superior in numbers, size of the body, physical powers and strength.]

Similarly, you are like the hawk when it comes to killing (or eliminating) the bird symbolising 'Bhava' (the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world).

[To wit, you provide your devotees the boon of getting freedom from the cycle of transmigration.] (6)

अरुण नयन राजीव सुवेशं । सीता नयन चकोर निशेशं ॥ ७ ॥  
हर हृदि मानस बाल मरालं । नौमि राम उर बाहु विशालं ॥ ८ ॥

aruṇa nayana rājīva suvēśaṁ. sītā nayana cakōra niśēśaṁ. 7.  
hara hr̥di mānasa bāla marālaṁ. naumi rāma ura bāhu viśālaṁ. 8.

You have eyes that are like the pink (or red-hued) lotus flower, and your general visage and appearance, your divine form, is magnificent and charming.

You are like the moon for the bird called ‘Chakor’ that represent the eyes of Sita.

[The ‘Chakor’ bird is enamoured of the moon, and when the latter rises in the sky, the bird fixes its gaze on it so much so that it becomes oblivious of everything else and follows the course of the moon across the sky by tilting its head accordingly. Likewise, Sita too loves Lord Ram very much and keeps the Lord within her sight.] (7)

In the heart of Shiva which is like the lake known as ‘Mansarovar’, you are like a young Swan that floats majestically on this lake of crystal clear water.

[This lake is located in the upper reaches of the Himalayan Mountain range, near Mt. Kailash, the mythological abode of Lord Shiva. The lake has many a Swans floating on its crystal clear water. In this analogy, Lord Shiva’s heart is compared to this lake because it is pure, pious, holy and uncorrupt. Shiva always remembers Lord Ram, meditates upon the latter and reveres him as his deity.]

Oh Lord Ram, I bow most reverentially before you (naumi rāma). You have a broad chest and long arms (i.e. the Lord is hugely magnanimous and compassionate in heart, and is always ready to lend his helping hand to him who needs it). (8)

संशय सर्प ग्रसन उरगादः । शमन सुकर्कश तर्क विषादः ॥ ९ ॥

भव भंजन रंजन सुर यूथः । त्रातु सदा नो कृपा वरूथः ॥ १० ॥

sanśaya sarpa grasana uragādaḥ. śamana sukarkaśa tarka viṣādaḥ. 9.  
bhava bhanjana ranjana sura yūthaḥ. trātu sadā nō kṛpā varūthaḥ. 10.

He (Lord Ram) is like the legendary bird known as Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu; the divine Eagle) when it comes to eliminating doubts and confusions which are like snakes that are easily devoured by the former.

[Garud is a sworn enemy of serpents; it swoops down on them and gobbles them up. In this analogy it is meant that Lord Ram can remove all worldly delusions, doubts and confusions if one seeks his shelter just like the case of Garud devouring all snakes without any effort.]

He can destroy the gravest of grief and despair that arises out of angry quarrels and heated disputes.

[To wit, if one faces this situation, then he can calm down and gain peace of mind and heart if he remembers the Lord.] (9)

He can rupture or break the endless cycle of transmigration, and provides joy and delight to the community of Gods.

Let that treasury of kindness, grace, mercy and compassion be benevolent and gracious upon us! (10)

निर्गुण सगुण विषम सम रूपं । ज्ञान गिरा गोतीतमनूपं ॥ ११ ॥  
 अमलमखिलमनवद्यमपारं । नौमि राम भंजन महि भारं ॥ १२ ॥

nirguṇa saguṇa viṣama sama rūpaṁ. jñāna girā gōtītamanūpaṁ. 11.  
 amalamakhilamanavadyamapāraṁ. naumi rāma bhañjana mahi bhāraṁ. 12.

The Lord is unique, matchless, and most mysterious in many respects. For instance, he is both ‘Nirguna’ (without attributes and forms) as well as ‘Saguna’ (one who has a distinct physical form and characteristics)<sup>1</sup>, and he is variable and divergent (viṣama) as well as uniform, steady and unchangeable (sama)<sup>2</sup>.

He is unique and unparalleled; he is beyond the reach of Gyan (knowledge and wisdom), Vaani (speech; one who cannot be described) and Indris (both the gross and the subtle organs of perception)<sup>3</sup>. (11)

I bow most reverentially before Lord Ram who eliminates the burden of the earth, and who is most beautiful and unique, who is pure, uncorrupt, clean of all taints and is absolutely faultless, and who is eternal as he is without a beginning and an end. (12)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The ‘Nirguna’ form of Lord Ram refers to his cosmic form which is pure Consciousness, subtle, sublime, all-pervading and invisible. The ‘Saguna’ form refers to the same Lord who had revealed himself as a human being with the name “Ram”. As a human, he had physical form and characteristic features like all humans.

<sup>2</sup>The essential form of Lord Ram is ‘pure consciousness’ that is eternal and unchangeable. He is steady and uniform in his mind and heart. But since he had assumed a human form he showed a wide variety of emotions and sentiments like ordinary human beings—i.e. he showed variations and changes in his behaviour, attitude and dealings in this world which would be at odds with his primary character. This is why the Lord is called a ‘maverick player’ who does not conform to any given standards and yardstick.

<sup>3</sup>There are five gross organs of perception—viz. eyes that see, nose that smells, skin that touches and feels, tongue that tastes, and ears that hear. The subtle organs are the mind and the intellect which analyze whatever information is received through the gross organs to arrive at a conclusion about any given situation. In essence it is meant here that it is not possible to know who the Lord actually is by employing any instrument that a person normally employs to learn about any thing. In other words, Lord Ram transcends all form of knowledge.]

भक्त कल्पपादप आरामः । तर्जन क्रोध लोभ मद कामः ॥ १३ ॥  
 अति नागर भव सागर सेतुः । त्रातु सदा दिनकर कुल केतुः ॥ १४ ॥

bhakta kalpapādapa ārāmaḥ. tarjana krōdha lōbha mada kāmāḥ. 13.  
 ati nāgara bhava sāgara sētuḥ. trātu sadā dinakara kula kētuḥ. 14.

He is like a garden of Kalpa Trees for his devotees. [To wit, he fulfills all the wishes of his devotees. The Kalpa Tree is the all wish-fulfilling tree of the Gods. Even one single Kalpa Tree can grant all wishes, so one can well imagine the amount of rewards one would get if one has access to a garden full of such trees! Even the Gods can grant wishes, but Lord Ram is simply like a huge royal treasury of boons and grants.]

He scares away or chases away (i.e. removes) all negativities and sufferings such as those arising out of Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Mada (arrogance, ego and haughtiness) and Kaam (lust and passion). [In fact, every living being suffers from these vices and their horrifying consequences. By taking shelter with Lord Ram and seeking the Lord's blessings, one is easily able to get rid of these evils and their attendant problems.] (13)

He is an expert and skilled in all the virtues. He is like a bridge that can help a creature to cross over this ocean-like world. [It is easy to build a bridge over a river, but not across an ocean. An expert swimmer can swim across a river, but would drown in an ocean. Here it means that if one wishes to get over the horrors of this world and break free from the cycle of birth and death, it would be better for him to seek shelter with and help from Lord Ram.]

Oh Lord who is like a 'flag' (i.e. the most exalted member) of the Solar Race! Please be kind to always extend your protection to me. (14)

अतुलित भुज प्रताप बल धामः । कलि मल विपुल विभंजन नामः ॥ १५ ॥

धर्म वर्म नर्मद गुण ग्रामः । संतत शं तनोतु मम रामः ॥ १६ ॥

atulita bhuja pratāpa bala dhāmaḥ. kali mala vipula vibhanjāna nāmaḥ. 15.  
dharma varma narmada guṇa grāmaḥ. santata śaṁ tanōtu mama rāmaḥ. 16.

The majesty and powers, the strength and reach of the Lord's arms are legendary and unparalleled. Indeed, he is a treasury of astounding glory, of stupendous majesty, of immeasurable strength and endless powers.

[To wit, no one, even the powerful Gods or anyone else in this creation can ever compare with Lord Ram's strength and powers, as well as his ability to protect his devotees.]

His divine and holy Name is such that it can destroy or neutralise the gravest of sins and their consequences in the present age of Kaliyug (which is full of evil and vices). (15)

He is like a shield of Dharma (virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility and ethics). [The Lord protects and upholds these glorious virtues.]

In all sooth, his glorious virtues give joy, delight and happiness. [To wit, Lord Ram is such a huge repository of excellent qualities and noble characters that when one remembers him and comes to know more about the Lord before whom one has surrendered, one is thrilled and excited, one feels privileged and very glad to be acquainted with such a noble, gracious and exalted Lord as Lord Ram.]

I pray that Lord Ram grant auspiciousness and welfare to me in an ever increasing mode. [That is, let me be blessed more and more with each passing day and year of my life.] (16)

जदपि बिरज व्यापक अबिनासी । सब के हृदयँ निरंतर बासी ॥ १७ ॥  
तदपि अनुज श्री सहित खरारी । बसतु मनसि मम काननचारी ॥ १८ ॥

jadapi biraja byāpaka abināsī. saba kē hṛdayam̐ nirantara bāsī. 17.  
tadapi anuja śrī sahita kharārī. basatu manasi mama kānanacārī. 18.

Though you (Lord Ram) have a majestic presence and magnificent virtues (befitting you as the Lord of the world), though you are all-pervading and omnipresent, though you are imperishable (because you are eternal and infinite), and though you live in the heart of all living beings (in the form of their Atma or pure consciousness) [17]---

---Still, oh the destroyer of the demon Khar (kharārī), please live in my heart in the form with which you roam in the forest with Sita and Laxman<sup>1</sup>. [18] (17-18)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Here, sage Sutikshan asks Lord Ram to bless him so that he can remember the Lord always in his pleasing form with which he had come to the sage's hermitage to pay a visit. The wise and enlightened sage knew all about spiritual philosophy and metaphysics, but they are dry subjects that are best dealt with in an intellectual gymnasium; they do not appeal to the heart which longs for love and affection that would only arise when something pleasing and appealing to the heart as well as the mind is found. And this was found by the learned sage in the form of Lord Ram who stood before him. In fact, the sage saw in Lord Ram a personified form of all knowledge and enlightenment of all hues. When the sun was at hand, what was the use of searching for another source of light?]

जे जानहिं ते जानहुँ स्वामी । सगुन अगुन उर अंतरजामी ॥ १९ ॥  
जो कोसल पति राजिव नयना । करउ सो राम हृदय मम अयना ॥ २० ॥

jē jānahim̐ tē jānahum̐ svāmī. saguna aguna ura antarajāmī. 19.  
jō kōsala pati rājiva nayanā. kara'u sō rāma hṛdaya mama ayanā. 20.

Oh Lord! Those who think themselves to be learned and knowledgeable because they regard you as one who has a Saguna as well as a Nirguna form, as one who resides in the heart or inner-self of all living beings (as their Atma or pure consciousness)—let them think whatever they want, for I am not concerned with it.

As for me, this is all that I want (and pray to you to grant me this single boon): Let the lotus-eyed Lord Ram, the Lord of the Kaushal clan (i.e. the ruling family of Ayodhya in which Lord Ram was born), make my heart his only abode.

[To wit, let Lord Ram live in my heart in the lovable form in which I behold the Lord before my eyes. I don't want anything else. I am not interested in metaphysics and spiritual philosophy sans this divine vision of the Lord. This is my only and most earnest request.] (19-20)

अस अभिमान जाइ जनि भोरे । मैं सेवक रघुपति पति मोरे ॥ २१ ॥

सुनि मुनि बचन राम मन भाए । बहुरि हरषि मुनिबर उर लाए ॥ २२ ॥

asa abhimāna jā'i jani bhōrē. mair̥m sēvaka raghupati pati mōrē. 21.

sunī muni bacana rāma mana bhā'ē. bahuri haraṣi munibara ura lā'ē. 22.

Let me not be deprived of or forget this one single privilege and exalted feeling, even for a fleeting moment, that I am a humble servant (devotee) and Raghupati (Sri Ram) is my Lord!' (21)

Lord Ram was exceedingly pleased when he heard the words of the sage (Sutikshan). Feeling thrilled and delighted, the Lord cheerfully embraced the exalted sage and clasped him to his bosom. (22)

परम प्रसन्न जानु मुनि मोही । जो बर मागहु देउँ सो तोही ॥ २३ ॥

मुनि कह मैं बर कबहुँ न जाचा । समुझि न परइ झूठ का साचा ॥ २४ ॥

parama prasanna jānu muni mōhī. jō bara māgahu dē'um̐ sō tōhī. 23.

muni kaha mair̥m bara kabahum̐ na jācā. samujhi na para'i jhūṭha kā sācā. 24.

Oh sage, be assured that I am exceedingly pleased with you, and thus you can ask for any boon that you want to have, and I shall willingly grant it to you.' (23)

Sage Sutikshan replied: 'Oh Lord, I had never wished to have any boon. [I loved you and worshipped you not with any expectations in return.]

Say, what can I ask for, when I just can't understand what is true and what is false in this mortal world.

[A person would obviously want something that is real and worthwhile; he would want a reward that is not fake and worthless. But oh Lord, I can't distinguish between the real and the fake in this world. Hence, I don't want to make a fool of myself and lose this lifetime opportunity by asking for something that I am not sure would not be a fake.] (24)

तुम्हहि नीक लागै रघुराई । सो मोहि देहु दास सुखदाई ॥ २५ ॥

अबिरल भगति बिरति बिग्याना । होहु सकल गुन ग्यान निधाना ॥ २६ ॥

प्रभु जो दीन्ह सो बरु मैं पावा । अब सो देहु मोहि जो भावा ॥ २७ ॥

tumhahi nīka lāgai raghurā'ī. sō mōhi dēhu dāsa sukhadā'ī. 25.

abirala bhagati birati bigyānā. hōhu sakala guna gyāna nidhānā. 26.

prabhu jō dīnha sō baru mair̥m pāvā. aba sō dēhu mōhi jō bhāvā. 27.

Hence, I leave it unto thee to decide what thou wouldst want to give me. Whatever thou think is good for me and would give thy servant happiness, I prithee thou art free to give me that boon.' (25)

[Lord Ram was impressed by the wisdom of sage Sutikshan. The Lord knew what the sage really wanted, and what would give him eternal joy and bliss. Lord Ram had already tested it on the sage and had found that the boon he was about to grant him had already made Sutikshan exceptionally exhilarated and lost in ecstasy during its testing phase<sup>1</sup>. So therefore, Lord Ram decided to make that boon permanent for sage Sutikshan as follows—]

Lord Ram blessed sage Sutikshan with this boon: ‘I grant thee the boon of having eternal devotion for me, along with the purest form of Vairagya (dispassion towards and detachment from the gross world and its perishable material things) as well as Vigyan (deep knowledge and understanding of the spiritual Truths; refined gnosis; clear understanding of the principles of metaphysics and theology as enunciated in the Upanishads and other scriptures).

Verily indeed, thou shalt be a treasure trove of all sorts of Gyan (gnosis; enlightenment; wisdom; self-realisation; knowledge of the Truth and the ability to distinguish between falsehood and truth).<sup>2</sup>’ (26)

Sage Sutikshan said to Lord Ram: ‘I have got the boon which the Lord wished to grant me, but I request you to now give something that is very dear to my heart<sup>3</sup>.’ (27)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 10 herein above. The implication is obvious: Lord Ram had satisfied himself that this particular type of boon would be most liked by sage Sutikshan. Why? It is because the sage had told the Lord to give him something that would give him joy, happiness and bliss—refer to verse no. 25 herein above. Therefore, this was the boon that was most suitable for him.

<sup>2</sup>Later on in the story of Ram Charit Manas we shall come across another example of a devotee of Lord Ram being granted a similar sort of boons as bonus when the devotee sought nothing but Bhakti (devotion) from the Lord. Of course Bhakti was granted to him, but the Lord also granted him many other blessings in the same manner as he had granted to sage Sutikshan now as add-ons.

The case in point is sage Kaagbhusund, and we shall read about the episode later on in Uttar Kand, Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 85.

<sup>3</sup>What was that thing which Sutikshan wanted to have but Lord Ram hadn’t granted him yet? The answer is found in the next verse, viz. Doha no. 11 herein below.]

दो०. अनुज जानकी सहित प्रभु चाप बान धर राम ।

मम हिय गगन इंदु इव बसहु सदा निहकाम ॥ ११ ॥

dōhā.

anuja jānakī sahita prabhu cāpa bāna dhara rāma.

mama hiya gagana indu iva basahu sadā nihakāma. 11.

Sage Sutikshan said: ‘Oh my revered Lord Ram, prithe grant me the boon that holding a bow and arrow in your hands, and accompanied by your younger brother



Laxman and your consort Sita, you would dwell eternally in the sky of my subtle heart that should remain free from all desires and taints like the moon that adorns a clear sky.<sup>1</sup> (Doha no. 11)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Sage Sharbhanga had also sought a similar boon—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 8.

One notable aspect of what the sage says is that he wishes to have a clean heart that has no desires in it. It is a message for all of us—that if one wants the Lord God to reside in one's heart, then he has to clean the slate and get rid of all his worldly desires.

The desires would tarnish his heart and obstruct its cleanliness. If the sky is clear of all pollution, it is only then the beauty of the full moon can be perceived; if the cleanliness of the sky is disturbed by presence of say dust particles or banks of clouds floating across its canvas, the beauty of the full moon would not be properly enjoyed.

Sage Sutikshan's prayer to Lord Ram has been recounted in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 27-34 also.]

चौ०. एवमस्तु करि रमानिवासा । हरषि चले कुंभज रिषि पासा ॥ १ ॥  
बहुत दिवस गुर दरसनु पाएँ । भए मोहि एहिं आश्रम आएँ ॥ २ ॥  
caupāṭi.

ēvamastu kari ramānivāsā. haraṣi calē kumbhaja riṣi pāsā. 1.  
bahuta divasa gura darasanu pā'ēm̐. bha'e mōhi ēhim āśrama ā'ēm̐. 2.

Granting sage Sutikshan his wish by saying 'So shall it be', Lord Ram (ramānivāsā)<sup>1</sup> then proceeded to the place where sage Agastya (who was known as 'Kumbhaj')<sup>2</sup> lived. (1)

When sage Sutikshan came to know of Lord Ram's plans to go visit sage Agastya, he said: 'Lord, I have been living in this hermitage for a long while, and ever since I arrived here I haven't had the privilege to have a divine sight of my revered guru (i.e. my moral preceptor and spiritual teacher, sage Agastya). (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word "ramānivāsā" has two parts: viz. Rama, and Niwasa. "Rama" refers to goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of material wealth, while "Niwasa" means to live near. The combination of these two independent words refers to Lord Vishnu near whom goddess Laxmi always resides as she is the Lord's consort. Lord Ram is called "ramānivāsā" because he is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

<sup>2</sup>Sage Agastya: He is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a 'Brahm-rishi' or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

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

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

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

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

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

The sage lived in the most formidable and inhospitable part of the southern forests, beyond the Vindya range of mountains, that was known as Dandak, or Dandakaranya. One of his disciples was sage Sutikshan whom Lord Ram had blessed prior to going to meet sage Agastya. It was sage Agastya who would advise Lord Ram to go and dwell for some time at Panchavti, as we shall read shortly.

This episode of Lord Ram meeting sage Agastya is also narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", in its Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-50.

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

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva, Cantos 103-105; and (iv) Anand Ramayan, Vilaas Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-24. This feat of sage Agastya is cited by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

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

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

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it.

The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

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

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

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

In all these versions, one thing is found common, and it is that the sage had invoked the divine powers of Lord Ram to accomplish this unique feat. He had pronounced the Mantra (spiritual formula to invoke the cosmic powers of a chosen deity) of Lord Ram, which is “Raamaaye Raamchandraaye Raambhadraaye’.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The story of sage Agastya stopping Mt. Vindiyachal from rising too high in the sky is narrated in the Mahabharat, Vanaparva, Chapter 104. Briefly it is as follows:

The Sun-God, who goes around Mt. Sumeru, the golden mountain, daily, was once asked by the patron deity of Mt. Vindiyachal to go around this mountain as well. The Sun-God, however, declined, saying that his course or path through the heavens (sky) has been determined by the Creator, and hence he has no authority to violate it by going around some other mountain. This annoyed the deity of Mt. Vindiyachal who decided to raise the mountain to such an height that it would stand in the way of the Sun-God's course through the firmament, thereby obstructing his path and preventing him from circling Mt. Sumeru.

The gods residing on Mt. Sumeru were alarmed and flummoxed at this sudden and extraordinary development. They approached the mighty sage Agastya and sought his help to restrain Mt. Vindiyachal from getting higher and obstructing the path of the Sun. The sage devised a stratagem and went to the Mt. Vindiyachal, and asked its deity to give him way so that he can move on towards the south direction from the northern plains. The deity representing Mt. Vindiyachal prostrated before the revered sage to pay respects to him, and allowed him to cross over its body (i.e. the mountain) to the other side. The sage went to the other side but asked the deity keep the mountain thus prostrated (i.e. lie low) till the time the sage came back from his mission. The deity had to obey the sage. However, the sage never returned that way, and hence Mt. Vindiyachal kept on lying low ever since that time. In this way, the wise sage had successfully prevented Mt. Vindiyachal from rising heavenwards and obstructing the path of the Sun.]

अब प्रभु संग जाऊँ गुर पाहीं । तुम्ह कहँ नाथ निहोरा नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

देखि कृपानिधि मुनि चतुराई । लिए संग बिहसे द्वौ भाई ॥ ४ ॥

aba prabhu saṅga jā'um̐ gura pāhīm̐. tumha kham̐ nātha nihōrā nāhīm̐. 3.  
dēkhi kṛpānidhi muni caturāṭī. li'ē saṅga bihasē dvau bhāṭī. 4.

[Sage Sutikshan continued—] ‘Oh Lord (prabhu), now I shall go with you to meet my guru (sage Agastya) at his hermitage.

Oh Lord, I am not casting any obligation on you at his hermitage, nor am I seeking any special permission for you in this regard, because you cannot deny me the right to visit my own guru. The only thing I am doing is to simply accompany you as you are headed to his hermitage; I will simply be following you without disturbing you in the least<sup>1</sup>. (3)

The two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were amused by Sutikshan’s wit and cleverness<sup>2</sup>. So they allowed him to accompany them (as they departed from there for sage Agastya’s hermitage). (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Sage Sutikshan said to the amused Lord Ram: “Oh revered Lord! I will visit my guru in any case because I have not seen him for a very long time, and long to see him. I was planning this visit for some time, but for some or the other reason it did not materialize. Now when I learn that you are going in that direction and have the wish to visit sage Agastya, I thought to take this opportunity to go there too. There is no harm if one has some company while on the road in an alien and wild land where there are no proper paths, nor is there someone who could tell in which direction to go in case one gets lost on the way. I know this place and its geography like the back of my hand; I know the path through the forest that leads straight to sage Agastya’s hermitage. This will be of great help to you, for, as you are already aware, this is a dense and formidable forest, and it is easy for one to get lost in it if one is not careful. There are great chances that you will be wandering aimlessly in this wilderness and not reach the sage’s hermitage at all. So, it is not so much in my interest as it is in yours to let me accompany you and act as your guide. It would serve a twin purpose—I shall be able to meet my guru and pay my obeisance to him after a long gap, and you shall not face the inconvenience of wandering around aimlessly in a hostile place without finding where sage Agastya’s hermitage is actually located. It is win-win situation for both of us, ain’t it?”

<sup>2</sup>Lord Ram and Laxman realized that the wise but simple-hearted sage Sutikshan wants to spend some more time with them; he wants to derive some more joy by their divine company; he wants to chat with them and drink more of this nectar of bliss derived from being in the company of Lord Ram much like a bee, attracted by the sweet scent and the nectar that a lotus flower has, hovers for a long time over the flower, sits on its petals and rises repeatedly, but refuses to fly away unless it is completely satisfied .

Sage Sutikshan was clever because instead of asking Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to stay at his hermitage for sometime, which he nevertheless doubted that the Lord would accept as he was in the mood of moving ahead on his journey, he tells the Lord that he was also planning to go to meet his guru (sage Agastya) whom he has not seen for a long time, but hadn’t had the opportunity to go there till now, but now that the Lord was headed in the same direction where he wanted to go, so it would be a good idea to join him. It will serve the Lord well too, as since the sage knew the path to Agastya’s hermitage very well, the Lord would be spared the trouble of locating it in the wilderness.

This was pure worldly logic and rustic wisdom which Lord Ram and Laxman appreciated; sage Sutikshan's wit amused them. So they allowed the sage to accompany them on their way to sage Agastya's hermitage.

There was one other very interesting reason why Lord Ram smiled at sage Sutikshan's wit and wisdom. What was it? Well, let us examine: It was for a long time that sage Sutikshan hadn't visited his guru, and so there were fair chances that sage Agastya would be annoyed with his disciple for neglecting him and not bothering to come regularly to pay his obeisance to his guru though he lived in the same forest, not very far away. But when Sutikshan would approach his guru in the company of Lord Ram, and when the guru sees that his disciple was exceptionally fortunate as he was blessed by Lord Ram first before the Lord came to bless him, as well as the fact that his disciple has personally escorted the Lord to his guru's hermitage—any sort of annoyance or anger or ill-will that sage Agastya might have had for Sutikshan would immediately vanish in thin air.

And this is what actually happened as we shall be reading shortly in the verses that follow herein below.]

पंथ कहत निज भगति अनूपा । मुनि आश्रम पहुँचे सुरभूपा ॥ ५ ॥  
तुरत सुतीछन गुर पहिं गयऊ । करि दंडवत कहत अस भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥

pantha kahata nija bhagati anūpā. muni āśrama pahum̐cē surabhūpā. 5.  
turata sutīchana gura pahim̐ gaya'ū. kari daṇḍavata kahata asa bhaya'ū. 6.

On the way, Lord Ram chatted with sage Sutikshan and expounded on the different aspects of the virtue of Bhakti (devotion for Lord Ram).

By-and-by, the Lord of the Gods (“surabhūpā”; i.e. Lord Ram, the Lord of heaven where gods live) arrived at sage Agastya's hermitage. (5)

Sage Sutikshan immediately went to his guru, and after prostrating before the latter to pay his obeisance, Sutikshan said as follows --- (6)

नाथ कोसलाधीस कुमारा । आए मिलन जगत आधारा ॥ ७ ॥  
राम अनुज समेत बैदेही । निसि दिनु देव जपत हहु जेही ॥ ८ ॥

nātha kōsalādhīsa kumārā. ā'ē milana jagata ādhārā. 7.  
rāma anuja samēta baidēhī. nisi dinu dēva japata hahu jēhī. 8.

‘Oh Lord (nātha)! The two princes of the king of Kaushal (kōsalādhīsa kumārā), who support the world, and who provide it with solace and succour (jagata ādhārā), have come to meet you. (7)

They are Lord Ram, along with his wife Vaidehi (Sita; the daughter of king of Videha, also known as Janakpur), and his younger brother (Laxman)—whom your lordship (dēva) meditates upon, and whose holy name you repeat or chant (japata hahu) day and night<sup>1</sup>.’ (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Sutikshan obviously meant Lord Ram here, as it is the Lord's holy name that sages and other pious souls use while doing Japa (repetition of some sacred Mantra) during one's spiritual practices.

In this context, refer also to what Uma, the divine consort of Lord Shiva tells him with regard to Lord Ram and use of his holy name by Shiva to do Japa day and night as his regular spiritual practice in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 108.

The fact that Lord Shiva repeats Lord Ram's holy name day and night has also been mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46.]

सुनत अगस्ति तुरत उठि धाए । हरि बिलोकि लोचन जल छाए ॥ ९ ॥  
मुनि पद कमल परे द्वौ भाई । रिषि अति प्रीति लिए उर लाई ॥ १० ॥

sunata agasti turata uṭhi dhā'ē. hari bilōki lōcana jala chā'ē. 9.  
muni pada kamala parē dvau bhā'ī. riṣi ati prīti li'ē ura lā'ī. 10.

No sooner sage Agastya heard this news, but he got up instantly and dashed forward to meet them.

When he beheld Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram; he is referred to as 'Lord Hari' here as he was a human form of Lord Vishnu, also known as Lord Hari), tears spread in the sage's eyes. (9)

Meanwhile, the two brothers fell down at the lotus-like feet of the sage, who immediately lifted them up and clasped them very affectionately to his bosom<sup>1</sup>. (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are other instances where we find the same reaction when a great sage meets Lord Ram, albeit with a little variation in description of details of what actually transpired at that time. Refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 106 (sage Bharadwaj); (ii) Doha no. 124 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it (sage Valmiki); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 243 (sage Vasistha meeting Lord Ram at Chitrakoot); (b) Aranya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 3 (sage Atri); (v) Doha no. 7 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 20-24 that precede Doha no. 10 (sage Sutikshan).]

सादर कुसल पूछि मुनि ग्यानी । आसन बर बैठारे आनी ॥ ११ ॥  
पुनि करि बहु प्रकार प्रभु पूजा । मोहि सम भाग्यवंत नहिं दूजा ॥ १२ ॥  
जहँ लगि रहे अपर मुनि बृन्दा । हरषे सब बिलोकि सुखकंदा ॥ १३ ॥

sādara kusala pūchi muni gyānī. āsana bara baiṭhārē ānī. 11.  
puni kari bahu prakāra prabhu pūjā. mōhi sama bhāgyavanta nahim dūjā. 12.  
jaham' lagi rahē apara muni bṛndā. haraṣē saba bilōki sukhakandā. 13.

The enlightened sage reverentially asked about the well-being of Lord Ram (and his companions, i.e. Sita and Laxman). Then the sage escorted the Lord inside his hermitage and gave him a seat to sit down upon. (11)

After Lord Ram was seated, sage Agastya offered his worship to him in a variety of ways<sup>1</sup>, and said: ‘Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, there is no one else who is as fortunate as me today (that the Lord of the world has come to visit me personally, and I have been able to offer my worship to him personally and directly too). (12)

All the great sages and hermits who lived in that part of the forest<sup>2</sup> were exceedingly exhilarated when they saw Lord Ram who was a veritable root from which all sorts of joy, happiness, bliss and beatitude sprouts. (13)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When sage Sutikshan met Lord Ram, he too had escorted the Lord inside his hermitage where he had offered worship in a variety of ways—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Even a casual reading of this verse would make it clear that a number of sages and other pious souls were present in sage Agastya’s hermitage when Lord Ram arrived. Who were these sages and hermits? They lived in the forest as itinerant mendicants and ascetics who lived in loose groups consisting of a few or more souls who would move around from one place to another frequently, either for security reasons in order to avoid the demons or ogres who roamed freely in the wilderness, or to meet their peers from other groups, as well as to visit senior sages who had established hermitages, where they would rest for a while, hear discourses and take part in discussions before moving on to somewhere else.

In the context of sages and their hermitages, a very interesting observation can be made at this point. If we have read the story of Ram Charit Manas attentively, then in the course of our reading we must have discovered that we come across two types of hermitages—one in which the resident sage or the hermit lives alone, spending his time in serenity and quietude in order to pursue his spiritual aims, and the other type of hermitage was one where there was a chief sage under whom many disciples lived, and where there used to be a gathering of sages and other pious souls who would regularly assemble for discussions and discourses.

Amongst the former types of hermitages was that of sage Sutikshan\*1 who lived alone; and amongst the latter types where regular congregations were held was the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj\*2 earlier, and sage Agastya presently.

We come across a gathering of sages and hermits at Sharbhanga’s place, but it was because the word had spread that the sage wants to leave his body and go to heaven. So the assembly had gathered to bid him farewell\*3.

Then there is a stellar example of a hermitess named Sabari who too lived alone, waiting for Lord Ram’s arrival so that her soul can find liberation and deliverance\*4.

The remarkable thing about these hermits and sages who preferred to live alone, whether they were males or females, was they had no fear from the demons, ogres, monsters, or wild beasts that abounded in the wild forests. The obvious reason is that they had strong will power; their souls had the strength of spiritual powers that enabled them to overcome all worldly fears. Besides this, they had a firm belief that the Supreme Being, whom they worshipped, would always protect them.



{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, \*1 = Aranya Kand, Doha no. 10 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes it.

\*2 = Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109.

\*3 = Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 9.

\*4 = Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 34; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 36.}]

दो०. मुनि समूह मँ बैठे सन्मुख सब की ओर।

सरद इंदु तन चितवत मानहुँ निकर चकोर ॥ १२ ॥

dōhā.

muni samūha maham̐ baiṭhē sanmukha saba kī ōra.

sarada indu tana citavata mānahuṁ nikara cakōra. 12.

Lord Ram sat down and faced all the sages and other pious souls who surrounded him from all the sides. All of them gazed at Lord Ram as they were all mesmerized by the charm of the Lord even as the Chakor bird fixes its gaze on the disc of the full moon because it is enamoured of the latter<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 12)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This imagery is cited elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—viz. Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 115. Here we read that the commoners whom Lord Ram met on his way to the forest were so enthralled at the divine sight of Lord Ram, whom they saw from so close quarters, that they just could not move their eyes away from the Lord's holy form.

The Chakor bird (Indian red-legged partridge) is so enamoured with the moon that the bird fixes its gaze on the moon's disc as soon as it rises in the eastern horizon; then it keeps on looking at the moon, tilting its neck and slowly moving it to follow the course of the moon across the night sky, till it sets in the west.

This imagery is employed to emphasize that the sages were so mesmerized by Lord Ram's charming presence that their eyes were riveted on the Lord and they gazed at him unblinkingly.]

चौ०. तब रघुबीर कहा मुनि पाहीं । तुम्ह सन प्रभु दुराव कछु नाहीं ॥ १ ॥

तुम्ह जानहु जेहि कारन आयउँ । ताते तात न कहि समुझायउँ ॥ २ ॥

अब सो मंत्र देहु प्रभु मोही । जेहि प्रकार मारौं मुनिद्रोही ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

taba raghubīra kahā muni pāhīm̐. tumha sana prabhu durāva kachu nāhīm̐. 1.

tumha jānahu jēhi kārana āya'um̐. tātē tāta na kahi samujhāya'um̐. 2.

aba sō mantra dēhu prabhu mōhī. jēhi prakāra mārāum̐ munidrōhī. 3.

Then Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the line of kings belonging to the illustrious family descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya (*raghubīra*), said to sage Agastya: ‘Oh Lord (*prabhu*), nothing is secret from you, for thou art all-knowing. (1)

You are well aware why I have come hither, and that is why I desist from telling thee in detail about it<sup>1</sup>. (2)

Oh sage, now please grant me some mystical powers (or tell me some secret formula; “Mantra”) so that I may slay the enemies of the sages (i.e. the demons)<sup>2</sup>.’# (3)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram wished to remind sage Agastya that his chief purpose of coming to the forest was to fulfill his promise made to the gods, mother earth and sages long ago, that he would eliminate the cruel demons and restore peace in the world.

Why was the Lord reluctant to discuss the matter in detail with sage Agastya, especially when the Lord himself acknowledges that the sage knew the secret of his coming to the forest? The reason is that this meeting was not held in private, but was attended by a large gathering of sages who had assembled at sage Agastya’s hermitage as is evident from Doha no. 12 herein above. So therefore, Lord Ram did not wish to make a hue and cry about his chief objective because he was weary of some spy of the demons who may have quietly sneaked in disguised as a sage, and if this spy learns that Lord Ram was a manifestation of the Supreme Being on a mission to eliminate the demons, it was quite possible that this spy would alert all the demons, and then the whole plan would come unstuck. The demons would collect and attack the Lord en-masse much before he could reach their den in Lanka where their king Ravana lived, and take him out, or else they would scatter and go into hiding, in which case it would be practically impossible for the Lord to eliminate them entirely.

As a matter of war strategy, surprise and doubt about Lord Ram’s true identity and his intentions were necessary as they would play a crucial role in creating confusion in the demons’ camp so that they can be misled into underestimating the powers of Lord Ram, making them careless during the actual confrontation, and thereby get easily trounced, one by one. In this context, refer to the doubt that was created in the mind of Ravana as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

<sup>2</sup>There are two important observations that can be made at this juncture: The first observation pertains to the “Mantra” which Lord Ram requested from sage Agastya. Well, the word “Mantra” literally means a mystical formula that inherently possesses stupendous powers because it pertains to the cosmic powers of the Deity to whom it is dedicated. For example, if a person uses the Mantra dedicated to the Fire God in a systematic way, in accordance with the system devised for its use, then the astounding ‘burning powers of the fire’ can be harnessed by him.

But a word has many connotations, and it should be understood and interpreted in the context it is used. Hence, here Lord Ram simply means that since sage Agastya was all-knowing as well as a very senior and able sage who possesses great spiritual powers, and was not only aware of the primary reason why Lord Ram has come to the forest but also knew how the Lord’s objective could be successfully achieved. He was definitely in a position to advise Lord Ram about certain important strategies and means that would help the Lord to win the war against the demons; the sage could advise him on some intelligent and prudent method which the Lord could

put into good use in the conflict with the ferocious demons that loomed on the horizon.

So, the word Mantra can be interpreted here to mean some wise and intelligent strategy, some prudent advice, some trick, some method that sage Agastya could tell Lord Ram by which a powerful adversary, the demons, can be easily trounced.

We must remember that a bevy of sages and hermits were present on this occasion as is clear in Doha no. 12 herein above. If sage Agastya openly told Lord Ram the method by which the demons could be eliminated, it would compromise the secrecy of the Lord's mission, and if there was a spy of the demons who was present amongst the assembly of sages disguised as one of them, he was sure to go and tell all his demon friends about the danger to their lives and how the strategy that Lord Ram would adopt to bring them down. Sure enough then, the entire plan of the Supreme Being would come crumbling down like a pack of cards as the demons would be ready with a counter-plan. That is why we shall see in the next verse that follows herein below that sage Agastya cleverly deflected this request from Lord Ram.

But in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 45-46 we read a fascinating account of sage Agastya giving Lord Ram a powerful and magnificent bow, two magical quivers that had a never-ending supply of arrows, and a gem-studded sword that Indra, the king of gods, had given to the sage with an instruction to pass them on to Lord Ram at the right time. These would be used by Lord Ram henceforth in the battles he fought with the demons. In the background of what has been observed in the paragraph herein above, how do we explain it?

Well, the answer is very simple: Sage Agastya was sure to have kept these weapons somewhere inside his hut, concealed somewhere inside his private quarter. So therefore, he must have quietly taken Lord Ram inside his hut on some excuse and handed over these weapons to him while informing the Lord of their importance and uses.

The second observation is this: We have read that in the past also when Lord Ram met a great sage, such as Bharadwaj, Valmiki and Atri, he had sought guidance from them about his next destination in the forest. Since all these sages were all-knowing, and were therefore privy to the Lord's secret mission as to why he was heading to the forest, which was to eliminate the scourge of the cruel demons, they guided Lord Ram in a direction that would help the Lord reach his destination and complete his mission. Sage Bharadwaj sent his disciples to show the Lord the path\*1 that would lead him to sage Valmiki, and then Valmiki told the Lord to go and spend time living in Chitrakoot where the Lord would meet sage Atri\*2. At the time of leaving Chitrakoot, it was sage Atri who guided the Lord\*3 towards the direction that would take him to the hermitage of sage Sharbhanga. In this way, one after another, these great sages led Lord Ram to his destination where he would be able to complete his mission.

{Refer: \*1 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 109 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

\*2 = Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 126; (ii) Doha no. 132 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

\*3 = Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-5.}

It were not only the sages and hermits who had guided Lord Ram to his next destination, as we have just read, but we find that the Lord was helped by other noble souls too. There are two sterling examples of this: One is the case of Kabandha, who

was a Gandharva (a sort of demi-God serving as musicians in the heaven) in his primary form but had become a octopus-like hobgoblin due to a sage's curse, who, after his deliverance by Lord Ram, too had advised him to go and meet Sabari, an old tribal woman who was one of Lord Ram's greatest devotees. This is clearly narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 1-3.

And the other instance is that of Sabari, an old tribal woman who was a great devotee of Lord Ram and lived alone in the forest in the hope of seeing the Lord before her death. The Lord obliged her and even granted her the rare privilege of doing her last rites himself as he would have done for his own mother. Prior to her death, Sabari had advised the Lord to go towards Pampa lake where he would meet Sugriv, the prince of the monkeys, who would help the Lord to find and free Sita from the captivity of the demon king Ravana. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 10-13 that precede it.

#It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram had no need for such guidance from anyone though, as he himself was 'all-knowing', being the Lord of the entire creation and a manifestation of the Supreme Being, a fact that sage Agastya would reiterate in verse nos. 4-9 herein below. This being the case, why would Lord Ram then ask different sages to help him by advising him where to go next, or what is he expected to do next?

Well, once again the answer is obvious: The Lord wanted to show respect to these great sages by seeking their guidance and blessings.]

मुनि मुसुकाने सुनि प्रभु बानी । पूछेहु नाथ मोहि का जानी ॥ ४ ॥

तुम्हरेई भजन प्रभाव अघारी । जानउँ महिमा कछुक तुम्हारी ॥ ५ ॥

muni musukānē suni prabhu bānī. pūchēhu nātha mōhi kā jānī. 4.  
tumharē'im̐ bhajana prabhāva aghārī. jāna'um̐ mahimā kachuka tumhārī. 5.

Sage Agastya smiled in amusement when he heard what Lord Ram had said. The sage replied: 'Oh Lord (nātha), what a wonder that you (being all-knowing yourself, and being the Lord of the world) are asking me to advise you how to slay the enemies of the sages (i.e. the demons)! How do I know what to do? (4)

It is the reward of worshipping you and being devoted to you that I have become aware or enlightened about some of your glories<sup>1</sup>. (5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>"It is like scratching the surface of a gigantic planet, or cupping a fistful of water from the surface of the ocean, and then claiming to know about the whole planet or the ocean. It's incredulous if one makes such a ridiculous claim. To wit, oh Lord, whatever little knowledge of anything that I have is got by your own grace, and so therefore how can I tell thee anything when thou art yourself a treasure-house of knowledge?"

Lord Ram's glories and virtues are uncountable, endless and beyond comprehension, so sage Agastya says that his knowledge is very limited. Even the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund has emphatically reiterated this fact in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92.]

ऊमरि तरु बिसाल तव माया । फल ब्रह्मांड अनेक निकाया ॥ ६ ॥  
 जीव चराचर जंतु समाना । भीतर बसहिं न जानहिं आना ॥ ७ ॥  
 ते फल भच्छक कठिन कराला । तव भयँ डरत सदा सोउ काला ॥ ८ ॥  
 ते तुम्ह सकल लोकपति साई । पूँछेहु मोहि मनुज की नाई ॥ ९ ॥

ūmari taru bisāla tava māyā. phala brahmāṇḍa anēka nikāyā. 6.  
 jīva carācara jantu samānā. bhītara basahim na jānahim ānā. 7.  
 tē phala bhacchaka kaṭhina karālā. tava bhayam̐ ḍarata sadā sō'u kālā. 8.  
 tē tumha sakala lōkapati sā'īm. pūm̐chēhu mōhi manuja kī nā'īm. 9.

Oh Lord, your Maya (the cosmic mystical powers of the Supreme Being that are very mysterious, and which the Lord employs to create this universe with all its variants) is like a gigantic cosmic tree resembling the wild fig tree (ūmari taru), and the countless worlds or universes that are present in this creation represent the many fruits of this cosmic tree.<sup>1</sup> (6)

The countless animate beings as well as inanimate things are like the many small insects that are found inside the fruit of this tree. These poor creatures are not aware that there is anything outside the limit of their own habitat in the fruit; they erroneously think that the fruit in which they live is the whole world, and there is nothing beyond it.

[To wit, the insects that live inside a ripe fruit of the wild fig tree think that their immediate surrounding is the whole world, for they are oblivious of the fact that like the fruit in which they live, there are countless other similar fruits on the same tree, each having its own world of insects.] (7)

All these insects as well as the fruits in which they live, along with the tree itself would perish one day or the other, as the all-powerful force of Kaal (meaning—time and death) would devour them sooner or later, as it spares none.

But this seemingly almighty 'Kaal' itself is under your influence, for it obeys your command, and is so scared of you that it does not want to defy you<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This is the 'Viraat form', or the all-encompassing cosmic form of the Supreme Being. Later on in the story we shall read a similar account of Lord Ram's cosmic form at two places—viz. (a) as described by Ravana's wife Mandodari in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15; and (b) as described by Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 21 where we read that Hanuman has said the same thing to Ravana regarding the cosmic powers of Lord Ram.

<sup>2</sup>An exactly similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 225; (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 22; (c) Lanka Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6.

The metaphor of the fruit of the wild fig tree with the countless insects that live inside it, and all of which are devoured by Kaal, is used by Angad while sternly rebuking Ravana, the demon king, in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 34.]

यह बर मागउँ कृपानिकेता । बसहु हृदयँ श्री अनुज समेता ॥ १० ॥  
अबिरल भगति बिरति सतसंगा । चरन सरोरुह प्रीति अभंगा ॥ ११ ॥

yaha bara māga'um̐ kṛpānikētā. basahu hṛdayam̐ śrī anuja samētā. 10.  
abirala bhagati birati sataśaṅgā. carana sarōruha prīti abhaṅgā. 11.

Oh Lord who is an abode of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpānikētā), I request thee to grant me this one boon—that thou, along with Sita and thine younger brother (Laxman), wouldst reside in the subtle space of mine heart<sup>1</sup>. (10)

May I have unbroken, abiding and continuous form of devotion for thee (abirala bhagati); may I have renunciation, detachment and dispassion towards this material gross world (birati); may I have communion with sages and saintly souls (sataśaṅgā); and may I have eternal and unwavering devotion and affection for the Lord's holy lotus-like feet (carana sarōruha prīti abhaṅgā)<sup>2</sup>. (11)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Similar request had been made by other sages too: refer—Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 107 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it (Bharadwaj); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 8 (Sharbhanga); (iii) Doha no. 11 (Sutikshan).

<sup>2</sup>Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 26 that precedes Doha no. 11 where sage Sutikshan too has sought this kind of boon from Lord Ram.]

जद्यपि ब्रह्म अखंड अनंता । अनुभव गज्ज भजहिं जेहि संता ॥ १२ ॥  
अस तव रूप बखानउँ जानउँ । फिरि फिरि सगुन ब्रह्म रति मानउँ ॥ १३ ॥

jadyapi brahma akhaṇḍa anantā. anubhava gajja bhajahim̐ jēhi santā. 12.  
asa tava rūpa bakhāna'um̐ jāna'um̐. phiri phiri saguna brahma rati māna'um̐. 13.

Although thou art a personified form of the supreme Brahm (i.e. the Supreme Being representing the cosmic Consciousness) who is invisible, infinite and eternal (thereby making the Lord beyond comprehension and out of reach of perception by a creature), the Lord who is known or realized only by experience (and not by any other means), and who is worshipped and adored by saintly souls --- (12)

--- Yet I request thee to empower me with sufficient wisdom and enlightenment so that I am able to expound on that cosmic form of Brahm (as enunciated in the Upanishads), and at the same time acquire the ability to describe the visible

manifestation of the same Brahm revealed as thy divine Self (i.e. in the visible form as Lord Ram)<sup>1</sup>. (13)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We come across one other such instance where a devotee of Lord Ram has been blessed with a similar boon—and it is the case of the saintly crow by the name of Kaagbhusund. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 85.

That said, let us cite a simple and day-to-day example from the ordinary world where we live to understand the difference between the concept of cosmic Consciousness represented by ‘Brahm’, whose form is said to be invisible, infinite, uniform and all-pervading, a form that cannot be seen or perceived by the sense organs of a living being, and the same Brahm’s visible form that one can easily see and relate to as ‘Lord Ram’—as explained below:

We cannot see and touch ‘water’ molecules present as the invisible moisture or vapour in the atmosphere all around us (which would represent ‘Brahm’ in our example), but when the same water molecules present in form of moisture or vapour condenses on a surface, say the window pane, during winter or at any other time when the temperature drops to a point which would facilitate condensation, then we can see the same ‘water’ in the form of a thin film that is formed on that surface and wetting it; we can then not only see the otherwise invisible water molecule present in the atmosphere around us but also feel its presence as something that is wet and reminds us of ‘water’ if we swipe our fingers across it. Extended further, if the temperature drops more, the same water molecule would turn solid and become ice or snow, which has a certain visible form and attributes. This latter form of moisture would then represent ‘Lord Ram’, the visible and perceptible form of the formless and invisible Brahm. This form of Brahm as Lord Ram has attributes and certain characteristic features; it’s a form that has an origin and an end just like the film of water on a cold surface, or ice or snow. These visible forms of water last for a certain time, and as soon as the temperature begins to rise, they would vanish. To wit, they have a beginning and an end, but this ‘end’ simply means that the water molecule has become invisible to our naked eye though it is present as ‘moisture’ in the atmosphere that surrounds us. Likewise, at a certain point of time, Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, revealed himself as Lord Ram, lived for a fixed tenure, and then reverted to his original form as the cosmic Consciousness. It is simple and straightforward as that.]

संतत दासन्ह देहु बड़ाई । तातें मोहि पूँछेहु रघुराई ॥ १४ ॥

है प्रभु परम मनोहर ठाऊँ । पावन पंचबटी तेहि नाऊँ ॥ १५ ॥

दंडक बन पुनीत प्रभु करहू । उग्र साप मुनिबर कर हरहू ॥ १६ ॥

बास करहु तहँ रघुकुल राया । कीजे सकल मुनिन्ह पर दाया ॥ १७ ॥

चले राम मुनि आयसु पाई । तुरतहिं पंचबटी निअराई ॥ १८ ॥

santata dāsanha dēhu barā'ī. tātēm mōhi pūm'chēhu raghurā'ī. 14.

hai prabhu parama manōhara ṭhā'ūm'. pāvana pañcabaṭī tēhi nā'ūm'. 15.

daṇḍaka bana punīta prabhu karahū. ugra sāpa munibara kara harahū. 16.

bāsa karahu taham' raghukula rāyā. kījē sakala muninha para dāyā. 17.

calē rāma muni āyasu pā'ī. turatahiṁ pañcabaṭī ni'arā'ī. 18.

Oh Lord, since it is your gracious nature that you prefer to honour and give importance to your devotees and followers, this is why you have asked me for guidance<sup>1</sup>.

[To wit, I am humbled and honoured that you, who are the Supreme Being himself in a personified form, would seek my advice and help to succeed in your mission. But I understand why you do so—it is because it is in your nature to honour your devotees and followers by giving them importance by way of seeking their help and guidance to accomplish your work. This is your majesty's greatness and graciousness which I appreciate and salute.] (14)

Oh Lord, there is a very pleasant and charming place known as 'Panchavati'<sup>2</sup> further ahead in this forest. (15)

Lord, by living in the formidable forest known as 'Dandak', you would bless and purify it, and free it from the horrific curse of a sage that has turned this forest into a very dangerous, inhospitable and intractable stretch of wilderness (that is infested by ogres, demons, monsters and evil spirits)<sup>3</sup>. (16)

Oh Lord of the illustrious family of king Raghu ("raghukula rāyā"; Lord Ram)! Please live there for some time and bless all the sages, hermits, ascetics and other pious souls who dwell there.<sup>4</sup> (17)

Thence, after receiving permission from sage Agastya to proceed, Lord Ram departed from there and soon arrived near Panchavati (as advised by the sage). (18)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Sage Agastya refers to Lord Ram asking him to tell him some 'Mantra' which would enable the Lord to eliminate the demons—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that follows Doha no. 12 herein above.

<sup>2</sup>The word "Panchavati" has two components—viz. 'Pancha' meaning 'five'; and 'Vata' meaning 'a tree', especially the banyan tree. So, the place which sage Agastya told Lord Ram had five big banyan trees standing in a circle, which would make the spot a pleasant place to dwell. It was located a little away from sage Agastya's hermitage, in the same Dandak forest, and was near the bank of river Godavari—refer: Doha no. 13 herein below.

<sup>3</sup>Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 24 and the note appended to it (Volume 1 of this series) where we read more about the Dandak forest and the curse of the sage. This It was cursed by sage Sukracharya, and so it became barren. After Lord Ram made Panchavati his abode for some time, the same Dandak forest was transformed into a verdant paradise as we shall see shortly in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14 herein below.

Now, let us read a little more about this "Dandak forest" as follows:

The Dandakaaranya or the Dandak forest was the most uninhabitable and fierce part of the forest. It was infested by demons and ogres as well as cruel wild animals. This forest was the area where Lord Ram had spent the major part of his



forest exile, and it covers all the events as mentioned in the 'Aranya kand' of the epic Ramayana/Ram Charit Manas.

An interesting legend is associated with this forest. 'Dandak' was the youngest of the hundred princes who were the sons of king Ikshvaku after whom a dynasty was named in which later on Lord Ram was born. Dandak was a stubborn and stupid son, so the father, king Ikshvaku, gave him the region of the kingdom lying between two great mountain ranges—the Vindhya and the Shaiwal—to rule from there. This region acquired the name 'Dandak' after this son. Another reason is that the word 'Danda' means punishment. The king was so upset with this son of his that he assigned to him a forest region as a punishment for his nature. Dandak was virtually sent to exile in a forest with due honour, far away so that he would not interfere with the administration of the rest of the kingdom and cause nuisance.

He built and established a beautiful city named Madhumanta there, and made Sukraachaarya, the Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) of the demon race, as his royal Guru. He ruled over this kingdom in peace for a long time

Besides being utterly stupid, Dandak was of a promiscuous nature. Once he had gone to his Guru's hermitage in the Hindu month of Chaitra. It was a very pleasant occasion, and overcome with lust he had molested Arjaa, the daughter of his own Guru Shukraachaarya. The Guru became furious and cursed him, saying—'let Indra, the king of Gods, shower hot-as-fire dirt and sand on your kingdom and scorch it to ashes as far as a hundred Yojans (800 miles). This will continue for seven days, and during this time everything here, moving and unmoving, will be reduced to ashes.'

Then he advised his daughter Arjaa, 'Live here on the shores of the huge lake measuring some one Yojan (8 miles). Some time later, sages came to live here to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) because it was serene and uninhabited. This forest came to be known as 'Dandakaaranya'—the forest that was reduced to such a state because of this curse as a punishment.' Refer: Valmiki Ramayana, 7/49/81.

As a result of this curse, the entire kingdom was decimated and reduced to an un-inhabitable and barren stretch of land. Since Dandak was the cause of this, the entire land was named after him to remind and warn the coming generation to be careful about what they do and how they behave. Since it was left alone from being overcrowded, sages, hermits and ascetics made it their home. Being thus blessed by their august presence, some of the curse was neutralized and it got the name 'Janasthaan'—a place that was inhabited by Gyanis or learned and realised souls. According to modern historians, the area of modern India that falls around Nasik, a city along the western seaboard of the country, was the area called Danda-kaaranya in ancient times.

When Lord Ram came here on the advice of sage Agastya, it was freed of its horrible curse and regained its beauty and magnificence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 16-17 that precede Doha no. 13.

It was here that Lord Ram made friends with Jatau, the vulture king who was to later lay down his life trying to save Sita from being kidnapped by Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13, and later on Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29 to Doha no. 32.

It was in this forest that Lord Ram had killed the ferocious demons Khar, Dushan, Trishira and their 14 thousand companions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18, to Doha no. 20.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 257, line nos. 6-7 which say that the forest of Dandak which was barren with burnt out trees and full of thorns was

converted into a verdant forest full of flower and fruit bearing trees as soon as Lord Ram put his holy feet on its floor.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14 it is narrated how the Dandak forest was transformed—“Ever since Lord Ram came to live in this forest, the sages, hermits and seers who lived there became happy and all their torments ended. The hills, the forest, the rivers, the ponds and lakes in this forest began to look charming and beautiful; they were delightful to behold. Their magnificence and beauty changed and appeared to improve every passing day; each new day made them appear more beautiful and enthralling than the previous day. The hordes and flocks of animals and birds that populated this forest lived happily and joyously, without any worry in the world. The forest reverberated with the humming of the black bee. Even the king of serpents, Lord Seshnath, is unable to describe the pleasant environs of the forest where Lord Ram, the Lord of the universe, himself resides.”

Tulsidas’ “Dohawali” mentions this forest and refers to this incident in its Doha no. 172. Let us see what it says—

172. दंडक बन पावन करन चरन सरोज प्रभाउ ।  
ऊसर जामहिं खल तरहिं होइ रंक ते राउ ॥

172. daṇḍaka bana pāvana karana carana sarōja prabhā'u.  
ūsara jāmahiṁ khala tarahiṁ hō'i raṅka tē rā'u..

“By the grace of the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram—which had converted the inhabitable Dandak forest from being cursed to being one that was blessed and holy (i.e. from being harsh, inhospitable and riddled with fierce blood seeking demons and cruel animals, into a verdant green forest rich in pleasant flora and fauna)—even infertile land can yield crops, miscreants and rascals can be liberated (i.e. provided freedom from the burden of their accumulated sins and their horrible consequences), and a pauper (i.e. a penniless destitute) can become a king.” {This particular Doha appears in Tulsidas’ book called Ram Agya Prashnawali, as verse no. 3/1/1 in it.}

Another reference of the Dandak forest appears in Tulsidas’ ‘Vinai Patrika’, verse no. 257, stanza no. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Earlier, Lord Ram had chosen to stay at Chitrakoot on the advice of sage Valmiki—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 133.]

दो०. गीधराज सैं भेंट भइ बहु बिधि प्रीति बढ़ाइ ।  
गोदावरी निकट प्रभु रहे परन गृह छाड़ ॥ १३ ॥  
dōhā.

gīdharāja saim bhēṇṭa bha'i bahu bidhi prīti baṛhā'i.  
gōdāvarī nikaṭa prabhu rahē parana gr̥ha chā'i. 13.

On the way, Lord Ram most affectionately met the king of vultures (who was known as 'Jatau'), and they reaffirmed their mutual respect and affection for each other<sup>1</sup>.

By-and-by, the Lord arrived at the designated place (known as Panchavati) near the banks of river Godavari. Here he began to live in a thatched hut which he erected himself (with the help of Laxman)<sup>2</sup>. (Doha no. 13)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram's meeting with Jatau near Panchavati has been more elaborately narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-7.

This meeting is crucial in the context of what happened later on when Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana. As narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan verses cited herein above, during this first meeting Jatau promised Lord Ram that as long as he lives in that area of the forest, he, Jatau, would give the Lord protection. Jatau also told Lord Ram that he was a friend of king Dasrath, the Lord's father#. True to his words, when Sita was being taken away by Ravana on his chariot to Lanka, Jatau intervened; he asked Ravana to set Sita free, and on the demon king's refusal, a fierce battle ensued between the two. Ravana was seriously wounded, and Jatau even managed to free Sita for a while, but then providence had other plans in store, so Ravana drew his sword and cut off the poor vulture's wings, whereat Jatau fell down helplessly on the ground while Ravana took Sita back and rode away. Lord Ram came that way, saw the wounded Jatau, comforted and caressed him, and since his wound was very serious and Jatau did not want to live any longer, as he longed for deliverance from this world, the Lord obliged him. But before dying, Jatau told the Lord everything about how Sita had been abducted by Ravana. This bit of information was very important for Lord Ram, for now he knew who was the enemy, whom to pursue, and where to go to retrieve Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-26 that precede Doha no. 29; (ii) Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Doha no. 31.}

Jatau was the younger brother of another great vulture named Sampati. We shall read more about them in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 28.

#Let us briefly read the few stories that are associated with the friendship between king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, and Jatau, the vulture.

One such is narrated in 'Aagneya Ramayana'. It says that at the time of Dasrath's marriage with his eldest wife Kaushalya, Ravana, the king of demons, got the wind of it and became irked. He created obstacles in the path of the groom's party while it was on its way from Ayodhya to the kingdom where Kaushalya lived. Ravana caused a flood to occur in the river that the groom's party was crossing on boats. The particular boat that Dasrath rode broke, and he was left adrift on the water. But somehow he managed to save his life by reaching an island. Sage Vasistha too was with king Dasrath at this time. The auspicious time fixed for the marriage ceremony was very near, and the two, Dasrath and Vasistha, marooned in a remote island, were worried as to how they would reach the venue in time. It was on this occasion that Jatau had helped them by giving them a lift on his back and ferried them to their destination. This is believed to be the reason why Dasrath and Jatau became life-long friends.

In another Ramayana known as the 'Bhavartha Ramayana', there is a story that king Dasrath had gone to help Indra, the king of gods, to fight a demon named Namuchi. During the fierce battle, Jatau had attacked Namuchi and felled the armour that the demon wore on his head as a protective shield. Seizing the moment, Dasrath

had severed the demon's head. Since that time, the two, Jatau and Dasrath, became fast friends and comrade-in-arms.

Another reason for their brotherhood was that sage Kashyap was the grandfather of Jatau, the king of vultures, and king Manu, who later on took birth as king Dasrath—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123.

Jatau and Dasrath were contemporaries, and both lived for 60 thousand years—apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse no. 20.

<sup>2</sup>When Lord Ram was in Chitrakoot, there also he used to live in a thatched hut. But since Chitrakoot was situated at a place in the forest where forest and hill dwelling tribes known as Kol, Kirat, Bhil etc. used to live, erecting a thatched hut was an easy task. These tribals had done this job for the Lord. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 133 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}

Compared to Chitrakoot, Panchavati was a desolate and abandoned part of the wilderness. Hence, here Lord Ram and Laxman had to help themselves in erecting a thatched hut. It was a rough hewn structure made of mud and clay over which was spread a cover of leaves. Other parts of trees, shrubs and small plants locally available were used to complete a rustic dwelling for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to live in for the time being, before the Lord would resume his journey and go to Kishkindha, his next halt.

Lord Ram's arrival at Panchavati and how he passed his days there has been narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 8-15.]

चौ०. जब ते राम कीन्ह तहँ बासा । सुखी भए मुनि बीती त्रासा ॥ १ ॥  
गिरि बन नदीं ताल छबि छाए । दिन दिन प्रति अति होहिं सुहाए ॥ २ ॥  
खग मृग बृंद अनंदित रहहीं । मधुप मधुर गुंजत छबि लहहीं ॥ ३ ॥  
सो बन बरनि न सक अहिराजा । जहाँ प्रगट रघुबीर बिराजा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jaba tē rāma kīnha taham̃ bāsā. sukhī bha'e muni bītī trāsā. 1.  
giri bana nadīm tāla chabi chā'ē. dina dina prati ati hōhīm suhā'ē. 2.  
khaga mṛga bṛnda anandita rahahīm. madhupa madhura guṇjata chabi  
lahahīm. 3.  
sō bana barani na saka ahirājā. jahām̃ pragaṭa raghubīra birājā. 4.

Ever since the day Lord Ram started dwelling in that place (Panchavati), all the sages and other pious souls who dwelt there were blessed with profound peace and joy; all their worries, torments and sufferings were dispelled by the virtue of the Lord's grace and presence in their vicinity<sup>1</sup>. (1)

The surrounding hills and mountains, the forests and groves, the rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and other water bodies—all became beautiful and pleasant to behold. Their charm and attraction began getting better and better by each passing day<sup>2</sup>. (2)

All the birds and animals lived happily together, enjoyed freedom and fearlessness, and were in complete harmony with each other and their surroundings<sup>3</sup>.

Honey bees hummed sweetly around, lending an aura of mesmerizing charm associated with soft music that echoed in the otherwise serene and calm environment of the wild forest<sup>4</sup>. (3)

Even the king of serpents (*ahirājā*), i.e. Lord Seshnath (who has a thousand mouths, and consequently a thousand tongues), cannot describe<sup>5</sup> the magnificence, the fascinating beauty and the mesmerizing charm of a forest (Panchavati) where Lord Ram lived personally (i.e. where the Lord God himself dwelt in a personified form)<sup>6</sup>.# (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We have read earlier that when Lord Ram arrived at Chitrakoot and decided to abide there for some time, all the sages, hermits, ascetics and others who lived nearby came to pay their obeisance to the Lord and seek his blessings, thereby deriving immense pleasure and satisfaction in their hearts. Then they retired to their respective places and pursued their religious practices freely, without any fear of interference from any inimical force, and feeling enthusiastic in their spiritual pursuits as they found that their previous efforts had borne fruit by way of their having had the opportunity of seeing the divine form of Lord Ram, who was a personified form of the Supreme Being himself, and interacting personally with him, which was a rarest of rare honour and privilege. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 134 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 137.}

<sup>2</sup>An exactly similar thing had happened at Chitrakoot—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 137; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 138; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 139.

<sup>3</sup>Refer also to a similar narration in relation to Chitrakoot: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 137; (ii) Doha no. 138 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

<sup>4</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 137 in relation to Chitrakoot.

<sup>5</sup>Lord Seshnath is believed to be the celestial Serpent who has a thousand hoods on which he supports the world (earth) by holding it aloft on his head, and preventing it from sinking into the fathomless abyss of the cosmos. The ‘thousand’ heads of Seshnath would naturally mean that he has an equal number of tongues—i.e. a thousand tongues. When the need arises to stress that a certain thing is so profound and great in some given aspect that it is not possible to describe it in any way, for any such attempt would fail and would be like merely scratching its surface, let alone describing that thing in its entirety, then a poet or bard would cite the inability of Lord Seshnath to do so in spite of his having ‘thousand tongues’. It simply means that ‘if anything cannot be properly narrated or sufficiently described by Lord Seshnath though he has a thousand tongues, then say how it can be done by a human being who has merely a single tongue?’

<sup>6</sup>The forests and hills, the dales and groves, the rivers and lakes, the birds, insects and animals, the sages, ascetics and hermits who lived at Chitrakoot, and the general environment of joy and peace, of beauty and charm, of a feeling of abundance and blessedness, of fearlessness and brotherhood, that prevailed in Chitrakoot during the time Lord Ram lived there, have similarly been lavishly praised and honoured in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 138—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.

#To wit, ever since Lord Ram came to live in this forest known as ‘Panchavati’, the sages, hermits and seers who lived there became happy, and all their torments, sufferings and worries ended. The hills, the forest, the rivers, the ponds and lakes in this forest began to look exceedingly charming, magnificent and most beautiful; they were delightful to behold; they captivated the mind of the beholder and enthralled his heart. Their magnificence and beauty changed for the better, and appeared to improve with every passing day; each new day made them appear more beautiful and enthralling than the previous day. The hordes and flocks of animals and birds that populated this forest lived happily and joyously, without harbouring any animosity against their natural enemies, and living fearlessly and without any worry in the world. The forest reverberated with the humming of the black bees. Even the king of serpents, Lord Seshnath, is unable to describe the pleasant and harmonious environs of the forest where Lord Ram, the Lord of the universe, himself resides.]

एक बार प्रभु सुख आसीना । लछिमन बचन कहे छलहीना ॥ ५ ॥  
सुर नर मुनि सचराचर साई । मैं पूछउँ निज प्रभु की नाई ॥ ६ ॥

ēka bāra prabhu sukha āsīnā. lachimana bacana kahē chalahīnā. 5.  
sura nara muni sacarācara sā'īm. mair̥m pūcha'um̐ nija prabhu kī nā'īm. 6.

Once upon a time, Lord Ram was sitting cheerfully in a relaxed mood. At that time, Laxman (his younger brother) approached the Lord (because he wanted to learn something about spiritual and metaphysical topics), and said politely words that were honest and free from pretensions<sup>1</sup>. (5)

Laxman said—‘Oh Lord of the gods, the human race, all the sages, seers and hermits, and all other creatures of this creation. I ask something from you because I highly regard you as my Lord (and therefore I feel free to approach you with my query as I know it is only you who can correctly enlighten me and make me wiser with the eclectic spiritual knowledge and wisdom which I wish to acquire). (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>One day, Laxman asked Lord Ram some questions on spiritual, metaphysical and devotional topics, for he earnestly wished to be enlightened about certain things, and so he decided to ask the Lord to explain and clarify them. He did not ask these questions to see if Lord Ram had an answer for them; he was not testing the Lord and his knowledge. Laxman was not examining the Lord, nor was he teasing the Lord with teasers to test the Lord’s knowledge, wisdom and erudition, or attempting to create an impression upon the Lord that he had high intellectual thinking, was very wise and contemplative because such questions of high spiritual value had risen in his heart in the first place. None of these things existed in the mind, heart or demeanours

of Laxman when he approached Lord Ram with an honest desire to learn and seek clarifications. He was not pretending to be eager to learn while actually intending to either test the Lord's wisdom or to tease him in any way.

It ought to be noted here that this is the standard method adopted in our ancient scriptures, especially the Upanishads, when great metaphysical philosophy, profound spiritual truths, great doctrines, esoteric secrets, inviolable scriptural axioms and maxims et al were revealed by erudite and learned sages and seers when their disciples asked them pointed questions to which they answered in detail. Otherwise, this profound knowledge would have remained confined to the pages of the scriptures without benefiting the common man.]

मोहि समुझाइ कहहु सोइ देवा । सब तजि करौं चरन रज सेवा ॥ ७ ॥

कहहु ग्यान बिराग अरु माया । कहहु सो भगति करहु जेहिं दाया ॥ ८ ॥

mōhi samujhā'i kahahu sō'i dēvā. saba taji karaum carana raja sēvā. 7.  
kahahu gyāna birāga aru māyā. kahahu sō bhagati karahu jēhim dāyā. 8.

Oh Lord! Explain the things to me and give me that spiritual wisdom which will inspire and motivate me in such a way that I abstain from everything else and abandon all my involvements with this mundane and mortal world, and instead devote myself fully in serving your holy feet. (7)

Explain to me about 'Gyan' (pronounced as Gyaan; meaning spiritual wisdom that leads to enlightenment; gnosis; knowledge of metaphysical and theological principles), 'Vairagya' (pronounced as Vairaagya; meaning renunciation, detachment and dispassion towards all things material and irrelevant for one's spiritual welfare), and 'Maya' (pronounced as Maayaa; meaning delusions arising out of ignorance of the Truth and Reality, leading to confusions, perplexities and hallucinations). And then tell me about 'Bhakti' (the virtues of devotion, dedication and submission for the Lord) that makes you become merciful and benevolent upon those who possess this eclectic and grand spiritual virtue. (8)

दो०. ईस्वर जीव भेद प्रभु सकल कहौ समुझाइ ।

जातें होइ चरन रति सोक मोह भ्रम जाइ ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

īvara jīva bhēda prabhu sakala kahau samujhā'i.  
jātēm hō'i carana rati sōka mōha bhrama jā'i. 14.

Oh Lord! Explain to me properly the difference between the Ishwar (the Supreme Being; the Parmatma) and the Jiva (the living being)—so that I can have affection, devotion and faith in your holy feet on the one hand, and all my 'Shoka' (grief, sorrow, torment), 'Moha' (infatuations, attachments, attractions for this deluding world of material sense objects and desire for self-gratifications) and 'Bhram' (delusions, confusions, perplexities) are removed or dispelled on the other hand.' (Doha no. 14).

[Note— The question ‘who is a Jiva’ has been answered in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 117.

Laxman has asked the Lord to enlighten him about the following points in these verse—(i) Gyan, (ii) Vairagya, (iii) Maya, (iv) Bhakti, (v) Ishwar, and (vi) Jiva respectively. Then he says that this divine knowledge will help him to overcome his spiritual problems and mental ignorance that robs him of his peace of mind and spiritual bliss, that makes him get entangled in the web of worldly delusions and attachments that suck him in a vortex of ever-increasing grief and misery that arises in the heart of a man due to ignorance of his true self, of his truthful identity, as well as about the reality of this world. This eclectic and divine knowledge will dispel all his attachments with things that have no pith and reality, and in its wake free him from the countless confusions and perplexities that he faces and which subtly keep his intellectual mind guessing and vexed.

The Lord’s advice and teaching will not only help him to dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions that has mired his mind and intellect, but also enlighten him with pristine knowledge of the truth and reality that would act as the rejuvenating light illuminating his inner self as well as his mind and intellect with the brilliant light of knowledge (Gyan) effusing out from the holy scriptures. This grand knowledge is very abstruse and therefore needs explanation and elucidation. Who else will be better placed, more competent and wiser to expertly and properly explain the esoteric spiritual, theological and metaphysical knowledge enshrined in the holy scriptures, to expound upon them and make their essence easily understandable by the common man, more than the Lord himself?

It ought to be noted here that these concepts have been elaborately dealt with in a number of Upanishads. Though it is not possible to delve into them here in detail, a brief guide by way of references where these topics are especially elucidated in detail will be in order.

The concept of *Gyan* is truthful knowledge of what constitutes the absolute, eternal, universal, incontrovertible and irrefutable Reality and Truth in this creation. ‘Gyan’ is truthful knowledge about the reality; knowledge in all its sublime connotations; knowledge in all its glorious forms; a comprehensive knowledge which does not leave anything to be known; knowledge that can help the seeker obtain liberation and deliverance for his soul from the fetters have been shackling it to ignorance and delusions.

Therefore, ‘Gyan’ in terms of metaphysics is spiritual awareness and enlightenment which makes a man have an access to that knowledge about the great Truth of existence that is eternal, ethereal and divine in nature, a knowledge that is enlightening and liberating. This knowledge and awareness leaves nothing more to be learnt and pursued by a spiritual aspirant. It is the culmination of his journey of quest of the Truth about himself and about the rest of the creation.

Gyan is also synonymous with *self-realisation*. What is ‘self-realisation’ has been elucidated in, inter alia, the following Upanishads:--

- (a) Rig Veda = Atma Bodh Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-21.
- (b) Shukla Yajur Veda = Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 55, 61-71.
- (c) Krishna Yajur Veda = Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 7-9, 22, 68-69, 73, Canto 3, verse no. 1; Tejo-bindu Upanishad, Canto 2-4 and 6; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 81-110.
- (d) Atharva Veda = The *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 47, 53-59.



*How true Gyan is kindled* has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 76 as follows—“The fire is always present inherently in the firewood, but it is kindled or made to make its physical presence visible only when this wood is vigorously rubbed as done in the case of fire sacrifices when an Arani is used to light the fire.

Similarly, the light of Gyan, i.e. the illumination provided by enlightenment and wisdom is only brought to the fore by constant and diligent practice. It needs steadiness of purpose and unwavering commitment on the part of the spiritual aspirant to kindle this light of wisdom and enlightenment (that would help him to see who he really is—i.e. to become ‘self-realised’ and then progress further to realise that this ‘self’ is the non-dual and conscious Atma which is the microcosmic image of the supreme transcendental cosmic Atma of the entire creation at the macrocosmic level).

In other words, though each individual possesses the light of wisdom and intelligence that is inherently and naturally present in him for the simple reason that all have a brain and all have the same consciousness flowing in their bodies, but if this divine faculty is not properly polished, trained and harnessed then it would remain dormant and untapped like the fire in the firewood (76).”

*Characteristics of those who are possessed of Gyan* have been described in:-- (a) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Paingalo-panishad, in its Canto 4; (b) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahm Bindu or Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2 (full).

*What is true Gyan* has been described in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 14, 18, 24, 48-54, 65; and *how to obtain it* has been explained in Canto 1, verse no. 34-37.

*Relationship between Gyan and Mukti*—References = Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2; Brahm Bindu/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5.

This relationship has been explained in *Brahm Bindu or Amrit Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 5 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Let us see what it has to say on the subject—“A wise and erudite man should endeavour to control or restrain his Mana and train it to inculcate dispassion towards the deluding and entrapping attractions proffered by the sense objects of this material world only till the time the Mana has not been trained to remain focused on the heart and the eternal fount of bliss and happiness that resides in it. When the Mana becomes one with the heart, i.e. when the emotions and thoughts are concentrated upon one object without pulling the creature in opposite directions, it is obvious that peace and bliss are obtained by him.

The dissolution of the Mana (mind) while focusing on the ‘self’ residing in the subtle heart in the form of the Atma (the pure consciousness; the self)—i.e. when the creature is successfully able to keep his attention focused on his inner self where the fount of eternal bliss known as the Atma resides and prevent the mind from wandering in the external world and attempting to find the illusive peace and comfort there—is tantamount to obtaining Gyan and Mukti by the creature.

Everything else, all other interpretations and connotations of the terms Gyan and Mukti (liberation, deliverance) are merely elaborations of this great metaphysical, theological and spiritual truth as expounded in and enunciated by the scriptures. {In other words, turning the Mana away from the material world of impermanence and delusory charms, and instead diverting its energy and efforts to the inner self where the eternal, divine and glorious Atma representing the supreme transcendental consciousness known as Brahm resides, is the main aim of studying and hearing the scriptures. This is the main aim of the scriptures and their teaching, and if this aim is achieved successfully, then the rest become redundant. Otherwise, one can go on

reading reams of paper, debating the scriptural texts and listening to decades of innumerable lectures and still achieve nothing worthwhile.} (5).”

The realisation or awareness that Atma is, inter alia, different from the body, and is the true identity of a creature, is called ‘Gyan’. This Atma is a very unique entity and is called the ‘true self’ of the creature. Gyan refers to self realisation and attainment of enlightenment about the absolute Truth and Reality in this creation. It encompasses a broad swathe of philosophy which is taught by the Upanishads, called Vedanta. The difference between ‘Gyan’ and ‘Vigyan’ can be succinctly summed up in the statement—‘Brahm is’ or ‘Lord is’. This awareness and firm conviction of its truth is Gyan, while to say truthfully that ‘Brahm is I’ or ‘Lord is I’ is called Vigyan.

The concept of what consists of truthful form of Gyan in the context of metaphysics and spiritualism has been explained in a number of Upanishads. Here we shall quote a few of them—such as (a) Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 15-18; (b) Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12; (c) Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14; (d) Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 22.

The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 15-18 describes what truthful Gyan is and what Agyan is.

*Relationship between Gyan and Atma* has been enunciated in Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 60 which affirms that the Atma, the pure consciousness, is Gyan personified. To quote—“I (the pure conscious Atma, the true self of the creature) am an image and fountainhead of complete Gyan, i.e. knowledge that is eternal, ethereal and divine, knowledge that is enlightening and liberating.

When the light of Gyan is lit in my heart, the latter (heart) is illuminated with the divine light of consciousness where no darkness representing delusions and misconceptions can ever hope to survive. This fills the heart with immense contentedness and blissfulness. It effuses out of my being and forms a halo of a divine glow around me. As a result, I become an embodiment of light myself. {This light of ‘Gyan’ completely lights up my inner and outer self, and it radiates out of my heart like the light coming out of the wick of a lighted lamp.}

I represent all the hues and shades of thoughts and emotions that exist in this creation (60).”

The *three types of Gyan*—According to Shaarirako Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 13, there are three types of Gyan. They are Sata Gyan, Raja Gyan and Tama Gyan. To quote this Upanishad—“The knowledge of the eclectic, non-dual, immutable, eternal and absolute Truth of existence (i.e. the knowledge of the cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly everywhere and without no notion or concept of ‘life’ has any meaning) is regarded as Satwic Gyan (or the best and the excellent form of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment which paves the way for a man’s self-realisation and his ultimate liberation and deliverance from this world of birth and death marked by ignorance, delusions, horrors and torments that are never ending). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called ‘Satya Gyan’ or knowledge of the Truth.

The knowledge pertaining to Dharma (i.e. that knowledge which enlightens the man about his moral obligations, duties and responsibilities as well as making him aware of what are considered as noble, righteous and auspicious virtues, deeds or things in this world) come under the category of Rajsic Gyan (because such knowledge would automatically and naturally inspire him to get involved in doing

good deeds and avoiding the bad ones). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called ‘Dharma Gyan’ or knowledge of Dharma.

But that knowledge that is covered by a veil of darkness signifying ignorance, stupidity and delusions, leading to all sorts of misconceptions and illusions about the truth and reality, the darkness in which phantoms and ghosts are seen, comes under the category of ‘Tama Gyan’, or the knowledge dominated by darkness (13).”

The *seven steps to Gyan* have been elaborately described in Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse nos.21-47 of the Sam Veda tradition.

In this context, there are two other relevant concepts—Gyan Yoga and Gyan Shakti. (a) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature. (b) Gyan gives sufficient power, strength and wisdom to the creature which enlightens it about the good and the bad, about what is beneficial for it and what is ruinous for it. It is the empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called Gyan Shakti, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully.

The concept of Gyan has been explained in Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyasa, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.

*Difference between Bhakti and Gyan* and the fact that *Bhakti is superior to Gyan* and a better spiritual pursuit for the aspirant has been explained in the Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, in its Uttar Kand, Chaupai 11-16 and stanza ‘ka’ of Doha 115, and Chaupai 1-8 and stanza ‘ka’ of Doha 116, to Doha 120, the crow saint Kagbhusund preaches Garud, the legendary eagle, the mount of Lord Vishnu, the difference between Gyan and Bhakti. In the course of the discourse it is made clear why the path of Bhakti is superior to and better than the path of Gyan in order to attain one’s spiritual goal of attaining Mukti or Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for the soul).

The relationship between Bhakti (devotion for God), Gyan (truthful spiritual knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation and detachment from this deluding world of material sense objects) is outlined in the Ram Charit Manas, 7/120/14-15.

Next we come to the concept of *Vairagya*. It is the precondition to developing Gyan—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 of Sortha (a sort of Doha) no. 89 Ka. It says—“Can Gyan (true knowledge) be acquired without the help of a wise Guru (teacher); can Gyan (true spiritual knowledge leading to enlightenment) be acquired without Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion and detachment from delusory world ridden by ignorance); and can true happiness and bliss ever be obtained with having Bhakti (devotion and love) for Hari (Lord God). This is the declaration of the Vedas and the Purans (hence it is unquestionably correct because it is ancient and time-tested wisdom).”

“Anyone who has the priceless gem in the form of Bhakti (unflinching devotion and purest form of love) for Lord Ram in his heart can never have any

sorrow or grief even in his dreams; he is free from them”—refer Ram Charit Manas, 7/120/9.

The Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 47 describes the state of living with complete renunciation of all things worldly, known as ‘Sanyas’, in the following way—“A high degree of renunciation, detachment, dispassion, non-involvement and contentedness in which all the Sankalps (volition, ambition, determination, resolution etc.) vis-à-vis the world are exhausted is known as ‘Sanyas’.”

The term ‘Vairagya’ means complete renunciation and detachment towards everything that is non-truth and detrimental to the creature’s spiritual wellbeing. The Varaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 4 and 37 lists certain qualities which a spiritual aspirant must possess if he is to be an honest person who has actually accepted the vows of Vairagya.

The term Maya—*Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a ‘mother; a progenitor; something that creates’, while the other half refers to the ‘notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty’. The word ‘Ma’ also means ‘to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of’. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the ‘mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities’. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define this entire complex phenomenon at once. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, imposturing, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance in spite of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature’s mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that Brahm employs to create delusions. Maya is the deluding power of the supreme Authority in creation known as Brahm that has been used by him to create the sense of duality. The factual position is that everything is one and the same, and the different views of them is simply an illusion just like one sees a mirage in a desert and thinks it to be real whereas everyone knows that it is a physical phenomenon created due to the effect of excessive heat on desert sand, and it is the deluded mind that thinks it to be real though it is well aware that such things do happen in a desert and it is wise advice not to follow this illusion.

Maya has three subtle forms; hence it is called *Trigunamayi Maya*. These forms represent the three basic constituent qualities of creation, called the Gunas, that give Maya its inherent nature and characteristic quality. These three Gunas are—Sata, Raja and Tama. ‘Sata’ is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to

high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These *three qualities* together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any 'Truth' after rigorously examining the 'truthfulness' of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the 'truthful Truth'. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute 'Truth', he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Purva Kand/Canto 1, verse no. 10, describes these three types of Mayas. This Upanishad's Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 9-10 describe the effects of Maya, verse nos. 15-18 the relationship between Maya and the Atma, and verse nos. 44-45 the fact that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma as well as of Brahm.

The Atma Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, verse nos. 26, 28-29 are very explicit in the principle that all the spiritual problems that are created for a Jiva, the living being, are the cause of Maya, and that by eliminating Maya he can easily overcome them.

How the conquering and subsequent *elimination of Maya helps the creature* to conquer and sub-sequentially eliminate the world and its delusions has been described in Mantriko-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 4-8.

The Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 49 describes why it is important to overcome Maya in these words—"Only those persons who have cleansed their inner self of all taints and blackening soot created by Maya (representing all sorts of delusory and ignorance-based conceptions and misunderstandings pertaining to the actual reality and truth) are able to see the reflection or image of the Supreme Being in their inner self. This image is as glorious as its principle who has his own self-created body (i.e. who does not live in some other body like the creature's Atma which lives in another gross body when it takes birth in this world), is self-illuminated, and is the universal witness and observer of everything in this creation (which implies that he is present everywhere, inside and outside of everything, at the same time, and also in all phases of time such as the past, the present and the future). Therefore it follows that those who are covered by the veil cast by Maya and tainted by its evil shadow of deceit and illusions can never hope to see this glorious Divinity shining in their inner self (49)."

Next we have the concept of *Ishwar* and *Jiva*.

*Ishwar* is the cosmic causal body of the immanent, all-pervading and omnipresent Brahm. This *Ishwar* has the counterpart in the individual creature or *Jiva* as its causal body and is then known as *Pragya*—that which is aware, knowledgeable, wise, enlightened, intelligent, erudite, sagacious, expert and skilled. These are the attributes of Brahm who has revealed himself at the cosmic level in the body known as *Ishwar*, and at the micro level in the causal body of the individual creature as its *Atma* known as *Pragya*. Why is the causal body ‘*Pragya*’? It is because of the light of wisdom, enlightenment etc. emanating from the self-illuminated *Atma* that resides inside its inner chambers. This *Atma* is surrounded by the bliss sheath much like the embryo surrounded and protected in the mother’s womb by the embryonic membranes.

*Ishwar* is honoured by epithets which highlight some or the other of his majestic glories. Some of them, inter alia, are the following—*Satya* (truth), *Shiva* (auspicious), *Sundar* (beauty); *Satt* (eternal), *Chitt* (consciousness; knowledge), *Anand* (beatitude and felicity); *Akchar* (imperishable; the eternal ethereal word), *Uttam* (the best, the most exalted, the ultimate), *Purush* (the primary Male Spirit; the supreme Spirit), *Parmatma* (the supreme Soul of creation), *Prakriti* (primary Nature), *Purshottam* (the best *Purush*; the most exalted holy spirit), *Pragya* (knowledgeable, wise, skilled, enlightened and conscious) and *Vibho* (omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent).

The term *Ishwar* has been described in *Paingal Upanishad* of the *Shukla Yajur Veda* tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 4.

The *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of *Krishna Yajur Veda*, in its verse nos. 50-52 define the term *Ishwar* very succinctly as follows—

“Verse no. 50 = The *Ishwar* (the Supreme Being who is the cause of the entire creation, including the *Prakriti* and *Maya*) is called ‘supreme and almighty’ as he possesses the authority and power to control this *Maya* (*Prakriti* or *Nature*) and keep it subservient to him. The three unique characteristic qualities or virtues of this *Ishwar* are the following—(a) to keep *Maya* under control (*Vashyamayattva*), (b) to be non-dual and unparalleled (*Eka*), and (c) to be omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise (*Sarvagya*) (50).

“Verse no. 51 = This *Ishwar* (the Supreme Being) is predominantly auspicious, truthful and holy (*Satwic*), he is all-inclusive and all-encompassing (*Samashti*), and is a witness to everything in this creation (i.e. nothing is hidden from him--*Sakshi*). Being endowed with these unique eclectic qualities, supernatural powers and divine virtues, the *Ishwar* is able to create this world or decide not to do so, and even conclude what has already been created (51).

“Verse no. 52 = In this way, the pure cosmic Consciousness possessing all the eclectic and divine virtues and supernatural powers, such as being *Sarvagya* (omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise) etc. is called ‘*Ishwar*’ (52).”

Why the *Ishwar* became a *Jiva* (creature) has been described in *Paingal Upanishad* of *Shukla Yajur Veda* tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and Canto 2 is fully dedicated to answer this question.

*Difference between Jivatma and Parmatma*—This has been explained in *Atharva Veda*’s *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 4 as follows—“The four states in which a *Jiva* (living being) exists are the following—*Jagrat*, *Swapna*, *Sushupta* and *Turiya*. The fifth state called the *Turiyatit* state is beyond these four.

In other words, the same Atma appears to exist in four different forms depending upon these four states of a creature's conscious existence. Hence, the Atma that lives in the Jagrat state is called 'Vishwa', in the Swapna state it is called 'Taijas', in the Sushupta state it is called 'Pragya', and in the Turiya state it is called 'Tathastha' (literally meaning non-involved, indifferent and completely neutral). The Atma or consciousness that exists beyond these four states, the Atma which exists in the transcendental state called Turiyatit, is known as the 'Parmatma'—or the supreme Atma or the transcendental Consciousness. Since it is in 'transcendental' state of existence which goes beyond all the known states of worldly existence, it is natural that it rises above the gross and the mundane, and instead remains free from all the faults and shortcomings that are associated with worldly existence—i.e. the Parmatma is immaculate and devoid of all taints and corruptions that might have shrouded the Atma when it assumes a gross body while it lives in this world. [This is the reason why the Parmatma is compared to the sky because the sky stays above the gross world known as the earth and does not have any of the physical limitations of the earth.]

Again, since the wise ascetic has already realised that his true 'self' is the Atma that lives in the Turiyatit state of existence, it is obvious that he is like this Parmatma. So he exclaims upon this eclectic discovery—'I am Brahm (the Parmatma)!'

A person who lives perpetually in this Turiyatit state is deemed to be free from the limitations imposed by the other four states of existence. It may be argued that this Turiyatit state incorporates all the other four states of existence, but in actual practice it is perpetually a completely neutral state, and anything that is profoundly and eternally neutral cannot be said to have bias towards any one or the other thing. Since there is no reversal of this state of Turiyatit, i.e. once a man reaches this transcendental state of existence he would not go back to the other four states of existence, he would not be aware of the gross world and his gross organs as done in the Jagrat state, he would not dream as in the Swapna state, he would not be in the temporary state of rest in the Sushupta state which is a transient state as the creature oscillates between the Sushupta and Swapna states while asleep, and he would not even have any junior level of spiritual evolvment as exemplified by the Turiya state which is higher than the Sushupta state but lower than the Turiyatit state. This is because he has reached the highest point in his spiritual journey and has reached its pinnacle or citadel. There is no existence beyond it; it is the supreme state in which the consciousness can ever expect to exist. Hence, it is honoured by the epithet 'Param'—one that is supreme and beyond which there is nothing.

Since the eternal and truthful Atma (here referring the cosmic transcendental form of the Atma known as Consciousness, rather than the microcosmic form of the Atma that lives inside the body of the individual creature as its Jiva-Atma) is the only conscious and living entity that exists in all of these states of existence, it is deemed to be the only one witness of their presence.

{The gross body ceases to exist in the other states except the Jagrat state. The subtle body consisting of the mind ceases to exist in the Sushupta state. The causal body that harbours the individual's Atma ceases to exist when the creature dies and leaves the gross body. So, none of them are eternal. The Atma itself, though it is eternal and immaculate by nature, becomes mired in the delusions of the world, allows itself to be trapped in the web-like snare created out of its own free will, then remains engrossed in doing so many deeds and suffering from their consequences, has various desires and assumes so many roles voluntarily. Hence, it is also not apparently steady. In other words, the Atma that is called a 'Jiva Atma' is influenced by the

environment in which it lives; it is tainted by its surroundings. As compared to this situation, the Parmatma is unaffected by worldly things and is beyond the reach or influence of anything gross and mundane that pertains to this creation, whether it is good or bad. Hence, in this scenario, the only entity that remains constant and unchanging is the Parmatma, the supreme form of the individual Atma which is also known as Brahm. That is also why the latter is called the Absolute Truth—because the latter does not change.

A simple illustration will help to clear the idea. The celestial sun is unmoving and shining brilliantly in a uniform manner. But when seen from earth, it appears to move and even change its brilliance depending upon a number of environmental factors such as the presence of clouds, humidity, dust particles etc. in the atmosphere, etc. The sun also appears to rise and set, is hidden from view behind dark clouds, or even disappears during solar eclipses. But even a high school student knows that none of this is true. Similarly, the disc of the moon appears to have its own light whereas it merely reflects the light of the sun, and it also appears to change its contours every night though this is due to the different angles from which it is viewed from earth every night as a result of its revolution around the earth. The same argument applies to the Parmatma vis-à-vis the Jiva Atma. The Parmatma is like the sun, and the Jiva Atma is like the moon that shines in the light of the sun.}

Since the Parmatma represents that superior aspect of the cosmic Consciousness that is absolutely neutral and detached from everything, including Maya (delusions), it is beyond the purview of the four normal states of conscious existence of a creature. The Atma living in the Turiyatit state is called a Parmatma. In this state, it cannot be called a ‘Drasta’ of anything, or the one who sees anything, observes anything, or is a witness to anything—because this is a completely neutral and detached state of existence in which the mind and all the other faculties are defunct, and in which nothing matters for the super-conscious Atma<sup>1</sup>.

In such a case, should one regard the Jiva (the living being) as the Drasta? {If the Parmatma is not the Drasta or the one who sees, observes and witnesses anything because of its sublime cosmic existence and neutral character, then can one treat the creature that has a gross existence in a visible world of material sense objects as the seer, observer and witness?}

No, the Jiva (living being) is also not the Drasta in the true sense because his ‘true self’ is the Atma that is a most subtle and sublime entity which is really not involved in anything related to the gross body as well as the gross world. This Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma (which is the ‘supreme Atma’ or the cosmic Consciousness which is the macrocosmic form of the individual creature’s Atma). The Atma possesses all the virtues of the Parmatma in the sense that it is equally neutral, dispassionate, detached etc. from anything gross and untrue. The problem arises only when the creature, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, begins to identify himself with the gross body in which this Atma lives and erroneously begins to treat this body as his ‘true self and identity’. This body lives and interacts with the gross material world of sense objects.

So, when the creature begins to identify himself with the body, he becomes a ‘Drasta’ because then he begins to ‘see and perceive’ this world through the organs of perception of the body. Now he becomes someone who ‘sees’, someone who perceives, feels, tastes, touches, smells etc. The world becomes his object of perception or the ‘Drisya’. The Drasta (the seer or observer) is affected naturally by the Drisya (the objects or things seen or observed). The sight influences him and creates either a positive or a negative impression on his sub-conscious and psyche.



Such a creature cannot remain immune from, unaffected by or indifferent to his surroundings and what he 'sees' simply because his mind and intellect are not attuned to see the 'truth'. Had they been so, the creature would have realised that the body—which actually does the seeing or perceiving of the objects of the world—is not his truthful identity at all in the first place. The fact that he has not realised what his true nature is becomes the breeding ground for illusions of his being a 'Drasta' or the seer. Such a 'Drasta' gets embroiled in the affairs of the gross world because he 'sees' this world as being true—though this perception is absolutely erroneous.

On the other hand is the person who can be regarded as a 'neutral Drasta or a non-Drasta'. This wise man knows that his 'true form' is not the body but the Atma that lives in this body. Such a wise and erudite man would do things in this world like another 'ordinary' man, but with the difference that he does not get involved in anything the body does at the emotional and sub-conscious level. His mind neither gets involved in what his body does, nor does it register or store any information in its memory bank regarding the humdrum affairs of the world.

Therefore it is derived that the same Jiva Atma (a living being) can either be a 'Drasta' or a 'non-Drasta' depending upon the level of its wisdom and intellectual development in the spiritual sphere. That is, everything depends on the level in which a living being's Atma or pure consciousness exists in this world. In other words, at the lower level and grosser level of existence of the consciousness, the Jiva becomes a 'Drasta', while at the higher level of existence he is a 'non-Drasta'. A Drasta is involved in and influenced by the world, while the non-Drasta is uninvolved and neutral.

In other words, if the Atma relates itself to the world—whether at the gross level corresponding to the Jagrat state known as the waking state of consciousness in the physical world, or at the lower subtle level corresponding to the Swapna state known as the dreaming state of consciousness in the world of dreams—then this Atma is known as the 'Drasta'. But when the same Atma lives in the Turiya state of consciousness that transcends these levels of existence of consciousness—when it is completely detached from the world, the physical body and the subtle mind—then it is known as the 'non-Drasta'.

Now suppose it is said that the Jiva's (living being's) true nature is not to remain involved in worldly affairs as his 'true form' is the Atma which is pure consciousness that is equivalent to the cosmic Consciousness called the Parmatma, then this logic also does not hold its ground of validity. This is because as soon as the Atma assumes a gross body, it is immediately shrouded by the ego and pride of having a body. It is almost impossible to find a living being or a Jiva who would not accept that he has a body. In fact, the very concept of being a 'Jiva' rests on the premise that the Atma has a body. Therefore, if this notion of being a possessor of a body is done away with, it is only then that the Jiva becomes equivalent to the Parmatma. {The Atma is proud of the body because this body gives the Atma its form, its identity as an individual; it is by the medium of the gross body that the Atma is able to perform stupendous tasks in this world, achieves success in various fields and acquire name and fame; it is the body which helps the Atma to do deeds that are righteous, noble, auspicious and holy. The Atma is only a Spirit without a form, and to be identified it needs a physical form which the body provides. Hence, the Atma is proud of its association with the body. This stokes the ego and makes the Atma possessive of the body.}

In other words, the *difference between a Jiva and the Parmatma* is just like the difference between the Ghatakash and the Mahakash. {The Ghatakash is the space

present inside a hollow pitcher, and the Mahakash is the vast open sky outside the vessel. The Ghataakash is separated from the Mahakash by the physical body of the pitcher. Actually there is no distinction between the space inside and outside the pitcher, for if the vessel is broken the two spaces coalesce instantly and effortlessly.}

The two names of the same thing are given only in an abstract manner for the purpose of study, for in actuality there is no difference. So therefore, a Jiva has a distinct existence only as long as it has the body—or is conscious that it has the body, and as soon as this awareness of the body is removed, the two—the Jiva and the Parmatma—become one.

Another instance is cited now.] The same breath moves out and in the body as exhalation and inhalation. While doing so, it makes two distinct sounds—‘Ha’ and ‘Sa’ respectively. That is, while moving out the sound is equivalent to the letter ‘Ha’ of the Sanskrit language, and when moving in the sound is equivalent to the letter ‘Sa’. This forms the Mantra ‘Hans’, meaning a divine Swan. In other words, the Jiva’s Pran or vital winds also display artificial distinction as being exhaled breath and inhaled breath though the air is the same entity that cannot be distinguished and mutated. A wise, self-realised and enlightened ascetic understands the esoteric message encrypted in this sound of Hans. He realises that the breath is telling him that he is like the divine bird Swan which is regarded as the purest and the wisest amongst the birds. So, a wise ascetic always concentrates upon his pure and enlightened form known as the Atma that has no physical body like this wind or air element which too has no physical body. The Atma then becomes equivalent to the Parmatma.

With this sublime and eclectic spiritual view firmly established in his inner self, the enlightened ascetic discards all sense of ego and pride vis-à-vis the body. And when this happens, he becomes one with the Parmatma (as explained above) (4).”

The great metaphysical doctrine that the *Jiva and the Ishwar are one and non-dual* has been elucidated in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47, and (ii) Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77.

The *relation between a Jiva and Brahm/Ishwar/Parmatma* has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4 (difference between Jiva and Parmatma); Canto 9, verse no. 10 (difference between Jiva and Prakriti); Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 5 (Jiva and Brahm are one). (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 5; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 52-53, 70, 73. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda = Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2 (subject of Jiva vis-à-vis Brahm).

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurana, 4/9/6 describes this concept of a *Jiva being a reflection of the Supreme Brahm* as follows—‘My salutations to the Supreme Being who is almighty and all-powerful. The Lord has entered my heart, enlivens my vital Pran (breath), my limbs and my sense organs, and also empowers my faculty of speech—all of which would otherwise have remained dormant and ineffective.’

The reason *why the Jiva remains trapped in this world* has been elaborately explained in Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-13; and Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-8. How to *find liberation* from this world has been explained in this Upanishad’s Canto 5, paragraph nos. 9-13.

The concept of *Jiva and Jiva-Atma* has been beautifully brought out in Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its verse no. 15.

*Why a Jiva takes a new birth* has been answered in—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Varaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 71, Canto 4, verse no. 40; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 31; Canto 3, verse no. 24; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/10-12. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 12, 33; Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse nos. 4-14; Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse no. 1-6. (iii) Atharva Veda's Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 10-13, and Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-13; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 23; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse no. 1; Mundak 3, section 2, verse no. 2; Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 10; Prashna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 9-10, 13-16; Canto 3, verse no. 7, 9-10.

Relation between a *Jiva and Prakriti (Nature)* has been explained in (i) Atharva Veda's Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse no. 10.

Difference between *Jivatma and Parmatma*—(i) Atharva Veda's Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-13.

*Non-duality between the Jiva and Brahm* has been proclaimed in the Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 2, 5.

The *size of the Jiva* has been given in the Krishna Yajur Veda's Shwetashwatar Upanishad, canto 5, verse no. 8 as follows—"The size and dimension of the Jiva (literally and generally referring to the living creature, but here implying to the 'true identity' of the creature as its pure consciousness known as the Atma and not the gross body which might be as colossus as the mammoth or an elephant, and as minute as the one-cell organisms as the bacteria and amoeba) is astonishingly miniscule and microscopic beyond imagination. It is as small as the fraction that remains after the tip of a hair follicle is split into one hundred parts and then one part of this (i.e. the one hundredth part) is further split into another hundred parts. {The Atma is the size of one thousandth part of the tip of a hair follicle. The idea is not to actually measure its physical dimensions but to drive home the point that it is unimaginably minute like the atom.}

The miracle is that this single minute atomic entity expands itself into infinite variety of creatures, having as many variations in forms, shapes, sizes and colours as well as temperaments, inclinations, behavioral patterns and nature as there are number of species, classes and divisions of creation in this world (9)."

The eternal esoteric question *Who is a Jiva* (a living being) has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 3; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Saraswati Upanishad, verse nos. 47-48; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 15; Skand Upanishad, verse nos. 6-7. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2.

Though it is not possible here to quote all the above Upanishads to learn 'who a Jiva is', we shall however quote selected Upanishadic verses as follows to understand this concept better.

Now let us see what Paingal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 12 has to say on the subject of 'who is a Jiva'—"That all-knowing and omniscient Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation) invoked his own stupendous powers that created illusions and delusions in this creation, called his 'Maya', which allowed him to assume any form that he wished, and in conjunction with it (or joining hands with his own Maya, or allowing himself to become veiled in his own delusions) he entered

the body of the individual creature. He was so enamoured with his own creation, and especially when he allowed his Maya to accompany him, that the same cosmic Lord who is beyond comprehension of even the wisest of men and the reach of the holy scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, became engulfed or surrounded by 'Moha' (worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments, endearments, longings, love and affections). With this twin fault—viz. Maya and Moha—that supreme Lord who has no attributes and names became a 'worldly creature'. {When Maya found out that it's Lord is getting interested in and developing affection for what he has created, it went ahead to fulfill the wishes of its Lord like a faithful and obedient servant would. Maya went literally overboard to please the Lord, and knowing that he might balk and suffer from indecision as to whether or not to allow himself to plunge in the formidable web of creation that he plans to unfold (because Brahm was an enlightened Being, and he would soon realise his failings), Maya showed its sly hand and made him get infatuated and enamoured with the creation to such an extent that the Lord lost awareness of who is was, and consequently became engrossed in this world like a fish takes to water at the first opportunity. Say, if this can happen to the Ishwar whose Maya did not think twice in casting its evil spell upon its own Lord, how can an ordinary creature can ever expect to be free from its tentacles!}

Therefore, the supreme Ishwar, now manifested as a creature, the Jiva, began to treat himself as a doer of deeds and an enjoyer of or a sufferer from the consequences of those deeds because he became associated with the three types of bodies that he had assumed in his form of a worldly creature.

{The three types of bodies of a creature are the following—the gross body having the various sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body consisting of the Atma surrounded by the bliss sheath.}

When he got associated with the body having three divisions (gross, subtle and causal), he naturally lived through all the states through which these bodies pass during their sojourn in this mortal world—such as the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state of existence. Further, since he had assumed all the characteristics of a creature's body, he assumed that he would die like an ordinary creature. Thus, the immortal Lord became mortal! {Once Maya and Moha had their upper hands, the Lord of creation was misled to believe that he is an ordinary mortal being who has a mortal body, undergoes the three states of existence so characteristic of the body, that he would die, and that he would enjoy or suffer the results of his deeds.}

As a result he went round and round like the bullock turning the water-wheel or the potter's wheel which goes on endlessly turning; he got trapped in this wheel of a continuous cycle of birth and death (12).

The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12 describes who is a Jiva as follows—"The 'Manas Brahm' (i.e. the Brahm that lives as the sub-conscious and the subtle mind of the creature, controlling the latter's thoughts and emotions from within) has a divine and sublime subtle form known as 'Hans', 'So-a-Ham', etc.

{This Manas Brahm obviously is the pure conscious Atma as the divine bird Hans, the Swan, is frequently used in the Upanishads as a metaphor for the Atma to indicate the latter's immaculacy, holiness, purity and divinity, along with a high degree of wisdom, enlightenment and erudition. Since the Atma is also the 'self' of the creature, a person who performs a fire sacrifice with a holistic approach is expected to become highly self-realised in as much as he declares, with the greatest of

honesty and sincerity ‘I am that Brahm’ who is represented by Hans which is a metaphor for the Atma.}

This symbolic fire sacrifice (that is done to attain this eclectic state of existence when the aspirant becomes enough self-realised to understand that he is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified in the form of his Atma known as Hans) is actually the practice of Naad. When the seeker of Brahm becomes completely submerged in the thoughts of Brahm and the Atma, when he continuously meditates upon the pure consciousness by employing the Mantra ‘Hans’ (as described in a number of Upanishads for this purpose), his inner-self begins to resonate with the sound of Naad (i.e. the cosmic sound in ether which is said to be generated in the cosmos by the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm). This sound flows in a continuous stream like the flow of oil on a clean surface. Its vibrations reverberate in the nerves and veins of the practitioner’s body so much so that he becomes oblivious of everything else in this world.

Any disruption in this state of transcendental existence of continuous bliss and stability is the state of existence known as the Jiva—i.e. the Atma that lacks steadiness of bliss and tranquility, and is therefore tossed and tumbled around by the changing nature of the gross world around it.

[In other words, the ‘Jiva’ or the living being is an entity that is different from Brahm by the virtue of its losing its connection with the Atma, the pure consciousness. Otherwise, there is no distinction between the Jiva and Brahm.] (12).”

The Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-12 describe who a Jiva is as follows—

“Canto 4, paragraph no. 9 = During the period of Unmesh (i.e. when the external world is perceived employing the gross organs of perception in the gross body) the Avidya (lack of true knowledge; ignorance of the reality and truth) is the dominant feature. [From the spiritual perspective, the gross world that is seen to exist and the gross body which the creature thinks as his ‘self’ is out of total ignorance and false notions.]

On the contrary, during the Nimesh period this Avidya is totally dispensed with. {When one turns inwards and contemplates upon the ‘truth’ of existence by shutting off all sources of delusions that are created by the outside world, it is akin to shutting-off of all ignorance. Then what is observed is free from being tainted by Avidya.}

As soon as Unmesh resurfaces (i.e. as soon as one opens the eye, or as soon as one begins to perceive the existence of the gross external world and starts to relate himself with it, or soon as he becomes extrovert), the factor of Avidya (lack of knowledge of the truth that has its genesis in ignorance) also stages a come-back because it is propelled to the front by the very subtle and hidden Vasnas that are present in the creature. {These Vasanas are his natural passions and desires to enjoy the material comforts and pleasures of the world and its sense objects, to gratify the body and its sense organs. They drive the creature towards the world of artificiality or the world of Avidya, and away from the Truth represented by the world of Vidya.}

As soon as this happens, all the accompanying paraphernalia of Avidya make a colourful and forceful resurgence. With this development there arises the concept of duality as a natural corollary, as a natural follow-up, and as a natural consequence. {Once one allows himself to be trapped by Avidya, the latter catches hold of the prey with a vengeance and viciously hold him in its vice-like grip. The creature becomes

overwhelmed by delusions that propel him towards believing as true what is essentially untrue.}

Because of the mischief created by Avidya, or because of the lack of knowledge of the reality, there arises the concept of cause and its effect. The creature who is overcome with Avidya during the Unmesh phase of existence begins to see duality in the world—he begins to see or perceive a difference between the Jiva (the individual living creature) and the Ishwar (the Lord who appears to control this creature, who can punish and give reward, and to whom the creature offers his respects and worship).

The Ishwar is designated as being the cause of this creation, and the Jiva is the effect. The existence of this creation with all its units, including the living creature, is attributed to the Ishwar (the Supreme Being; the Brahm; the Adi-Narayan). The product that reveals the dynamism of this Ishwar, the effect of what Ishwar wished to do, is in the form of the Jiva, the living being (9).

“Canto 4, paragraph no. 11 = They (i.e. such people who do not honour Lord Vishnu and therefore are affected by Maya) continue to be trapped in the cycle of birth and re-birth repeatedly for an endless time, being impelled and motivated by the various components of the Antahakarans (the ‘inner self’ and its various Vasanas and Vrittis—the various natural inclinations, desires, yearnings, passions tendencies and habits etc. of a creature that traps him in the vicious cycle of birth and death and re-birth.

This Antahakaran is the field of activity of Avidya. {To wit, when true knowledge is lacking, the accompanying ignorance and related delusions directly affect the inner being of the creature, and through it, his whole thought process, temperament and life. It must be noted that mind and the intellect are important components of the Antahakaran, and it is the mind and the intellect that do the thinking and analysis for the creature. So when Avidya is the dominant player, its influence would be evident in all the spheres of life of the creature.}

At the same time it cannot be denied that the Antahakaran (the subtle inner-self) remains activated and empowered due to the presence of ‘consciousness’ inside the gross body of the creature. Since this ‘consciousness’ that keeps the creature alive and activates his Antahakaran is a reflection, an image, of the cosmic Consciousness which is synonymous with the divine entity known as Brahm, it follows that Brahm is the divine One who is reflected in the inner-self as well as the body of the creature. This ‘reflection’ or ‘image’ of the cosmic Consciousness is called the ‘Jiva’, the living being (11).

{The “Anthakaran”—This is the subtle body of the creature consisting of four components such as the mind (Mana), the intellect (Buddhi), the faculty of reasoning, thought, discrimination, understanding and the ability to pay attention and focus the mind and intellect on any subject (Chitta), and the notion of ego, pride and vanity, and their attendant arrogance and haughtiness (Ahankar).

The word ‘Antahakaran’ literally means the ‘inner instrument’ of the creature by which his mind works and receives the world. The word has two components—viz. ‘Antaha’ meaning ‘inner’, and ‘Karan’ meaning ‘instrument that causes the mind to work’. The external organs of the body such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which are the organs of perception physically receive the inputs from the external world, but their actual functioning is due to this Antahakaran or the inner instrument of the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect complex because if the latter malfunctions the former are useless.}

“Canto 4, paragraph no. 12 = Some say that all the Jivas (living beings) have the characteristic attribute of possessing an ‘Antahakaran’. {All living beings have a subtle component of the body known as the Antahakaran, which constitutes of the Mana (mind), the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankar (ego, pride) that determine the individual’s personality and qualities. See note to paragraph no. 11.}

Others assert that all the Jivas have the characteristic attribute of having a subtle body that lives in the gross body that is born from or created out the Maha-Bhuts, the great primary elements of creation.

{The 5 Maha-Bhuts—They are also called the ‘Panch Maha-Bhuts’ are the five primary elements of creation. They are sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or all forms of liquids, and earth or all forms of solids. The Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes these elements in great detail along with their manifold influence on this creation, including the latter’s very existence. The gross body of the creature is made up of these five elements in varying proportions. According to Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the ratio of these elements in this creation is the following—earth is one half, and the rest half consists of water, fire, sky and air elements in the ratio of one-eighth each.

Refer also to Jabal-darshan Upanishad, 8/5-6; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 2; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178; Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition verse nos. 85-99.

The 12 Maha Bhuts—According to the Gayatri Upanishad of Atharva Veda’s Gopath Brahman, Kandika no. 37, the twelve Mahabhuts are the following—Brahm (the Supreme Being), Akash (sky), Vayu (air or wind), Jyoti (light), Aapo (water), Bhumi (earth), Anna (food), Pran (life or the vital winds that sustain life), Mana (mind), Vaani (speech), Vedas, Yagya (fire sacrifice) = 12.

According to Kandika 38, they are the following—Veda, Vaani (speech), Mana (mind), Pran (life; vital winds), Anna (food), Bhumi (earth), Aapo (water), Tej (fire), Vayu (air or wind), Akash (sky), Brahm (the Supreme Being), Brahmin = 12.}

Still some others say that the Jiva is the reflection of the Chaitanya (consciousness) in the Buddhi (intellect). {The Consciousness that inspires the intellect and enables it to perceive, think, reflect, analyse, contemplate, deduce, decide and determine are the functions that make an entity distinguished from another that cannot perform these intelligent tasks. The entity that shows the above attributes is called a Jiva or a living being who is conscious, and that which doesn’t is not a Jiva. Therefore, a living being who is conscientious, wise, thoughtful, intelligent and mindful or ‘conscious’ of his responsibilities and moral duties would be called a ‘Jiva’ in the true sense of the word. The rest would be no more than life-less entities such as rocks, or un-intelligent creatures such as plants and other lower forms of animal life.}

All these different forms of Jivas or the classification of living beings into different categories is based on the characteristic attributes that they possess or exhibit. But fundamentally there is no difference between them. {This is accordance with the theory of Advaita or non-duality that stresses that all forms of creation are basically the same because they are simply different forms of the same Brahm, the universal Truth. Since ‘Truth’ can be only one and not two, it follows that if the world

is to have any meaning in it then it must conform to this basic fact about ‘Truth’—and it is that the ‘Truth’ will always remain one and not two. This at once shoots down the concept of ‘duality’ in creation! We can understand this eclectic phenomenon by a simple instance. Just like the same metal ‘gold’ is called by different names because of the different forms, shapes and sizes into which it is moulded to create various items of ornaments and decorative jewelry having myriad names and values though the primary ingredient is the same ‘gold’ in all of them, or just like the same element ‘earth’ is moulded by a potter into different forms and shapes with varying sizes and contours and given different names though the same element known as ‘earth’ is inherently present in all of them—similarly, all the Jivas or living beings are basically and inherently the same because they have the same universal ‘consciousness’ in them as the primary element that entitles them at all to be called a ‘Jiva’ in the first place.

To wit, notwithstanding the different definitions of Jiva according to various schools of thoughts and philosophy, the fundamental nature of a living being cannot be changed—and this is the fact that they are called a ‘living being’ because of the presence of ‘consciousness’ in them. Without its presence, no entity would be entitled to be called a ‘Jiva’ no matter how beautiful, important, intelligent or handsome he might be! For instance, the modern world’s computer is very intelligent and performs great calculations in a jiffy, and even helps one to predict the future and trace the past precisely based on intelligent interpretation of the data, tasks that would take a normal man a very long time to do even if it is at all possible for him to do it. But would anyone in his right senses call a computer a ‘Jiva’ or ‘a living being’?} (12).]

चौ०. थोरेहि महँ सब कहउँ बुझाई । सुनहु तात मति मन चित लाई ॥ १ ॥

मैं अरु मोर तोर तैं माया । जेहिं बस कीन्हे जीव निकाया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

thōrēhi maham̐ saba kaha'um̐ bujhāī. sunahu tāta mati mana cita lāī. 1.  
mair̐ aru mōra tōra tair̐ māyā. jēhir̐ basa kīnhē jīva nikāyā. 2.

Lord Ram answered—‘Dear, I shall explain these things to you in brief. Listen carefully with due attention; focus your mind and sub-conscious to what is being said, and don’t get distracted (so that you can properly and judiciously understand the secret being revealed to you without any confusion, and remember it with the correct perspective)<sup>1</sup>. (1)

The erroneous concept of ‘me or I and mine, you and yours’ is the essential cause of all sorts of Maya that has enslaved all the Jivas (living beings) by its vicious grip, it has ensnared all living beings in its vice-like shackle. This concept has all the living beings under its control<sup>2</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>My esteemed reader must have noticed by now that I have quoted extensively from diverse Upanishads in order to holistically explain the many aspects of metaphysical, spiritual and theological principles that form an integral part of Laxman’s questions, and Lord Ram’s answers that follow herein below. Though it has lengthened the text a wee whit, but it would surely, at the same time, leave an earnest learner and seeker of knowledge feel all the more enriched.



The instruments employed to listen, analyse, understand and remember anything that is being taught by a teacher, are the mind (*Mana*), the intellect (*Buddhi*) and the sub-conscious (*Chitta*). If any one of them is distracted, the knowledge becomes distorted proportionately. A person's depth and width of knowledge, his erudition and sagacity, his level of wisdom and enlightenment are all commensurate with the sharpness, the alertness, the competence, the ability, the willingness and the agility of all these three instruments playing in harmony.

The *mind* acts as the general receptacle as it controls the organs of perception, such as the ear with which one listens, and the other organs of the body which can create disturbance or distraction if not properly controlled by the mind. The *intellect* helps to analyse and understand the general body of the input information, and make it tangible, logical, comprehensible and usable for the man by encoding the input information in an intelligent manner so that an equally intelligible output is produced. The *sub-conscious* registers this information for future retrieval and reference. It is the back-room office of the living being, determining how he acts and reacts to a given situation depending upon the feedback this sub-conscious gives him.

A wise man's *Chitta* or sub-conscious will be focused on the Truth, and therefore all his reasoning, his decisions, his behavioral patterns, his advice etc would be moulded according to this background of Truth. But the information that the *Chitta* stores is determined by the *Buddhi*, the intellect. So, if the *Buddhi* is corrupt then the quality of information stored by the *Chitta* would also be corrupt. To understand anything properly, full concentration of mind is needed, and this can only happen when the sense organs of the body are properly tamed. This is what Lord Ram means here—he has asked Laxman to pay proper attention to what the Lord is about to preach him, because the knowledge that the Lord is about to impart have a profound bearing on the spiritual welfare and enlightenment of a creature, the primary motive of Laxman which made him approach the Lord with his queries.

<sup>2</sup>The truth is that the entity which calls itself a *Jiva* or a living being fails to understand what its real identity is. It fails to understand and realise that the external form of the gross body that the world recognizes as the '*Jiva*' is not the living being's truthful identity at all. The real *Jiva* is the *Atma*, the soul which is pure consciousness that lives inside this gross body. The *Atma* is the truthful identity of all living beings. It is a divine, holy, subtle and sublime entity, absolutely different and separate from the physical gross body. The *Atma* is a universal entity, not limited to any specific body; it lives inside the bodies of all living beings.

Hence, the idea that one person is Mr. A and the other is Mr. B holds no water in the spiritual plane—because the same *Atma* lives in both their bodies. It follows therefore that fundamentally there is no such thing as '*me*' and '*you*'. Since this is the great metaphysical truth of existence, there exists no reason why something belongs to '*me*' and not to '*you*'. This concept of '*you*' and '*me*' arises out of the erroneous belief that the gross body is the person's truthful self and identity. Once this mistaken belief is removed, the concept of duality automatically vanishes from sight.

The notion of a particular thing being '*mine*' creates an attachment to it; it makes a man worry about its safety and protection; it makes a man obsessive and possessive. He fears that the other person, the '*you*', would snatch it from him at the first opportunity, so his whole time, energy and being are spent on worrying about and protecting his possessions. The lure of physical gratification that all material things provide to a creature's sense organs is so strong and irresistibly great that a creature would never be satisfied with whatever he has; the urge to acquire more and still more

overpowers him so much so that he goes to any length to fulfill this desire. This in turn sets off a chain reaction of wants and more wants, coupled with the need to protect the ever increasing possessions and safeguard them from the prying eyes of jealousy that sprouts in the heart of others who are equally ignorant and deluded like this creature himself.

On the contrary, if the creature, the Jiva or the living being, is self-realised, enlightened and wise he will understand that the body is a perishable entity, and therefore there is no sense in pampering something that would one day betray the ‘true self’, the Atma. Similarly, the gross material world which relates to this gross body is also useless to pursue as one would be forced to abandon it once the body is abandoned. The real ‘self’ known as the Atma has nothing to do with either of them—the body or the world.]

गो गोचर जहँ लगि मन जाई । सो सब माया जानेहु भाई ॥ ३ ॥  
तेहि कर भेद सुनुहु तुम्ह सोऊ । बिद्या अपर अबिद्या दोऊ ॥ ४ ॥

gō gōcara jaham̐ lagi mana jā'ī. sō saba māyā jānēhu bhā'ī. 3.  
tēhi kara bhēda sunahu tumha sō'ū. bīdyā apara abīdyā dō'ū. 4.

Maya (delusions and worldly confusions) is the creation of the imaginative and fertile mind (Mana). Therefore, all the objects of perception of the sense organs in this world, and as far afield as the mind can go to imagine things and their existence in this mortal world—should all be regarded as being a form of Maya. They all represent Maya<sup>1</sup>. (3)

Now, this Maya has two divisions—one is known as ‘Vidya’ and the other as ‘A-vidya’. Vidya is a superior entity and it is beyond description. Avidya has a negative connotation, and has two forms (which will be described in the next lines)<sup>2</sup>. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The whole world and its countless entanglements are entrapping, deluding and misleading for the soul of the creature. If the creature is not careful then he will fall in their trap and tempted by their illusionary charm much like a thirst man running behind a mirage in a desert in the hope of finding water to quench his thirst.

<sup>2</sup>Primarily, the word ‘Vidya’ means knowledge, and its opposite is ‘A-vidya’ or lack of knowledge. Here, ‘knowledge’ would mean spiritual knowledge of the Absolute Truth and Reality of existence. This Vidya is highly esoteric and enigmatic. Since it is directly related to the concept of cosmic Consciousness that is divine and a fount of all knowledge, it is not possible to know it by other means or compare it with some other standard. It is the supreme standard of knowledge as it is related to the ‘Absolute Truth and Reality’ and not mere ‘truth’ that may be half-truth. The Absolute Truth that the Vidya refers to it is eternal, infinite, steady and sublime. Its knowledge is enlightening and obtained by meditation and contemplation. It is ‘self realised’ knowledge which cannot be bound and butted in language. The acquisition of Vidya leads to attainment of supreme bliss, beatitude and felicity.

Avidya on the other hand has just the opposite meaning; it simply means ‘non-vidya’ or lack of truthful knowledge of the ultimate Reality and the Truth. Naturally if Vidya is enlightening, Avidya would have just the opposite effect—it would have

darkness in varying degrees. Whereas Vidya lifts the soul upwards because it is sublime by its inherent nature, Avidya pulls the soul downwards because it is gross by its inherent nature.

We can also say that 'Vidya' is that knowledge which has a positive effect on a creature, while 'Avidya' is that knowledge that would have a negative effect. While a body of knowledge that proves beneficial for a creature is good and welcome in all its form, the body of knowledge that is detrimental to a creature's well-being and good should never be welcomed; the latter is best shunned.

Further, the same body of knowledge can be a boon for one person if put to good and constructive use, and a bane for another if misused and used for destructive purposes by him. A simple example from contemporary world would help clarify this concept. When say rocket technology or explosives such as dynamite were first discovered, they opened a vast array of opportunities for mankind, but the same technology also created havoc and misery when used to kill and destroy enemy and his cities in wars. In this instance, the former body of scientific knowledge would be called 'Vidya', while its misuse as cited herein above would come under the category of 'Avidya'.

The two divisions of Avidya will be discussed in Chaupai line nos. 5-6.

Let us briefly see what 'Vidya' and 'A-vidya' refer to in the eyes of the Upanishads. The word *Avidya* broadly means lack of true and correct knowledge of anything; it refers to being ignorant about the reality behind the misleading façade. Such persons are unwise, foolish and unaware of the actual truth. They are those people who think, inter alia, that their body is their true identity, that they are the ones doing deeds with their bodies and therefore are entitled to enjoy the fruits of those deeds and also have to suffer the bad effects of those deeds, that there is something known as the Atma which is their true self and that it has nothing to do with either the body or what it does, that the same Atma resides in all other creatures in the world, that the world is a visible display of the stupendous maverick tricks that the supreme Lord can play, that the deeds should be treated as an offering to that Lord and a service to him, that the alluring world with all its charms is but an imagination of the mind and is as illusionary as the mirage in a desert or the ghost seen in the night, that therefore the pursuance of the world is not the aim of life and not worth the effort, and so on and so forth. Such persons become surrounded by a veil called 'ignorance of the reality and truth'. They become deluded and start hallucinating like a man under a spell.

The irony is that even those who have had the fortune of studying the scriptures and are considered well versed and expert in them, are worse off if they do not understand and implement the doctrines and maxims of the scriptures in their true spirit. It is futile to study the scriptures if their intent and purpose is not grasped, and it is spiritual upliftment and attaining liberation and deliverance from the trap of delusions and ignorance in which a person has fallen. Merely recitation of the hymns endlessly, engaging in detailed religious rituals and completing them flawlessly to the dot, entering in endless debates in order to establish one's scholarship and erudition is nothing more than waste of life and energy. The real goal of knowledge is to inculcate spiritualism and provide emancipation and salvation, give eternal peace and tranquility, bliss and happiness, induce good virtues and make one beneficial for the society. If that purpose is not achieved, then such persons may get fame, fortune and honour, but spiritually they would be regarded as having fallen in a darker well because in an ignorant man commits an inadvertent error, he can be excused, but if the same error is committed by an expert, it is unforgivable. After all, what is the

purpose of studying and acquiring knowledge if a man still commits the same mistake as his illiterate brother!

One should not be confused by what is implied here. It does not imply that a man should not study or acquire knowledge. The intention here is to make it clear that if the knowledge is superficial and just acquired with worldly aim of acquiring fame, name, honour and wealth, then it will be denigrating, decapitating and demeaning for the exalted 'soul' of the creature and act as a deterrent for the spiritual upliftment of the individual. It would bog him down with worldly allurements that are very enticing on the surface but hollow and worthless from the inside. A person will be better off being ignorant and stupid because at least he would be humble and meek instead of being proud, haughty and arrogant about his misplaced knowledge.

What is *Avidya* and what constitutes *Vidya* have been explained in the Atharva Veda's Mahavakya Upanishad, in its verse nos. 4-5.

The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 17-18 deal with the concept of what constitutes *Vidya*, and what is its opposite known as *A-Vidya* in the context of the *Atma*.

The Sarvasaro-panishad, verse no. 3 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes both *Avidya* as well as its opposite *Vidya* in the following terms—"Verse no. 3—The misconception about the true nature of the 'self', called the *Atma* of the creature, as being the 'gross and perishable body' instead of its immaculate, pure conscious, eternal and imperishable form which remains totally detached, distinct and separate from the body, and the resultant sense of ego and pride as well as attachments and attractions pertaining to the body and the deeds done by this body that this misconception generates in its wake, is due to lack of truthful and holistic knowledge about the *Atma*'s fundamental and essential form as the ethereal, sublime, divine and holy entity which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental *Brahm*. This ignorance about the reality, this misconception about the *Atma vis-à-vis* the body and the world, this deluding idea that the 'self' is the gross perishable body and not an independent exalted entity which is eternal and imperishable as well as completely different from the body and has nothing to do with anything related with the grossness of the body, is called '*Avidya*'.

On the contrary, that means by which this ignorance about the truth is dispelled, that which removes all sense of ego and a sense of false pride that the creature has developed about the body and its abilities and powers, its strengths and potentials, its beauty and charm etc. is called '*Vidya*' or truthful knowledge (3)."

The Ishavasya Upanishad, verse no. 9 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition explains the concept of *Avidya* as follows—"Those persons who worship *Avidya* fall in a dark pit or a blind well like a blind man. They become shrouded in a veil of darkness symbolising ignorance of reality and ignorance induced delusions, leading to hallucinations like a man seeing imaginary things in darkness of the night.

Meanwhile, the irony is that those who worship *Vidya* (which is the opposite of being ignorant and illiterate), are deemed to be sagacious, learned, erudite, scholarly and skilled in what is regarded as 'knowledge' (i.e. are well read in the scriptures and considered scholarly amongst men), too fall in a dark pit, but the pit is darker and more grave and dense than the one in which their ignorant brethren had fallen. This darkness engulfs them from all sides and firmly clasps them in its vice like grip. [9]"

The concept of '*Avidya*' has been explained in the Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4, and Canto 5, verse no. 19 as follows—

“Canto 4, verse no. 4 = To think that this world consists of so many material things that have a real existence, to belief these material things and the world of sense objects to be true is known as ‘Avidya’—lack of true knowledge and dominance of ignorance.

All the things of the world consisting of material sense objects are the subject matter of Avidya. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 19.]

{When one is ignorant of the fact that the world is of a gross and artificial nature, and that it is entrapping as well as deluding for the Atma, he would pay attention to the material things of the mundane gross world; he would think of these things as having any kind of real value and importance which is worth paying attention to. It is ‘Avidya’ because such knowledge is not based on facts as the world and its material sense objects are un-truths; they are imaginary and deluding. They are like the mirage seen in a hot desert—appearing to be so alluring and real, but having no substance in it.}

Hence, a person who is known as ‘Maha Yogi’—i.e. a great ascetic who is very wise and enlightened, who is well acquainted about the ‘truth’ of the Atma, abandons such fallacious and deluding notions (as outlined above) (4).

“Canto 5, verse no. 19 = ‘It is not Brahm (the supreme transcendental Consciousness and the Absolute Truth)’—to think of anything or anybody in this term is known as ‘A-Vidya’ or ignorance. {This is because everything in existence is one or the other form of the same Brahm. Brahm is a universal truthful entity that is all-pervading and constant in the entire creation.}

Hence, overcoming A-Vidya or ignorance is to be firmly convinced that all is Brahm personified, and there is nothing that is not Brahm (19).”]

एक दुष्ट अतिसय दुखरूपा । जा बस जीव परा भवकूपा ॥ ५ ॥

एक रचइ जग गुन बस जाकें । प्रभु प्रेरित नहिं निज बल ताकें ॥ ६ ॥

ēka duṣṭa atisaya dukharūpā. jā basa jīva parā bhavakūpā. 5.

ēka raca'i jaga guna basa jākēṁ. prabhu prērita nahīṁ nija bala tākēṁ. 6.

One of the aspects of Avidya (ignorance) is very wicked as well as the cause and harbinger of endless sorrows, grief, pain and torments for the creature. If the creature is overcome by it or if it is able to trap the creature in its vicious grip, he (the creature) falls in a blind and dark well represented by this mundane and mortal world<sup>1</sup>. (5)

The other aspect of this Avidya is the one that creates this world. The three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) are controlled by it, and it uses them to create this world. This aspect of Avidya (having the three Gunas which it employs to create the world which in turn is also governed by these three Gunas) is controlled by the Supreme Lord. It has no strength of its own; it does not do anything of its own but depends upon the directives of the Lord to act according to his will and to fulfill his wishes<sup>2</sup>. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This first aspect of Avidya is called the ‘Aavarana Shakti’. The word Aavarana means to cover in a veil, to sheath, to envelop, to wrap in a sheet, distortions, pretension, deception, deceit and something that does not allow the original thing to be seen by covering it with a thin veil that distorts its originality; a veil of ignorance about one’s true nature, identity and essential form that cloaks the Atma/soul which is

pure consciousness and the true self. Hence, the word ‘Aavaran’ literally means a covering, shield, band, girdle, protective ring or sheath that encloses the deity from all sides.

The Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 47-49, 52-54, 56-57 describe what Maya actually is, how it creates this world and hides the ‘truth’ known as ‘super Consciousness’, and goes on to describe the two important types of Shaktis or dynamic powers of Maya—one called the ‘Vikshep Shakti’ and the other called the ‘Aavaran Shakti’. To quote—

“Verse no. 47 = The Prakriti (Nature) was created or produced by a combination of the three primary qualifications called Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas. {These are the basic qualities that determine the nature and temperament of all creatures. All living beings have them in varying proportions. The Sata is the best and most auspicious quality that makes a man spiritually inclined. The Raja makes him tend to veer towards the tendency to move towards the world with the intentions to expand and acquire fame and name. The Tama is the meanest of the three qualities which make a man mean and of a low mentality. The personality and character of any man is decided by the ratio of these three basic qualities.}

Just like an image forming in a mirror appears to be very true, life-like and almost identical to the object of which it is a reflection (if one is unaware that what one sees in this mirror is merely an image and not the real thing), the reflection of the consciousness in the mirror of Nature appears to be identical to the original cosmic Consciousness. {The nature of a man is already said to be tainted by the three Gunas as stated above. When the consciousness is seen through this veil, it is obvious that these three Gunas would cast their affect on the real form and nature of the consciousness and it would be tainted by them. So though the primary consciousness is pristine pure, incorrupt and immaculate, its version as seen in living creatures appears to be tainted due to presence of the various Gunas that are invariably present in all living creatures as their inherent character and nature. See verse no. 48 below.} (47).

“Verse no. 48 = Since the Prakriti (Nature) consists of three Gunas, when the pure consciousness is reflected in it, the result is that the Prakriti appears to depict three versions of the same consciousness, or Prakriti begins to glow or shine with three different hues that correspond to the three basic Gunas (called Sata, Raja and Tama) that this Prakriti has as its integral part. {The Prakriti has no shine of its own but it is the consciousness that is present in a creature that makes it alive and showcase its characters much like the case of a lantern’s glass chimney of a particular colour which glows and shows its colour only when the wick of the lantern is lighted inside it. The light of the lantern here is the consciousness, the coloured chimney is the Prakriti of the creature, and the lantern is the creature himself.}

You, i.e. your pure quintessential ‘self’ as the pure consciousness, become a Jiva (a mortal living being having a gross body and depicting a set of characteristics or attributes) because of being separated or torn away from your quintessential true form known as the Consciousness (which is always immaculate, incorrupt and pure) due to this distorted view of your ‘self’ when the latter is seen through the prism of the tainted Prakriti. {The pure quintessential ‘self’ is consciousness personified. It is marked by being eternal, immaculate and taintless. On the other hand the Jiva is mortal, perishable and tainted with numerous shortcomings. This happens because the creature sees the consciousness through the looking glass of his inherent nature which is already tainted by the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama. These three Gunas do

not allow anyone to see the consciousness in its true form. To do so, one would have to rise above the mundane and develop proper insight just like a microscope is needed to see things that are too small to be seen by the naked eye.} (48).

“Verse no. 49 = Prakriti (Nature) in which the dominant Guna or quality is pure Sata is called the ‘Maya that is predominantly auspicious’.

The pure consciousness that is reflected in this Maya (Prakriti or Nature) which is dominated by the Sata Guna is known as ‘Aja’ or the creator Brahma. {And this is why Brahma is regarded as being predominantly wise, learned and enlightened about spiritual and metaphysical matters inspite of the fact that he is neck deep in the process of creation, and is enchanted so much by his own creation and its astounding beauty that he remains perpetually enthralled and so completely enamoured by it that he appears, for all practical purposes, to be deeply engrossed in this perishable and finite world inspite of being the creator of the Vedas and their Upanishads that are the epitome of knowledge and wisdom regarding spiritualism.} (49).

“Verse no. 52 = In this way, the pure cosmic Consciousness possessing all the eclectic and divine virtues and supernatural powers, such as being Sarvagya (omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise) etc. *is called ‘Ishwar’*.

{Ishwar is honoured by epithets which highlight some or the other of his majestic glories. Some of them, inter alia, are the following—Satya (truth), Shiva (auspicious), Sundar (beauty); Satt (eternal), Chitt (consciousness; knowledge), Anand (beatitude and felicity); Akchar (imperishable; the eternal ethereal word), Uttam (the best, the most exalted, the ultimate), Purush (the primary Male Spirit; the supreme Spirit), Parmatma (the supreme Soul of creation), Prakriti (primary Nature), Purshottam (the best Purush; the most exalted holy spirit), Pragya (knowledgeable, wise, skilled, enlightened and conscious) and Vibho (omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent).}

Maya has two Shaktis (dynamic powers or forces) that are employed by this Ishwar (pure consciousness) to implement its will. These are—(a) Vikshep Shakti meaning ‘deflection, dissipation, confusion, perplexity, obstruction, disturbance, scattering or tossing about in uncertainty and disarray, agitation of mind and spirit, fickleness, fragmentation, fission and disharmony etc.’, and (b) Aavaran Shakti meaning ‘to cover in a veil, to sheath, to envelop, to wrap in a sheet, distortions, pretension, deception, deceit and something that does not allow the original thing to be seen by covering it with a thin veil that distorts its originality; a veil of ignorance about one’s true nature, identity and essential form that cloaks the Atma/soul which is pure consciousness and the true self’ (52).

“Verse no. 53 = The first forceful power of Maya called Vikshep Shakti is responsible for creation of the entire world, right from the gross body of the individual creature at the micro level of creation to the vast universe at the macro level of creation.

The second forceful power of Maya called Aavaran Shakti is responsible creating a distinction between the ‘seer’ (i.e. the pure conscious ‘self’ or the Atma) and the ‘things or objects that are seen’ by this seer at the micro level of creation, and between ‘Brahm’ (the all-pervading seer or cosmic Consciousness) and ‘Srishti’ (the manifested creation springing forth from this Brahm and the latter’s visible revelation) at the macro level of creation. This Aavaran Shakti covers the truthfulness of ‘consciousness’ and makes it tainted (53).

{The delusions created by Maya casts a veil around the truth so much so that the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true identity of the creature, is unable to see the ‘absolute truth and reality’ behind what is seen externally in the physical world. It forgets in its ignorance created by this veil of Maya that actually the external world has derived the importance and worth because of the presence of conscious life in the form of Atma in it, and the exterior façade is merely a covering that sheaths this Atma. Shorn of the Atma, the world would be as good as a dead body—say, who would like to fall in love with a dead body? A living being is dear one moment till he is alive and useful, and as soon as he is dead, he becomes useless and is disposed of immediately at the other moment. The basic unit that lends life, substance and value to everything in existence is the quintessential factor of universal consciousness that is a non-dual entity. That is, the consciousness in the creature known as the ‘seer’ and the other creature who is ‘seen’ is the same. This is the climax of enlightenment, and the absence of it is due to the covering of Aavaran which eclipses or distorts this wisdom and enlightenment. The tainted Aavaran of Maya prevents one to come to know the truth and reality, and it is the cause of all delusions that create a sense of duality and separation between things that are inherently one, immutable and inseparable. This delusion creates an impression of one entity being the ‘self’ and the second entity being the ‘other person’. It is the cause of all strife, all bad blood, disharmony, animosity, jealousy, malice and hatred in this world; it is the prime cause of all dichotomy, confusions, perplexities and doubts.}

“Verse no. 54 = This (Maya) is the root cause of all worldly fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial material world of delusions. Under the influence of Maya, the Sakshi—the true ‘self’ of the creature, the pure conscious Atma that is supposed to remain a neutral witness to the happenings in the gross physical external world without actually getting involved in it—begins to see and recognise the external world that exists in the front of its eyes with its gross physical properties and outer characteristic features by employing the gross eyes of the body.

That is, the gross features of the external world are seen and believed to be the true and real form of the world under the deluding influence of Maya. In other words, the ‘Ling Deha’ (gross body) of the creation is perceived as the real world instead of the pure consciousness and the ‘truth’ that pervades through out in it in a most subtle and hidden form (54).

{Since the world is beheld by the ‘self’ through the tainted veil of Maya which has already influenced the mind-intellect complex through which external inputs and information are received and interpreted, the creature (i.e. the Sakshi) sees only a distorted version of the world. That is, the creature is able to see only the external features of the gross world outside. This external façade is so life-like and magical that the creature believes it to be true and real. Maya prevents the ‘self’ from seeing the truth; Maya prevents the creature from realising the fact that this physical gross world is unreal and untruth and simply like a mirage of the desert—un-sustainable, transient, non-attainable, illusionary and deluding. The creature is not able to perceive the concealed ‘truth’ of life behind this façade, the ‘truth’ called the Atma or consciousness representing the cosmic Absolute without which this external gross body would be of no good. This is the magical theatrical performance of the maverick Maya that it produces a scenario that is so life-like and charming that a deluded creature who was supposed to remain a ‘Sakshi’ or a neutral witness to the external world is swept off his feet and gets neck-deeply involved in it.



Under the tainting influence of Maya, the creature is not able to see the hidden ‘real and absolute Truth’ and instead begins to believe in the ‘apparent truth’ which is more like the water of a mirage than the water of a river or lake. Refer also to note of verse no. 49.

In other words, the ‘Sakshi’, i.e. the true ‘self’ of the creature—who is supposed to be neutral and just mutely watch the magical creation of Maya unfold in the form of this physical world which is unreal, transient and perishable without actually getting involved in it (much like a spectator watching a magic show—forgets this basic principle and is so charmed by the scene watched that he gets swept off his feet and plunges head on into this world and its activities.

The net result of the influence of Maya is that the Sakshi gets neck-deep involved in something with which it should not have been involved at all—i.e. the ‘self’ of the creature should have remained neutral towards the material objects of the world and getting involved in them, should have seen the underlying ‘truth’ in the world and not be swept off by its external charms, but unfortunately this does not happen. Under the delusory effects of Maya, this Sakshi believes that what he sees in the outside world of sense objects is the truth and reality, and therefore it is worth pursuing and obtaining. The Sakshi allows himself to be voluntarily trapped like a bird willingly getting caught in a bird-catcher’s net. These facts are affirmed in verse no. 55 below.

The fact is that the world is artificial and an imaginary creation of the mind and its sub-conscious (refer Yogshika Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-61, 70), and the Atma—which is eternally wised and enlightened—is supposed to be aware of this fact and treat the artificial world as such. But unfortunately it doesn’t. This is because the Atma, which is supposed to be a mere ‘Sakshi’ (mute, dispassionate, neutral and non-involved witness) gets deluded or misled by the veil of ignorance cast around it by Maya. Treating itself as part of the world, the Sakshi gets involved in the activities of the world. Having exceeded its brief, the Sakshi is bound to suffer from its excesses and get tied in shackles represented by various misconceptions about the reality and truth. The Sakshi remains involved in doing deeds and hopes that he would get peace and comfort from this world. This world is like a whirlpool in an ocean, it sucks the Sakshi deeper in its vortex and it remains ever trapped in the cycle of birth and death, bobbing up and down in this vast endless ocean represented by this world. After a very long time and many births, the Sakshi realises its follies and decides that enough is enough; it now endeavours to find out a way that would finally ensure that liberation and deliverance is obtained by it at any cost, and that it would not do anything which would force it into being subjugated by Maya and recycled into the bin of birth and death once again. It then researches on the method to achieve this end, and studies the scriptures and consults wise men. It discovers that the basic cause of the entire edifice getting erected is Maya and its delusory effects. It also realises that the ‘self’ does nothing, and that everything is done by the ‘non-self’, i.e. the gross body. So, it abhors Maya and delusions created by it, deciding not to get involved in the world. Consequently, when the past baggage of deeds and their consequences are exhausted and newer ones do not accumulate, the Sakshi finally gets its treasured liberation and deliverance.}

“Verse no. 56-57 = When the covering veil of Maya is removed, the creature is clearly able to see the error and the difference between what is the ‘actual truth’ and the ‘apparent truth’. Then the consciousness stops to have any kind of attractions for the gross material world with which it was so enamoured till now. {In the instance of

the lantern cited in note of verse no. 49 above, when the tinted glass of the chimney is removed and replaced with transparent colourless glass, one can see the real colour of the flame along with the true colour of the objects that are seen with its light.}

Hence, the notion of the existence of a 'Jiva' (living being) who is separate from the 'true self' or the 'conscious Atma' vanishes. In other words, he begins to see the same Brahm everywhere, both inside his own self as the conscious Atma at the micro level of creation as well as the cosmic Consciousness that pervades everywhere in the external world at the macro level of creation. {The enlightened creature henceforth begins to identify his 'self' with the sublime and subtle consciousness that is invisible, instead of with the gross body that is physically seen in this world. Similarly, he sees no difference between any two living beings because the same conscious Atma lives in both of them.}

He also realises the truth of the fact that the primarily immaculate and untainted divine entity known as Brahm had appeared to be dual in the form of the Supreme Being and the Jiva or the Supreme Being and the manifested world. When the veil of delusions and ignorance is removed, the dichotomy between Brahm and this world is eliminated, and uniformity and non-duality between Brahm and the rest of the creation becomes evident. {He realises that the visible world is nothing but the same immutable, indivisible and non-dual Brahm revealed in these myriad and multifarious forms in which this vast and endless creation exists so much so that no two units in it are identical.} (56-57)."

This sort of ignorance acts to cover the mind and intellect of the creature and makes him forget his true form which is pure consciousness known as the Atma. Such a creature lies in a grave pit of delusions, thinking that the gross body is its true self, that the world is the reality. He remains engrossed in fulfilling the desires of his gross sense organs and is heavily burdened by the erroneous notion of this thing being mine and that being yours. His mind and intellect has been conditioned by the belief in duality, and hence he is always tussling between the falsehood and the truth, swinging wildly from one end to another like a pendulum. He is sucked in the vortex of endless desires and pursuit of happiness that runs away from him the more closer he attempts to get to them. Say, how one can ever expect to find rest and peace in this condition.

This sort of Avidya is also known as 'Maya' that creates the notion of 'me and you' or 'mine and yours'. The entire visible world, as well as the world which is not visible is veiled in this covering of Avidya. This is explained when an ignorant creature yearns for things of the world that are visible, things which he thinks will give him comfort, pleasure, happiness, peace and bliss, as well as those things that are not directly visible but he imagines that their acquisition will give him the same benefit as that obtained from visible world. Then he thinks in his erroneous belief that such benefits are steady and permanent. He forgets that the world itself is transient, impermanent, perishable and mortal, and therefore there is no question of anything related to such a world being permanent and steady. Refer Chaupai line nos. 2-3 above.

In other words, if a person allows himself to be caught by the Avidya, then the latter pulls him down in a dark world characterized by an endless chain of multifarious problems and spiritual horrors. Since this world revolves around the theory of Karma or doing of deeds, the creature gets sucked in its vortex, doing so many deeds in order to survive and live in this world. But their consequences are grave—because doing of deeds makes a person involved in them, and this in turn leaves him spell-bound in the countless problems associated with the deed and the

surrounding world where the deed is done. Then there is the perennial problem of not getting the desired result of efforts, motivating the person to strive more and more to achieve his objectives. Even when they are achieved, his cravings go on increasing tangentially so much so that his entire life is sucked in the whirlpool of this world. The deeds and actions along with their results is a fathomless ocean where one can go on and on without finding an end.

Another problem is attachment to the sense objects of the world as they are extremely tempting for the gross organs of perception and action of the creature's body which hanker for self-gratification. The creature is so overwhelmed by these and other such countless problems that he has little time left for contemplation and meditation or researching the 'truth and reality' of life. He goes stepping from one day to another in the hope of finding rest and peace which elude him like the water in a mirage. He finds himself trapped inside a dark and bottomless pit, the well-like world, from which he finds it impossible to extricate himself.

Among the many horrors related to this world referred to in this line are the constant fear of death and the body getting old and infirm. These fears arise out of the ignorance that the body is true identity of the person, whereas the fact is that it is merely a habitat for the Atma which indeed is the truthful 'self'. This Atma is eternal and non-perishable; it never decays or gets old. When the body becomes old and decrepit the Atma simply leaves it and enters another body. The Atma leaves the old body and lands to reside in a new body like a caterpillar leaving one leaf and alighting on a new leaf. The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 4/4/3 describes how the Atma leaves the old body at the time of death and enters a new body just like a caterpillar leaving an old leaf or twig and alighting on a new one. It reaches the end of the old leaf or twig, contracts its body, lifts its upper part, expands the body to get hold of the tip of the new leaf or twig, and then withdraws its body from the old habitat completely to make the new one its abode.

Avidya is also synonymous with 'darkness' that comes with the absence of enlightening light of understanding, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge. Even as a man walking in pitch dark is prone to grope and grapple to find his way, hurting himself in the process, stumbling and falling over frequently, may even fall in a pit or step in some filthy slush, and would miss his target with a wide angle as compared to man whose path is lit by a brilliant source of light and who knows what he does, where he is headed to, what are his goals in life etc., the dominance of Avidya acts as an all-powerful shackle for the creature that ties him down to the dark well representing this world.

<sup>2</sup>There are three fundamental Gunas or qualities that give shape to all imaginable forms of characters in this creation and also determine how the world behaves and thinks. According to the Upanishads, the supreme Brahman had used them to mould this creation. The supreme Creator had used his creative powers known as 'Maya Shakti', the dynamic cosmic powers of creation that resulted in the formation of Nature, and empowered it with these three Gunas to go about its duties. Thus, the Maya had these three instruments at its disposal to weave a veil of delusions around the creature's mind and intellect in order to make him believe in the reality of the world surrounding it just like an expert magician creates such make-belief magical world of illusions on stage that the audience forgets for the moment that it is merely watching a magic show, and instead begins to participate actively in it and live a life of delusions. As long as the magic show lasts, the audience forgets the reality of the world which actually exists. Likewise, as long as the effects of Maya last, the creature forgets who

he actually is and that what he thinks and believes to be true is merely an illusion created by the maverick Maya.

The fact that Maya is like a dancer obeying the commands of its Master, here referring to Lord Ram, is emphasized in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116.]

ग्यान मान जहँ एकउ नाहीं । देख ब्रह्म समान सब माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

कहिअ तात सो परम बिरागी । तून सम सिद्धि तीनि गुन त्यागी ॥ ८ ॥

gyāna māna jaham' ēka'u nāhīm. dēkha brahma samāna saba māhīm. 7.  
kahi'a tāta sō parama birāgī. tṛṇa sama sid'dhi tīni guna tyāgī. 8.

‘Gyan’<sup>1</sup> (as opposed to Agyan or Avidya) is that divine and magnificent virtue which does not allow the creature to harbour any negative qualities such as ‘Maan’ (ego, sense of false pride) etc. This virtue also enables the creature to see Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, as being an all-pervading, omnipresent and universal entity that resides uniformly in all the living beings as their Atma.

In other words, true Gyan makes a creature realise that it is the same cosmic Consciousness that lives inside the gross body of all living beings, that it is an immutable and imperishable entity, that it is subtle and sublime as compared to the gross nature of the world and the body of the creature, and that it is the truthful identity of all living beings in this creation. Gyan also enlightens the creature of the fact that the entire world exists because there is consciousness in it, and without this consciousness the world is a dark and dead place.

Therefore, if one wishes to acquire true knowledge about this world then he must search this ‘consciousness’ which is the universal Truth, instead of its many manifestations which are merely a reflection of it.<sup>2</sup> (7)

Oh dear (Laxman)! A person who has completely disassociated himself from any sense of pride or ego arising out of acquisition of the various Siddhis (mystical powers, authority, successes and acclaim)<sup>3</sup> and has become immune to the influence of the three Gunas (the three basic qualities in a living being)<sup>4</sup> is indeed eligible to be called a true ‘Vairāgi’ or a person who has sincerely, honestly and truly renounced the world and its temptations. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The virtues that are covered by the concept of Gyan have been outlined in Lord Krishna’s Geeta, Canto 13, verse no. 7-11 as follows—“A person in whom the following eighteen faults or negative traits are not present is said to have acquired Gyan—(1) Maan (ego, false sense of pride and superiority), (2) Dambha (deceit, conceit, pretensions, falsehood, crookedness, wickedness), (3) Hinsa (violence, both mental and physical), (4) absence of Kshamaa (lacking forgiveness, tolerance and fortitude), (5) to be Tedhaa (not being straightforward, to be cunning, wicked, crooked and deceitful), (7) to lack the desire to serve one’s Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide), (8) Apavitra (impurity of mind, heart, body, behaviour and thoughts), (9) Asthir (unsteadiness, fickleness, transient nature), (10) A-nigrihit Mana (lack of concentration and regulation of the mind and heart; lack of self control or self restraint), (11) Aasakti (infatuated with the desire to gratify the sense organs of the body; to be attracted by and attached to the material objects of senses in the world),

(12) Ahankar (pride, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy and vanity), (13) to seek happiness in a world dominated by birth and death, old age and its associated problems, countless sorrows and miseries, (14) to be engrossed in and infatuated with the household and its numerous relationships such as a family consisting of the son, the wife etc., (15) to have Mamta (sense of endearment and infatuation with the world and its material things, as well the household and its related attachments), (16) the feeling of either Harsha or Shoka (happiness or sorrows respectively) upon acquisition of anything or lose of another in this mortal mundane world, (17) lack of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God), and (18) not finding peace and happiness in when alone and free from all disturbances (i.e. not preferring solitude and serenity which is conducive to spiritual practices) but instead liking the company of people who prefer to remain indulgent in this material world of sense objects with great passion and longing.

<sup>2</sup>It's like the case of many images formed of the same object in mirrors of varying sizes and shapes and placed at different angles from the principle object. Each mirror presents a different view of the same object. Likewise, the 'cosmic super Consciousness' is the only universal Truth and Reality, and the world that is weaved around this truthful entity is merely a reflection of the reality and not the reality itself.

This eclectic knowledge of 'non-duality', i.e. of the presence of one single non-dual entity known as Brahm or the cosmic super Consciousness everywhere in this creation as the reality and the ultimate truth, is known as 'Gyan', and it leads to true enlightenment and self-realisation.

'Enlightenment'—because this knowledge begins to illuminate his inner self with the light of true knowledge like the self-illuminating light of the sun, a light that cannot any longer eclipsed and covered by the veil of darkness caused by ignorance or Avidya. It helps to fine tune the instruments of the mind and intellect by which the creature acquires knowledge of the external world. Just like the case of a person being able to see something clearly in daylight as compared to the darkness of the night, the creature who has Gyan is able to see the truth and reality of this world without any confusion. When the darkness of ignorance is removed, the light of knowledge shines through. This light removes all fears of ghosts and phantoms that had unnecessarily been tormenting the creature for generations.

'Self-realisation'—because the creature understands that his 'true self' is the cosmic Consciousness that resides in his gross body in the form of his Atma or soul, and that it is his true identity. This awareness makes his mind expand beyond the narrow confines of thought that makes him develop the erroneous notion of 'this is mine' and 'that is yours'—because with the acquisition of this divine knowledge of the universality of the Atma and the reality of existence, the creature's outlook and vision broadens, and he rises above selfish gross considerations to see the world from the holistic perspective of the Atma which is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and universal.

When one begins to see all the living beings equally then obviously no one is superior and no one is junior in this world—because the same universal Consciousness known as the Atma lives in all the living beings. Further, this whole world is a manifestation of the same Brahm playing different roles. The variety in appearance is due to veil cast by the Trigunmayi Maya according to the ratio in which the three Gunas are present in any given situation. Therefore, a wise, enlightened and self-realised creature dissolves all his sense of ego and pride because he is neither senior to anyone nor junior to anyone.

<sup>3</sup>The word *Siddhi* refers to various esoteric and powerful spiritual, supernatural, mystical and occult powers and spiritual achievements that an aspirant acquires as a result of certain religious practices, carrying out some mystical rituals, or observance of strict codes as prescribed in ancient texts. Such magnificent spiritual or mystical supernatural powers are not normally available to an ordinary creature, and therefore those who have them are highly respected and sought after in society. The different Siddhis are exceptional supernatural powers and mystical abilities that one acquires.

The Siddhis are the mystical powers, the moral authority and spiritual empowerment that a person possesses due to his religious practices such as doing Yoga or meditation, Dhyan or contemplation, Tapa or observing penances and austerities, Daan or giving away charity, Dam or practicing self-restraint, Dharma or following the tenets of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and probity etc. Acquisition of Siddhi is natural when one succeeds in his spiritual practices and they bring immense acclaim and authority in their wake even as a diligent, honest, intelligent and hard-working man acquires fame and prosperity in this world.

The term 'Siddhi' has a wider ramification as it also incorporates accomplishments of various kinds in diverse fields besides the spiritual, mystical and occult. For instance, acquisition of expert skills as an accomplished musician, an artist, a singer, an archer, a military strategist, an orator, a doctor, an engineer, a writer, a philosopher, a teacher, etc.—all of them can be said to have Siddhi in their respective field of activity and vocation. Therefore, rare achievement of any kind in any specialised field is to acquire Siddhi or expertise or acumen in that field.

The attainment of Siddhi literally means to obtain success in one's endeavours, to be skilled in one's trade, to be an expert in any field. In the context of Yoga and spiritual practices, it refers to the achievement of certain mystical and super-natural powers. A man who is not wise thinks that by acquiring some or the other Siddhi he would be liberated and delivered from his worldly fetters. But he is deluded in this thinking. Instead of reaching his actual spiritual goal of finding 'true' Mukti—or 'real' freedom from the bondage of the body and the world which comes with realizing the Truth known as the 'self' and the pure conscious Atma that is eternally free, he would be bogged down and trapped by following this or that method in his hurry to obtain some kind of Siddhi in the fallacious hope that these Siddhis would help him find Mukti. They do not; instead of liberating him they trap him further. When he attains Siddhis or when he acquires some sort of mystical and super-natural powers, he is usually filled with a sense of pride and achievement. There are good chances that he would boast of his prowess and powers, strutting around haughtily displaying them, and expecting honours and acclaim. Indeed, his wishes would be fulfilled because he would be crowded by favour seekers and those who need his intervention to solve their worldly problems, but in the bargain he loses his spiritual peace and attainments. Public advertisement of spiritual achievements would undermine his quest for spiritual upliftment and liberation; it would rob his soul of its yearning for peace, tranquility and serenity. Company of the world would distract him from his chosen path. Therefore, acquisition of various Siddhis by a man who is not sure of his goal in life would be similar to acquisition of material wealth by a greedy man who becomes so obsessed by it that he forgets everything else and his selfishness and greed increase exponentially instead of abetting in the least. He is also like a man who has acquired scriptural knowledge only with the intention of gaining worldly fame and as a means of livelihood, who wishes to milk this knowledge for pecuniary gains—for in the process his spirit is demeaned, denigrated and demoted.

Such persons can never hope to find spiritual welfare and upliftment. They can never hope to reach their final spiritual goal of finding Mukti. They are so foolish they have frittered away the golden chance of using Yoga as an instrument to achieve spiritual freedom and deliverance by bargaining its achievements such as acquisition of Siddhis to get worldly benefits.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no. 16 refers to *nine Siddhis*. They are the following—(i) ‘Anima’ ‘अणिमा’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; to become small like an atom; (ii) ‘Mahima’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, wisdom, erudition, knowledge and skills; to become huge like a mountain, thereby standing out and being unique or special in a crowd; (iii) ‘Garima’ is to be heavy-weight in any field, to have special qualities that give one’s ideas and words a great amount of importance and weight; to have stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance; (iv) ‘Laghima’ is the grand virtue of being simple and humble inspite of being great, powerful and authoritative; it is to have simplicity and humility despite possessing grandeur, majesty, power, authority and magnificence; (v) ‘Praapti’ is to be able to attain, gain or obtain anything wished or desired for; (vi) ‘Praakramya’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over everything else; to be able to rule over others; (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ is to be able to control and subdue others, and exert influence on them so much so that they become obedient and subservient; and (ix) ‘Praakaashya’ is to be able to assume any form one wishes.

Sometimes, Paraakramya is replaced by ‘Praakaamya’ which means irresistible will. But they imply the same thing because one obtains victory and glory only when one has an irresistible desire to attain it.

According to some versions, ‘Mukti’, or to obtain liberation and deliverance from all sorts of bondages and fetters, is also regarded as one of the Siddhis. It is closely related to ‘Moksha’ meaning final spiritual emancipation and deliverance of the aspirant.

According to some other accounts, ‘Bhukti’—i.e. the ability to enjoy whatever one wishes to acquire and enjoy, is also one of the nine Siddhis.

Often only *eight Siddhis* are cited. They are the same as the ones listed above, except that under this classification one of the nine Siddhis is removed.

The Upanishads that describe these Siddhis are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 151-155, Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 56-102; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 23-24. (b) Atharva Veda—Sita Upanishad, verse no. 37 (which says that goddess Sita is like the Kamdhenu cow who grants the eight Siddhis); Annupurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8 (which says that a wise aspirant should not be deluded by Siddhis); Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 12 (which says that the eight Siddhis are enshrined in the first outer ring of the Sri Chakra used to worship Goddess Tripura).

A truly wise and enlightened ascetic is one who *does not get deluded by the various Siddhis* that naturally come to him as a reward of success in Yoga. This fact has been affirmed in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22, 62, 76-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 62; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8.

Let us quote the Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8 on this point of not exploiting the acquisition of Siddhis for worldly gains—

“verse no. 5 = “A person who is stupid and of low intellect would yearn for acquiring the various Siddhis (mystical powers that come by doing Yoga and other spiritual practices), and to obtain success in his endeavours he would adopt any method that he lays his hand on. All the numerous methods are like webs that would entangle him. He tries to obtain Siddhi by any method available, without paying attention to their effectiveness and worth. (5).

“verse no. 6 = Material things of the world (such as wealth), Mantras (spiritual formulas used during various religious practices), various auspicious deeds and actions, as well as Kaal Shakti (the power of ‘death’ to provide a person freedom from the torments and numerous problems that he suffers from while he lived in the world and had a body, because with ‘death’ he leaves them behind) can be helpful in obtaining various worldly acclaim and super-natural powers known as ‘Siddhis’<sup>1</sup>, but they can not provide the supreme Truth to the spiritual seeker. None of the Siddhis can ever provide the much sought-after ‘Param Pad’, literally meaning the supreme stature, or the state of being highly exalted and enlightened, to the spiritual aspirant.

[A man might do great sacrifices using immense wealth and huge amounts of material things as donations and charities in order to attain some special powers. He might repeat some Mantras or undertake some mystical occult practices to acquire some mystical and super-natural powers. He might even spend his time and energy in doing auspicious deeds in the hope that some special mystical benefits would accrue to him, that he would acquire some sort of special powers and authority not available to others. He might even prefer to wait out his time to die so that he can find liberation and deliverance from his miseries. But all these would not give him access to the real and truthful form of Siddhi—i.e. he would not have achieved success in the real sense.

The reason is that all the so-called Siddhis bestow upon him some kind of super-natural powers that are enumerated below, and he would be swept off his feet by being able to perform miracles that other lesser mortals can't do. This would make him proud, arrogant and egoist; he would lose his footing or mooring or bearing when surrounded by acclaim and fame that come naturally to a person who has access to super-human powers. He would lose sight of the real goal of life to find final liberation and deliverance, to acquire knowledge of the essence known as the Truth. He would remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death; he would remain attached to the world and the body because of the simple fact that the mystical and super-natural powers acquired by him can be used only as long as there is a body.

This is because the Siddhis are dependent upon the body—they need the efforts of the body in their acquisition, and they can be employed only as long as the man is alive, for once he dies they become irrelevant. A dead man does not display any mystical powers. So obviously, the bondage of the body is still there; the dependence on the body is not done away with, and therefore no true freedom is obtained.

As for obtaining freedom after physical death of the body, this is also not possible because the creature would take another birth in order to fulfill his unrequited desires and to suffer the consequences of the deeds done in the previous life.

Hence, neither the obtaining of various Siddhis in the physical world that might give super-natural powers to the person would raise him to an exalted stature that would make him the supreme authority in this creation, nor can this stature be



obtained upon death. This is because the ‘supreme stature’ that is referred to here is the stature beyond which nothing is to be attained or reached. In this context, the various Siddhis are just milestones marking the various stages of his spiritual progress, but they are not the final goal, they aren’t his spiritual destination. Similarly, a creature would be re-born after death if he has not found ‘true’ form of liberation and deliverance or ‘Mukti’.

Therefore, neither attaining super-natural powers known as Siddhis, nor the death of the physical body are any indications of one’s attainment of the supreme state of exalted spiritual existence. That is, one cannot be called freed from the grossness of the existential world and the body if he acquires some sort of magical powers that can enable him to do super-natural things and perform miracles that other ordinary creatures cannot do—such as being able to lift himself against the forces of gravity, or being able to control his breath for prolonged periods of time, or being able to make himself small or large in size than what he actually is, or being able to leave the gross body for a limited time and travel in space like the wind. All these things can be done easily by acquiring the various Siddhis that come naturally as a reward of Yoga.

Similarly, one cannot be called freed from the fetters of the body as well as the world simply because he has died and left the gross body. If the mind and the heart had been hooked to this world and unwilling to leave the body at the time of death, though of course it had to do so because the body had withered away by the natural process of aging, the creature is bound to take another birth so as to fulfill its desires and hopes of continuing to enjoy the world and the body.

Then, what is it? The answer lies in the realisation of the fact that the ‘true self’ is the Atma, that this Atma is the pure consciousness that is the universal ubiquitous Truth, that this Atma is synonymous with the supreme Brahm who is the only almighty Authority in creation, and that the Atma is endowed naturally with all the powers and authority that one seeks to get by obtaining the various Siddhis. This Atma is the eternally and perpetually free entity that is not under any kind of bondage or fetter, and therefore one need not die in order to attain freedom. Therefore it follows that when one has realised or attained the Atma, when one has become self-realised and has accessed the fount of pure consciousness residing in his own inner-self as his Atma—then he need not strive to obtain any other separate Siddhi or any other separate Mukti as they are attained immediately and simultaneously when one becomes self-realised and attains the knowledge of the Atma. In other words, realisation of the Atma is tantamount to attaining all the Siddhis and all forms of Muktis together.

Such divine and holistic views of the ‘self’ makes the aspirant convinced that he has attained the state of supremacy in this creation; this helps him to avoid pursuing various Siddhis in order to establish his powers and authority in this world. It also eliminates the need to die in order to obtain some exalted abode in the heaven, because for an enlightened man who has become self-realised there is no separate heaven somewhere in the sky but it is located in his inner-self where the Atma resides.

If obtaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, is his ultimate goal for which he does so many things, such as practicing Yoga by which he is gifted with many Siddhis that come naturally as a bonus by doing Yoga etc., then he would be well advised that ‘true and meaningful Mukti’ comes only when the spiritual aspirant or seeker realises his ‘true self’ as the Atma, the pure consciousness. This realisation gives him true Mukti because of the simple fact that the Atma is an ethereal and sublime entity that is never bound, that is eternally free, and that does not need some Siddhi to prove its super-natural powers and authority. The Atma is eternally all-

knowing and omniscient; it is eternally powerful and almighty; it is eternally all-pervading and omnipresent; it is eternally truthful and one of its own kind. It has no dual existence, and therefore there is no need to seek a special form that is better and more powerful or more enlightened or more pure than what is it at present. The Atma does not need any special Mukti as such.] (6).

“verse no. 7 = If a person has some kind of desire or hope, he would make relevant efforts and follow corresponding path that would help him fulfill the desire or obtain his goal that he hopes to reach.

On the other hand, if he has no desire or harbours no hope there would be no need to make any effort or follow any path. Such a man is perpetually contented and peaceful. He does not want anything; he does not hanker after some thing or the other (7).

“verse no. 8 = Oh sage (Nidagh)! When one is fully enlightened about the reality of all material things in this world, it is only then that he can see the truth of the Atma. In other words, first he thinks that the world and its material sense objects are true, but with experience and close examination he finds this is not the case. Then he compares this knowledge of the world with that of the Atma which he has realised by meditation and contemplation. It is then that he discovers the difference, and comes face to face with the ‘truth’ of the Atma vis-à-vis the world and its material things.

{When a wise man analyses the world and its material things, he discovers that they are all illusionary and deluding by nature, and act as traps for the creature’s soul. The world and its things are all gross, perishable and transient; they cannot provide sustainable peace and happiness. The semblance of comfort and pleasure that they do provide is temporary and more entangling than liberating. On the other hand, he finds that the Atma is an eternal and imperishable entity that is sublime and subtle, and the bliss and happiness that comes with its realisation, or experienced when the Atma is realised, is of an eternal and divine nature. While the world is imaginary, the Atma which is pure consciousness is true.}

With this realisation he finds that the world and the various Siddhis (achievements, successes, powers and acclaim) associated with it are futile to pursue, and are best discarded. Only those who are ignorant of the fact yearn for various Siddhis; it is only such people whose mind and sub-conscious have desires for obtaining Siddhis (8).”

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 151-155 classifies all Siddhis into two categories—Kalpit and A-Kalpit. The Kalpit Siddhis are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have imaginable powers and potentials that can be predicted. On the other hand, the A-Kalpit Siddhis are those which are self-generated or uncreated by any artificial means, are natural and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted.

Now let us see what this Upanishad has to say on this subject—

“Canto 1, verse no. 151 = Such an accomplished ascetic becomes Mukta (liberated and delivered) even while he is alive in this world and lives in this physical gross body. {This is because this body becomes irrelevant for him; he has obtained complete control over it so much so that the normal bodily functions such as output of urine, stool, saliva, mucous and sweat etc. have come almost to a standstill—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no.57-58. This is called ‘Jivan Mukti’}.

Worldly Siddhis (accomplishments, successes and eclectic specialized powers) are of two types—Kalpit and A-Kalpit (151).

{The Kalpit Siddhis are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have predictable and imaginable powers and potentials that can be foreseen. On the other hand, the A-Kalpit Siddhis are those which are self-generated and cannot be created by any artificial means, are natural, and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted.}

“Canto 1, verse no. 152 = The ‘Kalpit Siddhis’ are those that are obtained by diligent efforts and conscious endeavour on the part of the ascetic or any spiritual aspirant. Success in obtaining mystical powers and acquiring spiritual authority in this case of Kalpit Siddhis is done with the help of various juices and essences called the various ‘Rasas’ (such as the Som Rasa used in fire sacrifice as an offering to the Gods and is said to be divinely blessed), the different medicinal herbs called the ‘Aushadhis’ (which are also used in fire sacrifices to clear the environment of toxic gases and germs), all the different deeds called ‘Kriyas’ (which are auspicious, righteous and noble in character and would therefore result in creation of positive energy and right circumstances conducive to one’s all round welfare and well being, here referring to the numerous rituals associated with formal fire sacrifices and other religious activities), and practice of ‘Mantras’ (i.e. doing Japa or repetition with them—this helps to harness the stupendous positive energy encrypted in their letters and words as well as to help the mind to learn concentration which in turn helps in training it to become calm, quiet, rested and focused on the work at hand, thereby achieving desired results with full attention of the mind’s faculties at work) (152).

{These Siddhis are called ‘Kalpit’ because their powers and potential effects can be predicted and imagined depending upon the medium used to acquire them. Such as for example, if one particular herb is consumed during the course of Yoga, its benefits as well as harms can be well predicted in advance. Similarly, the effects of the Mantras, Kriyas (deeds), and Rasas (juices; extracts) can well be ascertained before hand; they can be predicted with a great degree of accuracy.}

“Canto 1, verse no. 153 = These Kalpit Siddhis are not everlasting; they are transient in their effect, and their mystical powers are less effective and less potent. Some of them can be obtained easily without much hassle and even without employing any special means, while others require some sort of special effort and employment of special means or ways or measures as well as some degree of diligence on the part of the aspirant to be successfully accessed (153).

“Canto 1, verse no. 154 = The A-Kalpit Siddhis, on the contrary, are those whose stupendity, far-reaching mystical powers and grand effects cannot be imagined, pre-conceived, foreseen and predicted in advance. Such Siddhis are the exclusive domain of the Supreme Being called the Ishwar; they are possessed by him and are under his command. Such Siddhis are numerous and of different genres. They are available to (or can be accessed by) an honest and sincere ascetic who is engaged in self realisation with steadfastness of purpose, with persistent consistency and diligence. He is independent of any other props to support his spiritual journey except following the eclectic path of Yoga (meditation and contemplation). That is, he relies on Yoga only for his spiritual emancipation and salvation (154).

{In other words, such an aspirant who sticks to only one path for his spiritual liberation and deliverance, i.e. who follows the path of Yoga as envisioned in this and other Yoga Upanishads, is the only one who can successfully acquire such mystical powers and astounding potentials as the ones that come under the classification of ‘A-Kalpita Siddhis’. He therefore would not take the help of any kind of external help in accomplishing his spiritual goal of attaining self-realisation and liberation from the bondage of this gross and perishable body. He would not use medicinal drugs or their spin-offs in the form of various juices and essences such as the Som Rasa used during formal fire sacrifices to keep him going in his spiritual practice and maintain the level of his energy, strength, stamina and vitality, nor does he rely upon so many other ways and paths said to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul as proffered by various versions of different scriptures and their myriad interpretations. He relies only on one eclectic path of Yoga to the exclusion of all others. No one can judge the intensity and reach of his spiritual powers because they are unimaginably great and astounding.}

“Canto 1, verse no. 155 = Such A-Kalpita Siddhis are obtained by acclaimed ascetics by practicing Yoga for a long period of time. Those ascetics who have no Vasanas (worldly passions, yearnings and desires) are the ones who can acquire them, and their acquisition gives them immense strength and powers. They can assume any form they wish. These Siddhis are eternal and everlasting; they are not perishable (155).”

The Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55 enumerates the *benefits* that these great Siddhis or mystical and spiritual powers provide to a practitioner of Yoga. Let us see what this Upanishad has to say—

“Canto 5, verse no. 46 = Oh Sureshwar (the chief amongst Gods, i.e. Brahma)! Now I (Shiva) shall describe the various Siddhis to you. These help the aspirant to obtain true comfort, happiness and joy. By having complete control over the sense organs, by remaining absolutely calm and serene under all circumstances and provocations, the spiritual aspirant is able to *virtually conquer his Prans* (i.e. he is able to exercise full control over all the functions of his own body, including the external and internal ones) (46).

“Canto 5, verse no. 47 = When an accomplished practitioner is able to focus his mind during Yoga and become completely engrossed in *hearing the Naad* (the cosmic sound heard during deep meditation and contemplation, the sound that reverberates through his entire being and vibrates through his nerves and veins), he is said to acquire the mystical *powers to hear distant sounds not normally heard by the ears*.

{To wit, he develops the power to hear about things that had occurred in the distant past, are happening in some distant place out of earshot in the present time, and would happen in the future. His brain is so trained because he would not have heard the Naad in the first place if it had not been sufficiently fine-tuned. He develops transcendental powers of perception and deep insight so much so that he can foresee things and happenings in advance, or can have the hindsight long enough to see them occurring long back in time. It also means he can hear voices of the Spirits in heaven, the words of Gods and the Mantras that remain eternally etched in the cosmic ether in the form of sound waves.}

Similarly, when he has focused his mind and concentrated his attention on the Bindu (the dot size spot on the forehead between the two eyebrows where the source of wisdom and enlightenment is said to be located), he is able to *have a deep insight*

*into everything.* {To wit, he develops a high degree of practical wisdom and intelligence that pertains to this material world along with the mystical powers and astounding ability to have an insight into the paranormal. These help him to acquire a sight that is beyond the normal sight of the eye, and have a transcendental, super-human power of vision.} (47).

“Canto 5, verse no. 48 = When the Mana (mind) is submerged in the thoughts of the Kalatma (i.e. when he has developed the enlightened view-point that the same pure conscious Atma transcends all the three periods of time such as the past, the present and the future), a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant is able to *become ‘Trikalagya’—i.e. he knows and sees everything in the three phases of time, the past, the present and the future.* {To wit, he transcends the borders of time and place, and becomes omniscient and all-knowing.}

Besides this, he acquires the astounding mystical ability of *being able to enter the body and mind of others.* {To wit, he can know what others think by being able to read their minds, he can influence their temperament, thoughts and behaviours by controlling their mind along with controlling all their actions and deeds by controlling both their mind as well as their bodies. In other words, he can do things through the medium of the other person; whatever the other person does is actually being done by this specially empowered Yogi.} (48).

“Canto 5, verse no. 49 = When his mind meditates about and experiences the presence of Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) in the head, i.e. when the enlightened ascetic is able to *experience the presence of the supreme transcendental source of eternal bliss and peace known as Brahm* in the region of the Vyom Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra by focusing the attention of his mind and the energy of his vital winds called Pran there, *he is able to vanquish thirst and hunger (for worldly things, sensual pleasures and material comforts) along with overcoming the bad affects of all (spiritual) poisons.*

{By becoming Brahm-realised and experiencing its attendant spiritual ecstasy and bliss, the ascetic has nothing more to desire and wants nothing in this material world. The enjoyments and comforts of this material world are transient, artificial and inconsequential as compared to this spiritual high of ecstasy and bliss experienced by Brahm-realisation. He is deemed to have overcome all spiritual hurdles by way of overcoming the numerous faults and imperfections that create uncountable obstacles in his spiritual progress and reaching of the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation.}

When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the earth element and contemplating about it, he *acquires the mystical powers that allow him to take his mind to any corner of the earth, even in beyond it to the nether world called Patal.*

{This mystical power empowers him to transcend all physical and geographical barriers that usually impede the reach of an ordinary man, and his mind can go anywhere without any hindrance. He can think of everything that exists on this earth, and his mind can even visualise what is hidden inside the bowls of the earth and beyond it. While living on one part of the earth, he can know what is happening on its other side. This also would imply that nothing in this world would ever influence his mind and captivate it by trapping it in its charm and preventing it from breaking free from its shackles and proceeding ahead.} (49).

“Canto 5, verse no. 50 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the water element and contemplating about it, he has *nothing to fear from the water element*. {To wit, he need not fear from any harm being caused to him from water in any form, such as drowning in it or suffering from any water borne disease or some internal medical problems arising out of water such as oedema of lungs, dropsy of tissues and other diseases due to misbalance in the water content of the body.}

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the fire element and contemplating about it, he has *nothing to fear from the fire element*. {To wit, he cannot be burnt by fire; his body never has to suffer from lack of vital heat and energy; he never suffers from fever and other diseases due to misbalance in the fire element in Nature. Besides this, his speech acquires all the potent of this element because fire is said to be an integral part of the faculty of speech. He has proper eyesight because again the fire and its light are responsible for the faculty of sight to function properly. He has not to suffer from lack of hunger or digestive problems because the fire is responsible for the proper functioning of both.} (50).

“Canto 5, verse no. 51 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the air or wind element and contemplating about it, he is deemed to have *acquired the ability to move in the sky like birds*. {To wit, he becomes so light that he can float in the air; he can levitate and go to any place he likes by surmounting the physical barrier of earth.}

By fixing his mind in the exalted sky element, which is a metaphoric way of saying that by becoming as exalted and sublime as the supreme Brahm himself who has an exalted abode as high as the sky, such a realised and acclaimed ascetic can *acquire such mystical and eclectic powers as Anima etc.* (51).

“Canto 5, verse no. 52 = When a realised and enlightened ascetic’s mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the Viraat (i.e. the Viraat Purush) and contemplating about his stupendous divinity (i.e. when he is submerged in the thoughts of the Supreme Being in his vast, attributeless and invisible but all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush from whom the rest of the creation has come into being), the ascetic is able to *acquire such great glories and divine virtues called ‘Mahima’ as the ones possessed by the Viraat himself*.

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the four-headed Brahma (i.e. the creator of the visible creation as well as the four Vedas) and contemplating about his great glories, he *acquires the mystical powers to create the world if he so wishes* (52).

{To wit, he now transcends all the limitations of the physical world and even the paranormal world of the Spirits to reach the supreme exalted stature where he acquires such mystical powers as those possessed by Brahm when the latter revealed himself as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush is much senior and more powerful than even the individual gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation, for the simple reason that all of them have been created by this Viraat to carry out specific jobs on his behalf. The powers of these three Gods are tailor-made to enable them to carry out their respective functions, but the Viraat has all the powers of these three Gods vested in him, because the Viraat is the supreme Authority who delegates these powers to these Gods in the first place, and anyone who does not possess any power cannot delegate it to someone else. According to the Vedantic view of creation, the Viraat is the macrocosmic gross

body of Brahm in the subtlest and the most sublime form. Brahm first metamorphosed itself into the Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of creation, and the latter evolved into the Viraat. The entire creation has come into being from the body of this Viraat. So the latter incorporates the entire creation in its form. In other words, the Viraat is the sum total of all the gross bodies of all the individual creatures in creation. By extension, the ascetic who has acquired the stature which makes him one like the Viraat becomes very near to Brahm and acquires the enviable exalted stature of being superior to even the Gods because this Viraat is superior to all the Gods put together.}

“Canto 5, verse no. 53 = When the ascetic fixes the attention of his Atma (his conscious self) on Indra, the king of Gods and a metaphor for sense gratification and indulgence in worldly material comforts and pleasures derived from the sense objects in this world, he *obtains the greatest material comforts and pleasures that the world of sense objects can ever hope to provide anyone.*

Similarly, if he fixes the attention of his Atma on Vishnu, the sustainer, care taker and protector of the world, he would *acquire mystical powers to sustain, take care and protect the world.* With this mystical power he can well look after his dependants and his subjects. He becomes a kingly figure because this is the basic function of any good king—to sustain, protect and look after the general welfare of his subjects. (53).

{This is because ‘Indra’ is a metaphor for all things sensual and the natural tendency of the mind to remain engrossed in enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of the world with the sense organs. The word ‘Indra’ is derived from the word ‘Indris’ meaning the sense organs of the body. These sense organs have an inherent and natural inclination to be attracted towards the world and its material objects, and then derive comfort and pleasure from them. They would naturally swerve towards them and find a natural habitat in them. It is a Herculean task to pull them away from their natural habitat just like it is almost impossible to pull a man out of his own house and forcing him to disown it. So, if the ascetic remains engrossed in thinking about the material comforts of the world, he would strive whole-heartedly get them. This verse has a double meaning—on the one hand it is a sarcastic comment on those stupid ascetics who suffer great difficulties in first acquiring mystical powers and then frittering them away by using them to pursue and obtain such low-value and despicable objects as the material comforts of the world and personal glorification in spite of knowing that they are transient and perishable and would be demeaning for their soul, and on the other hand warning those who are newcomers in the spiritual field and are yet unaware of how to use the mystical powers once they are accessed by being successful in Yoga. The fruits of Yoga are emancipation and salvation for the soul, and not indulgences in the world and being captive of the sense organs need for constant and infinite gratification.}

“Canto 5, verse no. 54 = When the ascetic thinks of Rudra (the angry form of Lord Shiva) while meditating and fixes his mind and attention on his virtues (which are fiery in nature and consume the world in the fire of anger), he is able to *acquire such great fiery powers that would enable him to annihilate the world if he so wishes just like Lord Rudra himself.*

Likewise, if he meditates upon Lord Narayan (Vishnu), he becomes one like him and *acquires mystical powers possessed by Lord Narayan.* And if he meditates upon Lord Vasudeo (another name of Vishnu who is regarded as the Lord of the eight Vasus, the important entities created by the creator for the welfare of the creation

when it came into existence in the beginning, such as material wealth without which life in this world would be difficult to sustain), he is able to acquire all the eight Siddhis (i.e. he is able to acquire lordship over all these eight Vasus, and therefore over all the vital components of creation that help to sustain the creatures in this material world).

{An ascetic would acquire the virtues of the entity upon which he meditates. If his idol of adoration is something as horrible as anger, if his mind is always restless and agitated, if he is always full of jealousy and ill will towards others, if he is always thinking of violence, cruelty and spite, then he would acquire these lowly virtues because one becomes what one constantly thinks about. This is indicated by the word 'Rudra'. On the contrary, if he thinks and contemplates about nobler things and higher virtues of life such as the emancipation and salvation of the spirit, he would acquire those eclectic virtues as the ones personified by Lord Narayan. And if he is more concerned with the care, upkeep and general welfare of his dependants and subjects, he would be always thinking in the term of providing enough for their comfort and wellbeing so that they do not have to face dearth of any material necessities of life, and this is metaphorically depicted by saying that he would acquire the virtues of Vasudeo or would become as exalted and empowered as Vasudeo.} (54).

These *Vasus* are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following-- Dhruv, Dhar, Som (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som which is used during religious



ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush and Prabhas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

Lord Vishnu has one of his names as Vasudeo because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his undisputed lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, created at the beginning of creation to help sustain the upcoming creation.

“Canto 5, verse no. 55 = An ascetic who is not only well-versed with the real meaning and intent of the various tenets of Yoga in their literal sense but is also an expert exponent of them in practice, being a personification of Yoga itself, who is self restraint and practices the various principles of Yoga in their entirety, is able to achieve fulfillment of all his wishes. Success in any endeavour depends upon one’s sincerity of purpose, commitment and diligence, and this applies to Yoga as well (55).”

The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 23-24 assert that an ascetic who do meditation and worship of Lord Shiva are eligible to obtain the various Siddhis such as ‘Anima’ etc. To quote—“Those wise ones who symbolically pour a stream of this elixir on the divine deity called Mahadeva (literally the ‘great God’ or Lord Shiva), located in the region of the navel and whose form is like a lighted lamp, while doing Japa with the Mantra ‘Hans-Hans’<sup>1</sup> are blessed with being free from various diseases such as the degenerating effects of old age culminating into death. {Such a man acquires robust health and maintains it even in his old age; he dies peacefully without having to undergo the usual torments associated with old age and death.}

He is also becomes eligible to acquire the various mystical powers called Siddhis such as Anima etc. {He acquires special powers by preserving his vital energy, stamina and vitality.} (23-24).

*The Siddhis are meant to be kept secret*—The Yogtattva Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 76-78 clearly asserts that a wise ascetic should not allow the successful accomplishment of the Siddhis to go into his head and make him proud and arrogant. He should keep them secret and not divulge them to anyone, because the people with selfish interests would surround him seeking his intervention to help them with their worldly problems, but this would cause unnecessary obstacle in the path of the ascetic’s spiritual progress.

<sup>4</sup>The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three celebrated primary qualities called the Gunas. They are Sata, Raja and Tama.

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and

balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajasic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the 'bad Vasanas' or better still the 'worst type of Vasana' that any individual can have.

These Gunas, in varying ratios and mixtures, decide the character and personality of any given unit of creation. In modern world we recognize them as the ‘gene’ special to that individual, the ‘gene’ which makes each individual so unique in this creation. These Gunas can also be compared to the various shades and hues of colours that a painter uses to paint a picture or a portrait and inject life and uniqueness to it. Even the same painter cannot duplicate exactly a picture again—there is bound to be a difference between any two pictures or portraits no matter how invisible, imperceptible, microscopic and subtle it might be.

The *effect* of the Gunas and *how they affect this creation* have been explained in a number of Upanishads. For instance, in the Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 2 of the Atharva Veda the Lord Ram himself explains them. “The Lord himself is the one who is the cause of the creation coming into existence; he is the one who sustains and protects it; he is the one who finally concludes it. Towards this end, he willingly utilises the three basic qualities called the Gunas that act as catalysts to give effect to the Lord’s wishes. These three Gunas help to bring about a particular change in creation, and modify the existing equilibrium in accordance with the wishes of the Lord.

These three Gunas are the following—Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The dominance of the first quality called Sata Guna results in the emergence or retrieval of this present creation from the darkness that had prevailed after the previous phase of creation was annihilated. The dominance of the second quality called Raja Guna is responsible for the growth, the development, the sustenance and protection of creation that has come into existence. And finally, the third quality of Tama Guna brings about the conclusion of the existing creation.

Just like a huge banyan tree is secretly and imperceptibly present in its seed, only to emerge when the situation is conducive for its birth, this entire creation is secretly present in the supreme Lord and waiting for the right conditions that would cause it to emerge into a vibrant world. And this ‘right condition’ is created when the Sata Guna becomes a dominant factor. (2).”]

दो०. माया ईस न आपु कहूँ जान कहिअ सो जीव ।

बंध मोच्छ प्रद सर्बपर माया प्रेरक सीव ॥ १५ ॥

dōhā.

māyā īsa na āpu kahum̐ jāna kahi'a sō jīva.

bandha mōccha prada sarbapara māyā prēraka sīva. 15.

He who does not understand what is Maya, who is Ishwar, and what is the truthful form of his own ‘self’—such a creature is known as a ‘Jiva’.<sup>1</sup>

The Authority that decides the destiny of the creature depending upon the latter’s deeds, whether the creature should be liberated and delivered or allowed to remain entangled in this world of birth and death, the Authority that is supreme and transcendental, and the one that inspires Maya to act—it is the divine entity that is known as ‘Ishwar’.<sup>2</sup> (Doha no. 15)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When a creature is not enlightened about the fact that this world and its material temptations are creations of Maya or delusions, that this Maya is a creation of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness which has revealed itself in the form of this

world using the powers of delusions created by its own free will, and that the truthful identity of all living beings is known as the Atma which is pure consciousness like the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, being a microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic aspect of super Consciousness—then such a creature is known as the Jiva.

Obviously, there appears to be a separation of the Jiva from the Ishwar when the creature gets deluded into thinking that the gross visible body in which the Atma lives is the identity of a living being. Since all such bodies have separate existence, since one is clearly distinct from another, each body having its peculiar characters and personality, this creates an impression that the holder of these bodies have independent existence, and that such entities are distinct from the supreme entity known as the Ishwar because the latter is universal and omnipresent. This thinking is basically flawed because the gross physical body is not the true identity of the living being; the true identity is the Atma or the pure conscious soul. This individual consciousness is the same as the cosmic Consciousness, the only difference being in the plane or level of existence.

Since the ‘consciousness’ is an immutable and sublime entity, it simply cannot be fractured into so many parts as exists in this world.

Besides this, anything that is really ‘true’ must be eternal, infinite, steady, constant, permanent and imperishable. Both the world created by Maya, as well as the body of the creature, lack these grand qualities. So they definitely cannot be the ‘real truth’.

The scriptures, especially the eclectic Upanishads, repeatedly stress that this world is a manifestation of Brahm, and since Brahm is a single non-dual entity it follows that all its revelations are basically the same as they all have the same element at their core. For instance, countless images of a single object can be formed in as many mirrors, and a person who is not aware of the existence of the primary object will think in his ignorance that there are so many things. He gets deluded when he counts them, and this misconception may spread further when someone else asks him as to how many things he had seen. In his belief that he is speaking the truth he says he saw the number of things that he counted by the virtue of the images he saw in the mirror. Then a wise man tells him about his folly; he enlightens him that what he saw was merely images, and not the real thing. The real tally of things present is only ‘one’, and the rest is nothing but an illusion.

The same thing applies in the case of Maya, Ishwar and Jiva. It is under the influence of Maya that an ignorant person begins to see a separation between the Ishwar and the Jiva. Actually no such difference, separation or distinction exists between the Ishwar and the Jiva.

*Difference between Jivatma and Parmatma*—This has been explained in Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4 as follows—“The four states in which a Jiva (living being) exists are the following—Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya. The fifth state called the Turiyatit state is beyond these four.

In other words, the same Atma appears to exist in four different forms depending upon these four states of a creature’s conscious existence. Hence, the Atma that lives in the Jagrat state is called ‘Vishwa’, in the Swapna state it is called ‘Taijas’, in the Sushupta state it is called ‘Pragya’, and in the Truiya state it is called ‘Tathastha’ (literally meaning non-involved, indifferent and completely neutral). The Atma or consciousness that exists beyond these four states, the Atma which exists in the transcendental state called Turiyatit, is known as the ‘Parmatma’—or the supreme

Atma or the transcendental Consciousness. Since it is in ‘transcendental’ state of existence which goes beyond all the known states of worldly existence, it is natural that it rises above the gross and the mundane, and instead remains free from all the faults and shortcomings that are associated with worldly existence—i.e. the Parmatma is immaculate and devoid of all taints and corruptions that might have shrouded the Atma when it assumes a gross body while it lives in this world. {This is the reason why the Parmatma is compared to the sky because the sky stays above the gross world known as the earth and does not have any of the physical limitations of the earth.}

Again, since the wise ascetic has already realised that his true ‘self’ is the Atma that lives in the Turiyatit state of existence, it is obvious that he is like this Parmatma. So he exclaims upon this eclectic discovery—‘I am Brahm (the Parmatma)!’

A person who lives perpetually in this Turiyatit state is deemed to be free from the limitations imposed by the other four states of existence. It may be argued that this Turiyatit state incorporates all the other four states of existence, but in actual practice it is perpetually a completely neutral state, and anything that is profoundly and eternally neutral cannot be said to have bias towards any one or the other thing. Since there is no reversal of this state of Turiyatit, i.e. once a man reaches this transcendental state of existence he would not go back to the other four states of existence, he would not be aware of the gross world and his gross organs as done in the Jagrat state, he would not dream as in the Swapna state, he would not be in the temporary state of rest in the Sushupta state which is a transient state as the creature oscillates between the Sushupta and Swapna states while asleep, and he would not even have any junior level of spiritual evolvment as exemplified by the Turiya state which is higher than the Sushupta state but lower than the Turiyatit state. This is because he has reached the highest point in his spiritual journey and has reached its pinnacle or citadel. There is no existence beyond it; it is the supreme state in which the consciousness can ever expect to exist. Hence, it is honoured by the epithet ‘Param’—one that is supreme and beyond which there is nothing.

Since the eternal and truthful Atma (here referring the cosmic transcendental form of the Atma known as Consciousness, rather than the microcosmic form of the Atma that lives inside the body of the individual creature as its Jiva-Atma) is the only conscious and living entity that exists in all of these states of existence, it is deemed to be the only one witness of their presence.

{The gross body ceases to exist in the other states except the Jagrat state. The subtle body consisting of the mind ceases to exist in the Sushupta state. The causal body that harbours the individual’s Atma ceases to exist when the creature dies and leaves the gross body. So, none of them are eternal. The Atma itself, though it is eternal and immaculate by nature, becomes mired in the delusions of the world, allows itself to be trapped in the web-like snare created out of its own free will, then remains engrossed in doing so many deeds and suffering from their consequences, has various desires and assumes so many roles voluntarily. Hence, it is also not apparently steady. In other words, the Atma that is called a ‘Jiva Atma’ is influenced by the environment in which it lives; it is tainted by its surroundings. As compared to this situation, the Parmatma is unaffected by worldly things and is beyond the reach or influence of anything gross and mundane that pertains to this creation, whether it is good or bad. Hence, in this scenario, the only entity that remains constant and unchanging is the Parmatma, the supreme form of the individual Atma which is also known as Brahm. That is also why the latter is called the Absolute Truth—because the latter does not change.

A simple illustration will help to clear the idea. The celestial sun is unmoving and shining brilliantly in a uniform manner. But when seen from earth, it appears to move and even change its brilliance depending upon a number of environmental factors such as the presence of clouds, humidity, dust particles etc. in the atmosphere, etc. The sun also appears to rise and set, is hidden from view behind dark clouds, or even disappears during solar eclipses. But even a high school student knows that none of this is true. Similarly, the disc of the moon appears to have its own light whereas it merely reflects the light of the sun, and it also appears to change its contours every night though this is due to the different angles from which it is viewed from earth every night as a result of its revolution around the earth. The same argument applies to the Parmatma vis-à-vis the Jiva Atma. The Parmatma is like the sun, and the Jiva Atma is like the moon that shines in the light of the sun.}

Since the Parmatma represents that superior aspect of the cosmic Consciousness that is absolutely neutral and detached from everything, including Maya (delusions), it is beyond the purview of the four normal states of conscious existence of a creature. The Atma living in the Turiyatit state is called a Parmatma. In this state, it cannot be called a 'Drasta' of anything, or the one who sees anything, observes anything, or is a witness to anything—because this is a completely neutral and detached state of existence in which the mind and all the other faculties are defunct, and in which nothing matters for the super-conscious Atma.

In such a case, should one regard the Jiva (the living being) as the Drasta? {If the Parmatma is not the Drasta or the one who sees, observes and witnesses anything because of its sublime cosmic existence and neutral character, then can one treat the creature that has a gross existence in a visible world of material sense objects as the seer, observer and witness?}

No, the Jiva (living being) is also not the Drasta in the true sense because his 'true self' is the Atma that is a most subtle and sublime entity which is really not involved in anything related to the gross body as well as the gross world. This Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma (which is the 'supreme Atma' or the cosmic Consciousness which is the macrocosmic form of the individual creature's Atma). The Atma possesses all the virtues of the Parmatma in the sense that it is equally neutral, dispassionate, detached etc. from anything gross and untrue. The problem arises only when the creature, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, begins to identify himself with the gross body in which this Atma lives and erroneously begins to treat this body as his 'true self and identity'. This body lives and interacts with the gross material world of sense objects.

So, when the creature begins to identify himself with the body, he becomes a 'Drasta' because then he begins to 'see and perceive' this world through the organs of perception of the body. Now he becomes someone who 'sees', someone who perceives, feels, tastes, touches, smells etc. The world becomes his object of perception or the 'Drisya'. The Drasta (the seer or observer) is affected naturally by the Drisya (the objects or things seen or observed). The sight influences him and creates either a positive or a negative impression on his sub-conscious and psyche. Such a creature cannot remain immune from, unaffected by or indifferent to his surroundings and what he 'sees' simply because his mind and intellect are not attuned to see the 'truth'. Had they been so, the creature would have realised that the body—which actually does the seeing or perceiving of the objects of the world—is not his truthful identity at all in the first place. The fact that he has not realised what his true nature is becomes the breeding ground for illusions of his being a 'Drasta' or the seer.

Such a 'Drasta' gets embroiled in the affairs of the gross world because he 'sees' this world as being true—though this perception is absolutely erroneous.

On the other hand is the person who can be regarded as a 'neutral Drasta or a non-Drasta'. This wise man knows that his 'true form' is not the body but the Atma that lives in this body. Such a wise and erudite man would do things in this world like another 'ordinary' man, but with the difference that he does not get involved in anything the body does at the emotional and sub-conscious level. His mind neither gets involved in what his body does, nor does it register or stores any information in its memory bank regarding the humdrum affairs of the world.

Therefore it is derived that the same Jiva Atma (a living being) can either be a 'Drasta' or a 'non-Drasta' depending upon the level of its wisdom and intellectual development in the spiritual sphere. That is, everything depends on the level in which a living being's Atma or pure consciousness exists in this world. In other words, at the lower level and grosser level of existence of the consciousness, the Jiva becomes a 'Drasta', while at the higher level of existence he is a 'non-Drasta'. A Drasta is involved in and influenced by the world, while the non-Drasta is uninvolved and neutral.

In other words, if the Atma relates itself to the world—whether at the gross level corresponding to the Jagrat state known as the waking state of consciousness in the physical world, or at the lower subtle level corresponding to the Swapna state known as the dreaming state of consciousness in the world of dreams—then this Atma is known as the 'Drasta'. But when the same Atma lives in the Turiya state of consciousness that transcends these levels of existence of consciousness—when it is completely detached from the world, the physical body and the subtle mind—then it is known as the 'non-Drasta'.

Now suppose it is said that the Jiva's (living being's) true nature is not to remain involved in worldly affairs as his 'true form' is the Atma which is pure consciousness that is equivalent to the cosmic Consciousness called the Parmatma, then this logic also does not hold its ground of validity. This is because as soon as the Atma assumes a gross body, it is immediately shrouded by the ego and pride of having a body. It is almost impossible to find a living being or a Jiva who would not accept that he has a body. In fact, the very concept of being a 'Jiva' rests on the premise that the Atma has a body. Therefore, if this notion of being a possessor of a body is done away with, it is only then that the Jiva becomes equivalent to the Parmatma. {The Atma is proud of the body because this body gives the Atma its form, its identity as an individual; it is by the medium of the gross body that the Atma is able to perform stupendous tasks in this world, achieves success in various fields and acquire name and fame; it is the body which helps the Atma to do deeds that are righteous, noble, auspicious and holy. The Atma is only a Spirit without a form, and to be identified it needs a physical form which the body provides. Hence, the Atma is proud of its association with the body. This stokes the ego and makes the Atma possessive of the body.}

In other words, the *difference between a Jiva and the Parmatma* is just like the difference between the Ghatakash and the Mahakash. {The Ghatakash is the space present inside a hollow pitcher, and the Mahakash is the vast open sky outside the vessel. The Ghatakash is separated from the Mahakash by the physical body of the pitcher. Actually there is no distinction between the space inside and outside the pitcher, for if the vessel is broken the two spaces coalesce instantly and effortlessly.}

The two names of the same thing are given only in an abstract manner for the purpose of study, for in actuality there is no difference. So therefore, a Jiva has a

distinct existence only as long as it has the body—or is conscious that it has the body, and as soon as this awareness of the body is removed, the two—the Jiva and the Parmatma—become one.

Another instance is cited now. The same breath moves out and in the body as exhalation and inhalation. While doing so, it makes two distinct sounds—‘Ha’ and ‘Sa’ respectively. That is, while moving out the sound is equivalent to the letter ‘Ha’ of the Sanskrit language, and when moving in the sound is equivalent to the letter ‘Sa’. This forms the Mantra ‘Hans’, meaning a divine Swan. In other words, the Jiva’s Pran or vital winds also display artificial distinction as being exhaled breath and inhaled breath though the air is the same entity that cannot be distinguished and mutated. A wise, self-realised and enlightened ascetic understands the esoteric message encrypted in this sound of Hans. He realises that the breath is telling him that he is like the divine bird Swan which is regarded as the purest and the wisest amongst the birds. So, a wise ascetic always concentrates upon his pure and enlightened form known as the Atma that has no physical body like this wind or air element which too has no physical body. The Atma then becomes equivalent to the Parmatma.

With this sublime and eclectic spiritual view firmly established in his inner self, the enlightened ascetic discards all sense of ego and pride vis-à-vis the body. And when this happens, he becomes one with the Parmatma (as explained above) (4).

{The word ‘Drasta’ means one who sees, observes something. It is the mind that registers any sight that is seen, or any other perception for that matter, in order to enable the man to actually see or perceive the particular thing. For instance, a man might be gazing at something continuously but he might not be actually seeing it because his mind is lost in some other thoughts. In the present case when we refer to an ascetic in the Turiyatit state of existence we find that he is so much absorbed in meditation and reflection upon the truth of the Atma, his pure consciousness, and remains submerged in its thoughts and the bliss derived from it that he is totally oblivious about the surroundings. So he lives in a perpetual trance, and though he might beg for food or take a bath in the river, actually, at the mental level, he is not doing anything at all. If one asks him anything about his actions, his answer naturally would be in the negative, and in this he would be speaking the actual and sincere truth.

This also explains the difference between the Turiya and the Turiyatit states. The living being who has vestiges of awareness left in him, even of the fact that he is an ascetic or a Sanyasi, or the fact that he is enlightened and wise, may have risen above the rest of the creatures and live in a Turiya state of trance-like existence that resembles Turiyatit state, but he has not achieved truthful success. That comes when he reaches the Turiyatit state of complete unawareness and neutrality—or a state of ‘non-knowledge’. Obviously, a man who has no true knowledge of anything would not be able to see or hear or feel or taste or smell anything, simply because he does not know what these things mean or from where they originate or how to perceive them or distinguish between any two of them. This state is the truthful Turiyatit state. The Atma that lives in this eclectic transcendental state is the superior Atma called the ‘Parmatma’. It is exemplarily neutral and dispassionate. It does not see and bear witness to any thing or event. It is not concerned with anything. Hence it is called a non-Drasta—one who does not see.}

The eclectic concept of non-duality between the Jiva and Ishwar is explained in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47, and (ii) Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77.



The Krishna Yajur Veda's Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47 elucidates about the non-duality between the Jiva and Ishwar or Brahm as follows—

“verse no. 41 = [Verse nos. 41-45 espouse the philosophy of uniformity and non-duality of the soul, the philosophy central to Advaita Vedanta. It establishes why and how there is no difference between the Jiva, the living being, and Ishwar, the Supreme Being.]

In this tree represented by the creature's body, two birds live. One is the Jiva (the individual), and the other is the Ishwar (the supreme Lord). Out of these two, the Jiva enjoys and suffers from the consequences of the deeds done, while the Ishwar remains a neutral spectator or witness to that deed. The Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 6-7 uses this example of two birds to beautifully describe the relationship between the creature and the supreme Brahm. The metaphor of the tree is also used magnificently to describe this creation in Katha/Kathvalli Upanishad, Canto 2, Valli 3. (41).

The Jiva refers to that aspect of consciousness that makes the creature think that it is the ‘doer’ of deeds, and therefore is liable for its results, both good and bad. Such a deluded individual thinks that the body is his ‘self’ and therefore what the body does is being done by ‘him’. Such a person would naturally be affected by what is produced by the deed done because all actions have a reaction, and since he regards himself as the doer he must face the results as well.

On the other end of the thinking process is the eclectic view that the ‘self’ is not the body but the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and this Atma is separate from the body and it does not have anything to do with the deeds done by the body because the Atma is merely a temporary resident of the body. Besides this point, there is an element called ‘conscience’ in all individuals which tells them what is good and what is not. This conscience is the voice of the Atma inasmuch as it always tells the person about things which are righteous and auspicious and noble. Whenever the man indulges in worldly things or sinful acts, this conscience would warn him, even though for a fleeting moment, that the path he has chosen is not going to be conducive for his long-term good. This voice of the Atma, so-called, is the voice of the Ishwar referred to here in this verse. In other words, the consciousness revealing itself as the conscience is the Ishwar.

There is a very fine and almost imperceptible difference between the terms Ishwar and Brahm. While the word Ishwar generally refers to the supreme Lord of creation worshipped as a God by his devotees, the term refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is the ‘soul’ of this Ishwar. This ‘supreme, cosmic Consciousness’ is called Brahm; it is the ultimate Truth and the quintessence of everything of any worth in existence. In the individual creature this Brahm resides as his own ‘self’ or Atma. Therefore, Brahm is Ishwar because the former is the Lord of creation, and Ishwar is Brahm because it is Consciousness personified in its macrocosmic revelation. Practically, they can be used synonymously.

Since the Atma is a manifestation of Brahm and the sovereign residing inside the body of the individual, it is also called the Ishwar residing inside the heart or the inner self of the creature. This view is proved by the fact that the sublime and subtle Atma shows characteristics special to Brahm, the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, such as its eternity, imperishability, self-illumination, wisdom, enlightenment, all-pervading and all-knowing abilities etc.—qualities that the gross body lacks.

Therefore, this ‘Ishwar’, the resident Supreme Being or Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma, does not do anything and remains neutral towards the deeds done

by the 'Jiva', the individual who thinks that the body is his 'self'. Thus, the former (Ishwar) is merely a witness to the deeds while the latter (Jiva) is neck-deep in them.

It would be noted that the difference between the Jiva and the Ishwar lies in the level of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom by which things are perceived by the individual person. An ordinary man thinks that he is known as an individual because of the body, that the body is his 'self' and identity, and therefore he is subjected to all the characteristic features and qualities associated with the body—i.e. that he would die, that he takes a birth, that he suffers from this and that, that he does deeds and therefore must either enjoy the rewards of these deeds or suffer from their consequences, that this world and its enchantments are real, are meant for him and therefore must be enjoyed, and so on and so forth.

On the other end of the spectrum is the enlightened view that one's true identity is not the body but the soul or the pure conscious Atma which is the ethereal spirit that is imperishable and eternal, that this spirit neither takes a birth nor dies, that it is uniform and stable under all circumstances, and therefore it neither gets agitated or excited, nor depressed and dejected by circumstances or as the result of deeds, that it is untainted, untarnished and pristine pure, and therefore not affected by the various faults associated with this murky world which can only influence the external body and not its resident Atma, and so on and so forth.

The body is regarded as a tree on which both these birds live to indicate that the same body can lead to spiritual entrapment for one person while providing emancipation and salvation to another. The same body is used by a pervert man to commit horrendous sins and torment others no end, and a holy person uses the body to alleviate their sufferings and serve humanity selflessly. The same body can be a snare trapping the Atma, and it can also be a means of its liberation and deliverance. If a man gets involved with the world and uses his body as a means to gratify himself, he would be shackled to it, while if he uses it to study the scriptures and perform righteous deeds in an auspicious manner without getting involved in them and their results, he would be using the body to achieve liberation and deliverance. Even Yoga Upanishads emphasise the fact that meditation and contemplation is an important instrument by which the Atma can find its liberation, called 'Kaivalya Mukti' by doing various Yoga exercises, and these can only be done with the help of the body. So, in brief, it is the way one handles anything that is of greater importance rather than the thing itself.

“verse no. 42 = The Maheshwar (the great Lord; the truthful 'self' representing Brahm; the Atma as a representative of Brahm) does not enjoy or suffer from the consequences of deeds done by the Jiva. The former is merely a witness of everything. {The sublime Atma does not have to suffer from what the gross body does. It just watches silently in a dispassionate way the deeds of the body.}

In fact, the difference between the Jiva and Brahm is artificial and is created by Maya—i.e. by ignorance-incited delusions about one's true nature and essence. This knowledge itself is like an illumination that can remove this dark shadow of Maya (42).

{Basicallyl there is no difference between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm because the true identity of the individual is his eternal and enlightened Atma, the pure consciousness or soul residing in his gross body, and not the external perishable body that is gross, inert and inane to the extreme. This Atma of the individual creature is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma that is the essence and the principal entity of creation known as Consciousness, and therefore

both are the same. What pervades in the entire creation also pervades in one's own body; what gives life to the rest of the creation also gives life to the individual creature. This is the considered eclectic non-dual view of the Upanishads. It is out of ignorance of the fact that the creature thinks that the supreme Lord is somewhere else in the heaven and has to be sought outside his own self. It is out of ignorance of the Truth about one's true 'self' that a creature thinks that he is a Jiva, a living being with a gross body, who is different and separate from Maheshwar, the great Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation. This delusion and false conception is the result of Maya.

Once the creature becomes enlightened and wisened of this fact, once he realises that the difference between himself and Brahm is artificial and illusionary because his 'true self' is not the gross body but the ethereal cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma that is universal and uniform everywhere in creation, and that his own Atma is a microcosm of the omnipresent cosmic Atma that uniformly pervades in each form and each unit in creation, he immediately begins to see that there is no fundamental difference between his 'true self' and the supreme 'Self' of creation.

Hence, this knowledge that the dichotomy created between the Jiva and the Ishwar is an artificial creation of Maya is an awareness that would immediately lift the veil of delusions created by ignorance of the 'truth and reality'. It is like the illumination provided by the light of a candle of knowledge that cuts through the darkness of ignorance and the attendant phantoms and ghosts stalking the creature and horrifying him no end.}

“verse no. 43 = Just like the Ghataakash and Mathakash (the space present inside a hollow pot, and the space inside the building of a monastery respectively) are imaginary and artificial segregations or partitions of the same Akash (the sky and its infinite stretch of space) which is fundamentally immutable, indivisible, uniform and universally all-pervading and all-encompassing by nature, the Supreme Being known as Brahm too is imagined to have two separate existences as Ishwar and Jiva. In fact, this artificial and imaginary distinction between the two manifestations of the same non-dual and immutable Supreme Being (Brahm) as the Ishwar and Jiva is due to ignorance about the truth and reality (43).

{This is because both the Jiva and Ishwar are two sides of the same coin—one is at the gross and micro level of creation, and the other is at the sublime and macro level of creation, inspite of the fact that both have the same consciousness living inside them. That is, whereas Ishwar is the all-powerful, ethereal, macrocosmic, all-pervading and all-encompassing gross body of Brahm which has no physical barriers, the Jiva is the microcosmic gross body of the same Brahm as the individual creature with limitations of the gross body. The Ishwar is the nearest analogue to Brahm inasmuch as it is eternal, infinite, sublime, subtle, invisible, macrocosmic, universal and all-pervading in Nature, while the Jiva is mortal, gross and limited to his gross body. Both have the pure consciousness known as the soul or the Atma central to their existence. In the case of Ishwar, it is 'cosmic Consciousness', and in the case of the Jiva it is 'individual consciousness'. So the difference between the duo—the Jiva and Ishwar—is only based on an erroneous perception of the truth. Once the correct perception is taken into consideration, the dichotomy vanishes—and this is called enlightenment and self-realisation. That is, if the 'truthful' identity of both is 'consciousness' and this consciousness is Brahm, then it follows that Jiva and Ishwar are the same. In other words, a self-realised individual who has known his true self is like an Ishwar personified.}

“verse no. 44 = In fact, the consciousness personified as the Atma is nothing but Shiva (the auspicious beautiful Truth itself) personified. It is the level of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment that whether or not one distinguishes between a Jiva and Ishwar; actually there is no basic difference between them. {This is because the Jiva has a predominance of delusions and ignorance in it making it unaware of its glorious and divine true ‘self’, whereas Ishwar is the pinnacle of wisdom and enlightenment who knows this fact. Therefore, if the Jiva also becomes wise and enlightened then he would too become one like Ishwar. In this context, refer verse no. 42.}

If there was a real difference between them then their basic conscious nature would be compromised with. {Since a living being has consciousness in it, it is not inanimate like rock or tree, and therefore it is different from the inanimate forms of life in this creation. The difference between a Jiva and a tree has been explained by sage Yagyavalkya in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 28/1-7. But a lowly fallen man is not different from those who are wise, enlightened and noble except for the degree of these auspicious virtues possessed by them. Both have the same body showing the same functions, both take a birth and die, both reproduce and eat and drink, but here the similarity ends. The mental and intellectual setups of both are as varied as the sky and the earth. It is the level of erudition and wisdom or Gyan that decides whether a person treats himself as a Jiva or as Brahm personified as his Atma or pure conscious ‘self’.} (44).

“verse no. 45 = The apparent difference between the two categories of consciousness present in the Jiva and the Ishwar is dependent upon the level of their Gyan, i.e. their spiritual awakening, wisdom, enlightenment and conscience factor. The difference is due to the dominance of gross negative values in the former, and the sublime and noble values in the latter. So to say that ‘the pure consciousness’ has two types of existences—one as a Jiva and the other as Ishwar—is imaginary and due to ignorance of the absolute reality and quintessential truth about consciousness. And this truth is the fact that the ‘consciousness’ in reality is a uniform, universal, immutable, non-divisible and non-dual entity. Therefore the apparent dichotomy is due to the veil of ignorance about its immaculate pristine pure nature that surrounds the creature like a dark cloud of ignorance and delusions, leading it to believe that the Jiva (the ‘true self’ of the living being as his pure consciousness known as the Atma) is separate from the supreme Brahm (who is the supreme ‘Self’ and cosmic transcendental Consciousness) known as Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation.

The very fact that one sees two entities in what is essentially non-dual and immutable itself shows the low level of intellectual development and the deluded mind of the creature that sees this difference. {It is like the case of hallucination when one sees two images of the same object with two eyes whereas the two eyes ought to be seeing a combined three-dimensional single image of that object. It’s like seeing many images of the sun or the moon in many pans full of water and thinking that there are as many suns or moons in the sky as the number of images seen. Refer Amrit Naad Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12 which precisely describes this phenomenon.} (45).

“verse nos. 46-47 = The uniformity and oneness of the consciousness can be arrived at by intelligent application of the mind so that it can sift through and analyse available evidence and make intelligent deductions from it by applying wisdom, logic and the elimination process.

Once this uniformity and non-dual nature of the consciousness is established (i.e. once the wise man knows that the only thing of worth in whatever that exists in this world has the same basic nature and essence known as 'consciousness', that there is no duality and dichotomy in the world in the real sense because its basic worth lies not in its gross form but in the consciousness present in it, and that whatever duality that apparently exists is due to total stupidity and ignorance of the truth) the wise and enlightened man becomes free from all sorts of mental confusions and emotional agitations. He no longer remains tied to the shackles of delusions and ignorance.

He finds access to the eternal fount of extreme beatitude and felicity that comes with obtaining the essence of or knowing the truth of 'Shiva' which is non-dual and only one of its kind (46-47).

{The intrinsic value of a golden ornament lies in the quantity and purity of its gold content rather than its external form. Would anyone pay the same amount of money for a decorative piece of jewelry if he knows that it is not gold, but brass? Both gold and well-polished brass look almost alike to a naïve person; even the quality and purity of gold is not possible to be judged easily by a lay person. But all his confusions and doubts about the true value of the ornament are removed when its value is judged by an expert gold-smith. Likewise, 'Gyan' (truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition, information and enlightenment) tells a man what the real value and worth of the world is, what the 'reality and truth' of this world of uncountable sense objects and astounding charms is, what spiritual value does it have? It is then the man becomes 'enlightened' and sees the reality behind the fascinating external façade of pompous artificiality and illusive charms. He realises that everything is perishable and transient, and therefore of no actual and eternal value. He discovers that the only thing of any spiritual worth in this world is the 'consciousness' much like the gold in the ornament cited above. It is the true secret of life and existence; it is eternal and imperishable. When this happens, the darkness of delusions and ignorance are dispelled, and instead light of enlightenment shines through to illuminate the entire existence for the spiritual aspirant.

The word 'Shiva' refers to the eclectic divine virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, beauty, piety, holiness, renunciation, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, purity and truth. When a person becomes wise enough to rise above the mundane and lowly existence of remaining engrossed in worldly affairs of the sense objects and self-gratification, a selfish life which lacks broadness of vision and long-term welfare of the soul, when he gets to see the 'truth' in the light of wisdom and enlightenment, it is only then that he begins to see things from a higher pedestal, with a broader perspective of existence and the truthful nature of the soul and its future, and thereby develop a panoramic view of existence. It is like seeing earth from space when all the warts on the earth's surface—the mighty mountains and the meandering rivers, the green fields and the dry deserts, the artificial boundaries that separate nations and states—vanish. What is seen is a beautiful blue ball hanging from nowhere in the vast dark void of space. One then begins to wonder why men fight each other for a yard of land and cut each others throat for a gram of gold!

Thus, a wise man begins the search for the 'truth and reality' by studying the scriptures and consulting wise men. He trains his mind to gather all information and then analyse it to intelligently arrive at conclusions that are not based on hearsay, whims and misconceptions but on sound ground and reasoning. He understands the essence of the fundamental tenets of the scriptures and sees the eclectic, quintessential and undeniable spiritual 'truths' encoded in them. He applies this learning in practice and realises their true worth along with discovering who he himself actually is. He

then becomes ‘Shiva’ personified; he has discovered the ‘Shiva’ principle, or the grand irrefutable Truth of creation. He has accessed the magnificently grand virtues that are the hallmarks of divinity and holiness which are collectively called ‘Shiva’.”}

The Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77 affirms that there is basically no difference between a Jiva (the living being) and the Ishwar (the Supreme Being). To quote—“The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghatakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghatakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

{The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. This fact is elucidated in a number of Upanishads<sup>1</sup>. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.}

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva, the living being or the creature, and the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived<sup>2</sup>. This distinction or separation comes because one is not aware of the ‘truth and reality’, and is deluded to believe in the concept of duality or Dwaitya.

{Suppose we have different types of ornaments made of ‘gold’. A wise person is one who recognizes them all as ‘golden ornaments’, and not by their individual names, shapes or sizes, or even their usage. It is raw gold that has been crafted by the goldsmith into so many shapes and sizes, giving the same element known as ‘gold’ its myriad names and different market values. If ‘gold’ is removed from these ornaments, all of them lose their intrinsic value and inherent importance.

Similarly, everything in this creation—and that includes the Jiva—is a manifestation of Brahm. Since the Jiva is a living conscious entity that harbours the Atma, the pure consciousness, in its body, it has a special relationship with Brahm as the latter is the universal cosmic Consciousness that resides in each unit of creation. In other words, it is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has transformed itself into the living being known as the Jiva. It is just like ‘gold’ being transformed into an ornament having a name other than ‘gold’.<sup>2</sup> (77).”

<sup>2</sup>The supreme Authority that determines the fate of the living being is known as Ishwar or the Lord God, the Parmatma. Like an emperor who decides the fate of his subjects, the Ishwar decides how the creature should be rewarded or punished for his deeds and actions. The Ishwar is a neutral judge for all the living beings. As has been discussed earlier, the Maya is under the control of Ishwar which the Upanishads prefer to call ‘Brahm’. Brahm not only creates Maya but has full control over it. The Jiva on the other hand neither creates the Maya nor has any control over it. That is why Maya can delude the Jiva but not influence Brahm. If the Jiva wishes to get rid of the problems created by Maya then he has to request the Lord of Maya, i.e. Brahm or Ishwar, to help him out. The Lord is extremely merciful; if the Jiva prays to the Lord then the Lord removes the veil of Maya cast upon him and the Jiva is able to see the real thing in the light of Gyan that makes him realised, enlightened and wise.

An important observation can be made here. Lord Ram has told Laxman in this Doha no. 15 that there indeed exists a difference between a Jiva and Ishwar. This is to answer Laxman’s question asked in Doha no. 14. The Lord had also told Laxman that he will give brief answers—refer Chaupai line no. 1 that immediately follows Doha no. 14.

Upon careful analysis we deduce that though brief and to the point, all the answers that Lord Ram gave Laxman incorporate the essential teachings and doctrines of the Upanishads.]

चौ०. धर्म तें बिरति जोग तें ग्याना । ग्यान मोच्छप्रद बेद बखाना ॥ १ ॥

जातें बेगि द्रवउँ मैं भाई । सो मम भगति भगत सुखदाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dharma tēm birati jōga tēm gyānā. gyāna mōcchaprada bēda bakhānā. 1.  
jātēm bēgi drava'um' maim bhā'ī. sō mama bhagati bhagata sukhadā'ī. 2.

With ‘Dharma’ comes ‘Vairagya’, and with ‘Yoga’ comes ‘Gyan’. Gyan paves the way for ‘Moksha’. [All these must act in coordination for the spiritual well-being of the Jiva.]<sup>1</sup> (1)

Oh brother (Laxman)! It is Bhakti (devotion, love and submission for the Lord) which makes me feel happy and pleased very easily. It is this eclectic virtue of having Bhakti for me that bestows comfort, happiness, joy, peace, fulfillment and bliss to my devotees.

[In other words, I, the Supreme Lord, is very easily and conveniently pleased if the spiritual aspirant develops Bhakti for the Lord as compared to seeking the same Lord by the following other paths, such as the arduous path of Gyan and Yoga. Since the path of Bhakti is the easiest path leading to the Supreme Being, it is most

comfortable for the seeker, and its rewards are more profound because it is liked the Lord himself. Bhakti pleases the Lord most and very easily. Besides this benefit, it gives the practitioner of Bhakti immense happiness, peace, contentedness and bliss.]<sup>2</sup>  
(2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There is a very interesting deduction that we can arrive at by a close study of this Chaupai. As we have read above, the word ‘Yoga’ means to establish a union between two entities. The two pair of entities here are ‘Dharma’ and ‘Vairagya’ on the one hand, and ‘Gyan’ and ‘Moksha’ on the other hand. Yoga therefore helps the Jiva to establish coordination between all of them. That is, a practitioner of Yoga is able to reap the combined benefits of Dharma, Vairagya, Gyan and Moksha simultaneously. He gets acclaim and honour for his righteous deeds and noble thoughts, he enjoys the world without getting obsessed with it and affected by its countless miseries and horrors, he is regarded as a wise and enlightened person whose advice is sought by others, no amount of delusions and darkness of ignorance would now be able to put out the light of knowledge that has begun to shine from deep inside his inner-self, and no fetter will be strong enough to shackle him (i.e. his Atma) any longer.

Following the path of Dharma and Vairagya cleanses inner-self and scrubs off all the taints, impurities and blemishes that have formed a thick crust of negativity around his Atma, the true self of the Jiva. His path towards Moksha is lighted by Gyan, and this light shows the Jiva all the spiritual pitfalls in which he might have fallen had he walked on the same path leading to Moksha in the darkness of ignorance (called A-gyan). Even as success in any endeavour is dependent upon a coordination of many favourable factors playing in harmony with each other, success in this spiritual endeavour is aided and spurred on by Yoga. This indeed is the real and practical benefit of ‘Yoga’.

The word *Dharma* literally means obeying the general rules of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, morality and ethics. Any action or deed that is done or undertaken with these eclectic virtues in mind would come under the overall definition of Dharma. The term ‘Vairagya’ means renunciation, dispassion, detachment and non-involvement with the material world and its deluding charms.

A Jiva (the living being) has been indulgent, involved and associated with the world and its material sense objects from time immemorial. The world and its material things are gross by their inherent nature and dominated by the Tama Guna. Constant association with them leaves an imprint on the Atma or the pure self of the Jiva, and the latter is encrusted in a thick layer of delusions, negativity, faults, shortcomings etc. leading to countless sorrows, pain, miseries and torments. The Jiva gets sucked in the vortex represented by worldly fetters that keep him shackled for eternity. He continues to remain engrossed in the world and its material things in the false hope or expectation that they will give him peace, happiness and joy. On the contrary, they heap him with miseries and torments, pulling him down into a dark well from which the Jiva finds difficult to extricate himself as referred to in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 15. This has been explained earlier.

The Jiva had been perpetrating all sorts of mischief and nuisance, indulging in falsehood, deceit, conceit, pretensions and tricks in order to satisfy his natural urges for gratifying his ‘lower self’, i.e. his body and its organs, not paying heed to the requirements of his ‘higher self’, i.e. the needs of his Atma. All such activities of the



Jiva come under the over all classification of things that are 'A-Dharma' or the opposite of what consists of Dharma. But ironically he discovers that all his efforts to find peace and happiness by following the easier path of 'A-Dharma' have failed to yield the desired result. Then if he is wise and intelligent, he will sincerely look around to find how his real objective can be achieved.

It is upon diligent enquiry that he discovers the concept of 'Dharma' by the study of the scriptures and company of wise and saintly people. The Jiva then takes a resolve to follow the principles of Dharma if they give him eternal bliss and happiness, and help him to break free from the endless cycle of miseries and torments associated with birth and death.

The path of Dharma initially appears to be difficult for him because he has to exercise exemplary self-restraint and make great efforts to rein-in his spoilt habits. But gradually he finds that each act of Dharma gives him internal peace that is more profound and deep than the artificial peace got by worldly success in obtaining the desired things or attaining transient and impermanent successes in the temporal world that itself is inconsistent. The profound internal satisfaction, gratitude, peace and happiness that one experiences by following the path of Dharma vis-à-vis the path of A-Dharma inspires and motivates the Jiva to devote full time to the former path.

Dharma has a sublime dimension to all its activities; it is marked by dominance of Sata Guna, and even the Raja Guna that is present is of a higher category. The Jiva realises that the world is selfish and it can never give him his freedom because the world needs a 'slave free of charge to satisfy its needs'. The world keeps him shackled by throwing some bits and pieces of tempting things to keep him engaged, extracting the most out of him, and then chucking him off like deadwood. The Jiva discovers that the world and its material things will never give him happiness, peace and bliss that he had set out to find by allowing himself to remain engrossed in it.

Hence, by experience he becomes disenchanted with the deluding world and its material charms that are as illusive as the mirage in a hot desert. So a wizened, self-realised and enlightened Jiva develops a gradual sense of disillusionment with the gross world and its equally gross sense objects. That is, he develops *Vairagya* from this world. And the cause of this *Vairagya* is Dharma—because the latter has enlightened the Jiva where true peace and happiness lies. The wise, self-realised and enlightened spiritual aspirant understands that pursuit of this world can never give him true peace, happiness, comfort, joy and bliss which are the main purpose for which he had followed the temptations of the world and its material sense objects. He also realises that the latter entities are the cause of all his grief, miseries and torments. So he develops a deep sense of detachment from the world and its material sense objects because they do not serve his interest, they do not fulfill his spiritual objective of finding eternal peace and bliss as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Since this sort of renunciation and detachment comes from within, it is firm and steady as opposed to the condition when a person is forced to follow the path of renunciation, called *Sanyas*, simply because it is a tradition and therefore must be obeyed by him if he wishes to avoid scorn by the society. Such a person is worse than a person who has not taken to *Sanyas* at all because on the one hand he subjects his body to the severity of life as a *Sanyasi* for which he is not prepared mentally, robbing him of the basic comforts of life to which he was accustomed as a householder, and on the other hand he gets none of the spiritual benefits that come with accepting the life of *Sanyas* whole-heartedly and voluntarily. Forced renunciation is no renunciation.

If the Vairagya is true and internal then no amount of worldly temptations or allurements would be able to lure the spiritual aspirant away from his chosen path; they would not be able to trap him in their tentacles. It is only a person who pretends to have adopted Vairagya without actually having done so is the one who falls and gets entangled in the web of miseries and grief associated with falsehood and deceit.

Now let us come to the next term *Yoga* and examine how it helps the Jiva.

The word 'Yoga' is derived from two verbal roots—viz. 'Yuj' = Yu + Ja, meaning to yoke, or to concentrate. The dictionary meaning of the word is 'to join, a junction point, to attach, harness, to team with, to put together, to fix any union, to foster, to connect, suitability or compatibility of two or more things'. It also means 'to strive, endeavour, due diligence and industry; to concentrate, meditate, contemplate and focus the mind and thought on some abstraction; self restraint and channelising one's vital strength and energy in a particular direction'. The process of concentration, contemplation and meditation as envisioned by the Upanishads needed a well-disciplined mind and body. For this to happen, a set of exercises were devised — called the various 'Asans and Bandhas' (sitting postures and controlling of the vital functions of the body). So, taken purely in its modern concept, it refers to the regime of different exercises, but on a broader plane its main objectives is to enable the aspirant to meditate and focus his energy on self purification, self elevation and self realisation. The fact that these exercises help eliminate—or at least alleviate—so many ailments that afflicts a body in today's stressful life is an additional bonus, but not the aim of Yoga, though of course a healthy body is definitely conducive in spiritual practice.

Therefore it is that school of philosophy that helps a Jiva, the living being or the individual soul, to attain concentration on the Supreme Being or the cosmic Soul known as Ishwara. As the denser or more concentrated matter has a greater gravitational pull compared to the lighter and lesser denser one, the concentration results in the supreme Soul pulling the individual soul by the mere force of its attractive force so as to bring about the former plunging headlong into the latter to become one with it. This phenomenon is likened to the individual obtaining the state of Kaivalya or oneness with the Supreme Being so that only the latter is left behind and the former vanishes from existence for all practical purposes.

In practice, 'Yoga' usually means doing meditation and contemplation that enables the man to focus his attention on important issues so that he can coordinate all his faculties and efforts in his search for the truth and reality of anything. In the spiritual field, this is to find the truth about one's own self, about the world around, about how to free one's self from the fetters of ignorance, and about how to bring about a union between the different aspects of the universal Truth that appears to be scattered around due to the compound effects of generations of ignorance about the reality. It involves establishing a unity between the individual Atma, the 'self' of the person, and the cosmic Atma known as the Supreme Self by various well established processes that are documented in the scriptures. This effort makes a practitioner of Yoga enlightened about the truth of the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as the Atma, and this realisation, known as 'self-realisation', leads to attainment of eternal and profound internal ecstasy, bliss, felicity and beatitude. When this is achieved, the practitioner of Yoga is said to have found freedom from all delusions arising out of ignorance centered around the body and the world of material sense organs. The objective or aim of Yoga has been described in Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 74, Canto 3, verse nos. 13-17. The

culmination of Yoga is to help one realise one's true divine form and find rest in the spiritual glory of self-realisation, the discovery of the ultimate fount of bliss and joy residing in one's own bosom as the 'consciousness' known as the Atma.

Yoga practices involve some steps known as the limbs or aspects of Yoga. Usually there are said to be eight such steps. These are called 'Astaanga Yoga'.

These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 11—11 ½ and *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 24-25 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 3-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

The first five steps of Yoga, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratyahara are considered external processes or 'Bahiranga Yoga' (i.e. Yoga practices that involve the external gross aspect of the body such as its various organs of perception and action), while the last three, i.e. Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi are called the internal processes or 'Antarang Yoga' (i.e. Yoga that involves the subtle components of the body such as the mind and intellect). Patanjali says in his 12<sup>th</sup> maxim of the first chapter of Yog Sutra that success in Yoga can be achieved by a coordination of practice and detachment. While 'practice' obviously implies the observation of rules and steps of Yoga as defined in Yoga treatises, 'detachment' means the consciousness that has given up desires for objects either seen or heard of. This detachment should be comprehensive in the sense that the practitioner of Yoga should also be indifferent towards the three Gunas or qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that dominate all behavioral patterns in this world.

These eight steps of Yoga designed by Patanjali are meant to guide the spiritual aspirant gradually and in a systematic manner to progress higher in his spiritual endeavours and ultimately achieve the supreme state of eternal blissfulness that comes with inner awakening and experiencing the divine source of light and enlightenment that resides in one's own bosom.

Their aim is to establish a union between the various aspects of the universal Truth that have revealed itself in a variety of ways in this world into one single entity of the Absolute Truth. If a Jiva practices Yoga and achieves this aim, i.e. if he becomes enlightened about the Absolute Truth then obviously he will have obtained 'Gyan' or truthful knowledge.

What then is this Absolute Truth? It is the realisation that the same cosmic super Consciousness has revealed itself in myriad of ways in this world, that it is the only entity that is real and truthful, that the true nature of the Jiva is this Consciousness known as the Atma residing in a subtle form inside the gross body, in its inner-self as its inner-being and the 'true self' of the Jiva, that this Atma is the same as the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma, that the gross world seen all around is an imagination of the mind of the Jiva and has no reality in it, that the Atma is eternal and imperishable whereas the world and the body are mortal and perishable, that true freedom from miseries and grief is to realise that such feelings are limited to the gross body and its sense organs of perception and action that relate to the Jiva's interaction with the gross world, and they have no bearing upon the Atma which is a sublime and divine entity that is eternally blissful and full of beatitude, that true liberation and deliverance (called Mukti) as well as emancipation and salvation (called Moksha) means freedom from ignorance and delusions that comes with the understanding of what constitutes the Atma, the Parmatma, and the world.

Obviously, when the Jiva becomes thus enlightened, he is said to have acquired *Gyan* or truthful form of spiritual knowledge; the Jiva becomes self-realised and enlightened. He becomes a Gyani—one who has Gyan.

When one has acquired true knowledge, he is deemed to have attained *Moksha* or emancipation and salvation. This means that the Jiva realises the true nature of his ‘self’ and discards the fetter of the body and the world to merge his Atma with the cosmic Atma known as Brahm so much so that he is eternally liberated from the cycle of birth and death and their attending sorrows and problems. He is delivered from this entangling world and its web of miseries and delusions.

In the next line, Lord Ram tells Laxman that inspite of the powerful abilities of Gyan and Yoga in aiding the spiritual aspirant to attain his objectives of liberation and deliverance, the Lord is best endeared by following the path of Bhakti, i.e. the path of complete and sincere devotion, love and submission to the Lord.

In this context therefore we must have a look at Yoga from a different angle, a view which incorporates *Bhakti* and *Gyan* as one of its various limbs or branches. Now, let us have a quick glimpse at these aspects of Yoga.

*Gyan Yoga*—Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

Gyan Yoga cannot be separated from the concept of *Gyan Shakti* is related to the stupendous powers and authority possessed by ‘knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment’, and the instrument that implements this authority and power is the intellect. Gyan is empowerment, because without knowledge the mind and body would work like those of animals. Therefore, Gyan Shakti is the powers, potentials, authority, strength, respect and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise in any subject. This Shakti represents the dynamic powers and potentials that are a natural accompaniment of these grand qualities. This is called Gyan Shakti simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the necessary expertise and level of wisdom required to accomplish his objectives successfully. In this context, Gyan Yoga would be to divert the diligence with which a man applies this knowledge, wisdom, erudition and skills to acquire the objects of this material world and get acclaim and applause for his expertise, knowledge and wisdom to achieving success in uplifting himself and realising the ultimate goal and truth of this life and existence, and freeing himself from the clutches of delusions which have tied him down through numerous lives to find final liberation and deliverance for his soul. Gyan Yoga endeavours to channelise one’s knowledge into auspicious avenues and inspire the creature to make efforts relying upon the knowledge and wisdom he possesses to bring about a union between the individual creature’s soul and the cosmic Soul and Consciousness known as Brahm so that ultimate emancipation and salvation is obtained and the cycle of delusions, birth and death and their endless horrors are got rid of. Therefore, Gyan Yoga entails diligent study and pursuance of the Truth, turning inwards and upwards instead of outwards and downwards, to separate the non-truth from the truth like separating the grain from the chaff, and finally coming to

grasp with the eclectic concept of ‘truth and absolute reality’ of the ‘self and the Atma’, of ‘Brahm and Moksha (final and ultimate liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation)’.

The *relationship between Yoga and Gyan*—This has been described in Krishna Yajur Veda’s Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12-26, and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-15.

*Bhakti Yoga*— Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person’s ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

The concept of Bhakti Yoga is similarly integral to the concept of *Ichaa Shakti* relates to the power of the mind to have or make wishes, desires, aspirations and the determination to fulfill them. It is longing for anything, wanting to possess it any cost, and then endeavouring to acquire it. It is a precursor to Karma Shakti. It is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do it that he actually goes about doing anything at all, strives hard to get success in it, and then would like to enjoy the fruits of his labour. It is closely related to Bhakti Yoga inasmuch as when the Ichhaas (desires) are turned away from the world and hooked onto the search for the Truth and Reality with devotion and sincerity of purpose, it helps the man to turn away from the entrapping world of delusions and artificial comforts towards the world of truth and reality, i.e. towards his true ‘self’, the pure consciousness. The word ‘Bhakti’ means to be sincerely committed and devoted to anything, any cause, any principle, any doctrine or any entity. In this case, the devotion is towards the supreme transcendental Truth and the absolute Reality, whether known as Brahm or as the Atma. Bhakti Yoga therefore means a devoted and committed approach that coordinates the desires and actions in such a way that they are diverted to realisation of the supreme Truth known as Brahm instead of the mortal and perishable world of delusions and entrapments.

The importance of Bhakti has been elaborately described in the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 9-12.

<sup>2</sup>Let us learn a little more about this eclectic concept of *Bhakti* that is so much lauded and favoured by Lord Ram himself.

*Bhakti*—(noun; feminine gender) The concept of *Bhakti* has a very broad sweep, and it incorporates such glorious virtues as having, inter alia, sincere devotion, dedication and firm faith in the Lord God, total submission and surrender before the Lord God, having unwavering love, conviction and belief in the Lord God, to be completely dedicated to the Lord and surrender oneself to him, having reverence and veneration for the Lord God, having no other solace, succour, hope and respite except the Lord, treating oneself as a humble servant of the Lord God and feeling fortunate at being able to serve the Lord God, remembering the Lord God at all times and offering each and every deed done and action taken to the Lord without expecting anything in return, remaining unruffled and calm under all circumstances with the view that these are the wishes of the Lord God and one has no right to get overly excited over them. In brief, Bhakti entails honouring the divine forces of creation in the form of some chosen deity who personifies the grandest virtues in creation.

The *Holy Bible* also asserts the importance of ‘Bhakti’ as follows— ‘In him we live and move, and have our being’ (Acts, 17/28), ‘Trust in him at all times, you people, pour out your heart before him; for God is a refuge for us’ (Psalms, 62/8).

*Narad Bhakti Sutra*, literally meaning the fundamental formula that defines what comprises devotion for Lord God as enunciated by sage Narad who was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, is a treatise on Bhakti that is succinct and is universally respected as being one of the best in its genre. It has only 84 Sanskrit verses.

It says that the easiest (verse no. 58) and the best instrument for God-realisation (verse no. 80, 81) is ‘Bhakti’ because it gives the spiritual fruit or reward for which a person does any auspicious effort in the first place (verse no. 26, 30). It is superior to Gyan (knowledge), to Yoga (meditation), to Karma (rituals and religious observances), and other spiritual traditions (verse no. 25). Bhakti is a complete and wholesome way to attain self and god realisation; it needs no other support or help (verse no. 59).

Bhakti gives eternal peace and bliss of the highest order (verse no. 60).

Bhakti is divided into two aspects—(i) Paraa Bhakti, and (ii) A-paraa Bhakti. The A-paraa Bhakti is divided further into (a) Gauna Bhakti, and (b) Mukhya Bhakti. The Paraa Bhakti is the aim of spiritual practice, while the A-paraa Bhakti is a means to achieve success in it.

Paraa Bhakti is attainment of extreme and eternal bliss obtained upon God-realisation which is equivalent to self-realisation because the Parmatma, the Supreme Soul and the cosmic Spirit, is the same as the individual’s Atma or his own soul. It is like nectar, and gives immortality and supreme form of bliss (verse nos. 2 and 3); it helps eliminate worldly desires and temptations (verse no. 7).

The A-paraa Bhakti involves some methods to make this possible—such as having interest in worshipping the Lord (verse no. 16), having desire and interest in listening to the stories associated with the Lord (verse no. 17), to be engrossed in the thoughts of the ‘self’ or the Atma (verse no. 18), surrendering all deeds to the Lord and always remembering him (verse no. 19).

But it must be noted that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality is also conducive to attaining nearness or oneness with God (verse no. 28). In other words, Gyan and Bhakti go hand in hand; they aid each other instead of contracting one another (verse no. 29). Bhakti is the only way that leads to Mukti—liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration leading to permanent rest for the soul (verse no. 33). Bhakti helps one to break free from the shackling effects of this deluding and entrapping world (verse no. 33).

The methods by which Bhakti can be established and made to bloom in one’s heart are narrated in verse nos. 34-42 as follows—to abandon attachments to material sense objects and sensual pleasures of this world, to desist from self gratification of the sense organs (verse no. 35), to do Bhajan—or the constant remembrance of the Lord, his divine name and divine deeds (verse nos. 36, 79), to hear and sing the divine stories, the virtues and the holy name of the Lord along with others in the community (verse no. 37), to have contact and communion with holy men such as great saints (verse no. 38-39, 42) which is obtained when the Lord is kind (verse no. 40), to treat true devotees of the Lord as being equivalent to the Lord himself (verse no. 41), to offer all the deeds and their fruits or rewards to the Lord (verse no. 61) along with any trace of negativity such as desires, anger, pride etc. that may still linger on (verse no. 65), and in general doing everything that is auspicious and holy which makes it possible for him to enhance his level of Bhakti (verse no. 76).

Other aids to Bhakti are the following—Abandonment of the feeling of worldly happiness and joy on the one hand, and of sorrow, misery and grief on the other hand, eliminating any sort of desires and passions such as for gain or profit of

any kind, and to be careful not to waste a single moment and be prepared for death that may come any time (verse no. 77). Practicing the virtues of 'Ahinsaa' (non-violence), 'Satya' (truthfulness), 'Shaucha' (cleanliness and purity), 'Dayaa' (mercy and compassion), and 'Aastikta' (belief in God and the Holy Spirit as well as the teaching of the scriptures) etc. (verse no. 78).

The main obstacle in Bhakti is bad company (verse no. 43), as well as Kaam (wordly desires and passions), Krodh (anger) and Moha (infatuations, attachments, delusions, entanglements) that lead to Smriti-bhransa (failure to remember the horrible consequences of committing sins and getting entangled in the world), Buddhi-naash (destruction of intelligent thinking and wisdom), and Sarwa-naash (complete ruin) (verse no. 44).

Maya (the web of delusions so characteristic of this world) is a great obstacle and it is overcome only by detachment from all things (verse no. 46). Other methods of overcoming Maya are to live a serene life away from the world (verse no. 67), to break all worldly fetters and bondages, to become neutral by rising above the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama, and to discard attempts to acquire and then worry about the protection of worldly possessions (verse no. 47), to not bother about the fruits of one's deeds and labour but do one's duty as ordained by destiny, peacefully and stoically (verse no. 48), and to abandon even the Vedas (excessive study of the scriptures once the basic knowledge and guidance has been obtained) and become free from all doubts, confusions, perplexities and consternations (verse no. 49).

One must avoid the following also—talking about or remembering anything pertaining to women, material wealth, hearsay and talks that create doubts in the mind about the truth of the Holy Spirit, talks about one's enemies or those who are unfavourable—because all these things unnecessarily create vexation for the spirit (verse no. 63); negative characters such as Abhmaan and Dambha (pride and arrogance accompanied by deceit, conceit and pretensions) etc. (verse no. 64); getting involved in worthless debates and arguments (verse no. 74).

The 'Gauna' Bhakti is like a dumb man attempting to describe some delicious food (verse no. 52)—i.e. it is a silent form of devotion for the Lord which has no external signs. Here, the devotee sips the nectar of spiritual bliss that comes with self and god realisation without showing any signs of his spiritual enlightenment. It can be experienced and never be described; nothing more remains to be attained or desired for after that (verse no. 54).

The 'Gauna Bhakti' is of three types (verse no. 56)—(i) Saatvika, (ii) Raajsik, and (iii) Taamsik. These are also called 'Aarta-bhakti', 'Arthaartha-bhakti', and 'Jigyaasu-bhakti'. Gauna Bhakti is easy because it does not require any effort as it is done directly by having natural love for the God that arises in one's heart. It leads to internal peace and bliss (verse nos. 58-60).

A true and sincere devotee of the Lord acquires a holy aura around him which makes him effuse divinity and holiness similar to the Lord, thereby making their presence beneficial for the whole world around them (verse no. 68-71). Like the universality and oneness of the Supreme Being, Supreme Spirit, the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Reality, such realised devotees of the Lord have no distinction as to their caste, religion, knowledge, physical form, birth, level of worldly prosperity or poverty, or the type of deeds done by them—because they have risen above such mundane considerations (verse no. 72-73).

*The 11 types of devotees of the Lord*—Narad Bhakti Sutra, verse no. 82 outlines the eleven forms of Bhakti, which are actually variations of the same Gauna Bhakti because their main objective is the same—to develop devotion and love for the

Lord which lead to spiritual bliss, to liberation of the soul from worldly delusions as well as miseries, and to attain oneness of the individual's soul with the Supreme Soul of creation so that the cycle of birth and death is terminated for good. They are as follows:—(i) Guna and Mahatmya of the Lord—this involves narrating, singing and generally propagating the glories of the Lord and his divine virtues; (ii) Rupa—this involves remembering the divine form of the Lord and worshipping this form; (iii) Pooja—this involves offering of formal forms of worship to the Lord; (iv) Smaran—constantly and always remembering the Lord; (v) Daasya—to become a humble servant of the Lord; to serve the Lord with great simplicity and humility, not expecting anything in return; to be ever eager to do anything which would please the Lord; (vi) Sakhya—to treat the Lord as one's close friend and companion; (vii) Kanta—to honour the divine radiance of the Lord, and visualize that the Lord's radiance shining on one's self as the light of the sun; (viii) Vaatsalya—to love the Lord dearly as one loves one's children; (ix) Atma-nivedan—to submit one's self to the Lord; to pray to the Lord internally; to treat one's Atma as a fraction of the Supreme Atma represented by the Lord God; (x) Tanmayataa—to remain perpetually engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord and to remain lost in the bliss derived from it; and (xi) Param-viraha—to suffer gravely due to separation from the Lord just like a lover remains in submerged in grief if his loved one is separated from him.

Finally, Narad Bhakti Sutra lists some of the great devotees of the Lord as follows—Sanat-kumars, Veda-vyas, Shukdeo, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Shesh, Uddhav, Aaruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishan, etc. (verse no. 83).

*The 9 types or paths of Bhakti*, called the 'Navadhaa Bhakti', according to *Ram Charit Manas* (Ramayana) of Goswami Tulsidas—Basically, there are nine types of Bhaktis or the 9-fold path of devotion. In short, there are the following:- (1) hearing about the Lord's virtues, glories, deeds, fames, holy name etc.; (2) talking and discussing about the Lord; (3) remembering him; (4) serving his holy feet; (5) adoring and worshipping him; (6) honouring and revering him; (7) submission and humility before him, treating him as a friend and companion; (8) concentrating on one's pure-self or Atma; (9) and treating the Atma (soul) as being the manifestation of the Lord.

The great epic *Ram Charit Manas* of Goswami Tulsidas is a wonderful and matchless treatise on the eclectic concept of Bhakti which permeates throughout the Holy Book as one of its major characteristic themes. The following list gives an overall idea where this book incorporates Bhakti in its narration:--

(i) Ayodhya Kand—Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93; Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137; Doha no. 204; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 291; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301.

(ii) Aranya Kand—Chaupai line nos. 2-9 that precede Doha no. 16; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

(iii) Kishkindha Kand—Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12; Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15.

(iv) Sundar Kand—Doha no. 46, and Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 6 that precede Doha no. 47; Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 1-7.

(v) Uttar Kand—Chanda line no. 5-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; from Chaupai line no. 1, 7-10 that precedes Doha no. 86, to Doha no. 87 Ka; Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120; Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; Doha no. 122 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 15-19.

Now let us sample a few verses briefly to see the importance and benefits of Bhakti. *Ram Charit Manas*, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no.



93 emphasises that the best thing to do for one's spiritual welfare is to have unwavering and the purest form of devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram—i.e. to serve the Lord and have full faith in him. All the faculties of a man, such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds and actions), and his Bachan (words) should be directed towards this end. [सखा परम परमारथु एहू । मन क्रम बचन राम पद नेहू ॥ ६ ॥ ]

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137 says “Lord Ram is concerned with the level of affection that one has for the Lord, and other things are immaterial as far as the Lord is concerned; let this be known to all.”

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116 briefly say as follows—“Lord Ram loves Bhakti (devotion) while Maya (delusions) is merely like an obedient dancer who does the bidding of her Lord to please him. {The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would synchronise all her dance moves in accordance with the music being played and song being sung.} Since Lord Ram favours Bhakti, Maya is scared of it. Bhakti is free from any taint or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness. Maya is afraid of anyone in whose heart Bhakti resides with full authority—because Maya is simply a maid when it is compared to Bhakti. So Maya cannot play its tricks upon a devotee of the Lord in whose heart Bhakti lives as the reigning mistress.”

Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15 says “Kaam, or worldly desires and lust, do not sprout in the mind and heart of followers and devotees of Lord Hari just like it is impossible for grass to grow in a patch of infertile (desert or rocky and barren) land even if it rains there.”

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120 say—“Saints are the wise ones, and their wisdom is like the spade or the shovel which helps them dig out the truth from the surface of untruth and delusions. Gyan (truthful spiritual knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation; detachment from delusions and abandonment of ignorance) are like their two eyes. When one sincerely searches for the truth, he finds that Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) is like a gem that is like a treasure house of all happiness and well-beings.”

Vairagya is the precondition to developing Gyan—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 of Sortha (a sort of Doha) no. 89 Ka. It says—“Can Gyan (true knowledge) be acquired without the help of a wise Guru (teacher); can Gyan (true spiritual knowledge leading to enlightenment) be acquired without Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion and detachment from delusory world ridden by ignorance); and can true happiness and bliss ever be obtained with having Bhakti (devotion and love) for Hari (Lord God). This is the declaration of the Vedas and the Purans (hence it is unquestionably correct because it is ancient and time-tested wisdom).”

“Anyone who has the priceless gem in the form of Bhakti (unflinching devotion and purest form of love) for Lord Ram in his heart can never have any sorrow or grief even in his dreams; he is free from them”—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 120.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 86, the Lord himself declares to sage Kaagbhusund—“I repeatedly tell you, truthfully, that there is nothing or no one in this world as dear to me as the person who serves me with devotion, faith and sincerity. Even Brahma, the creator, is like other ordinary beings for me if he lacks devotion and faith in me. On the contrary, if a

creature has devotion and faith in me then I love like my life even though he may be most lowly and downtrodden.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87 and line no. 2 of Doha 87 Ka, Lord Ram says—“amongst all the creatures, they who have devotion, love, affection, belief and faith in me after having abandoned all sorts of negativity such as deceit, pretensions and delusions, verily I say that they are very dear to me no matter who they are, even if they are impotent men or women, or even if they are humble creatures of whatever denomination.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204 which says—“I am not interested in Artha (material wealth and prosperity), Dharma (following the scriptural sanctioned path of righteousness and probity), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) or Nirvana (Moksha—emancipation and salvation of the soul). The only boon and reward I want is that I may have unwavering, undiluted and un-stunted love and devotion for holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, for all times to come, and for all my future births.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 119, the crow saint Kaagbhusund tells Garud (the legendary eagle and the mount of lord Vishnu who had come to the former to hear the divine story of Lord Ram and be enlightened on spiritual matters)—“Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance) is not possible without having strong Bhakti (devotion and love) for Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being). Hence, those who are wise and enlightened prefer to have Bhakti, they give precedence to Bhakti, over all other means of obtaining Moksha. Moksha cannot be sustained without Bhakti even as liquid water needs a solid ground or surface to act as its base for its physical existence in this world.”

Why should one have total devotion for Lord Ram and love the Lord more than anyone else in this world have been outlined by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Uma in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma—“Listen Uma! In this self-centered and selfish world, there is no one more dear and well-wisher than Lord Ram. No, it is not the Guru (moral preceptor or teacher), father, mother, friend or any master or lord. It is the natural habit of all (except Lord Sri Ram), be it the god, a human being, a sage or anybody else, that they love someone only as long as their self interests are served.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 291, sage Vashistha tells Lord Ram “let all Sukha (happiness and comfort), Karma and Dharma (deeds and laws of conduct) burn down where there is no love for the holy feet of Lord Ram. All righteous efforts become unrighteous, all good fortunes and luck turn to be misfortunes and ill-luck, and all types of knowledge and wisdom become as worthless as false and misleading knowledge—when there is no love for Lord Ram, or where love and devotion for the Lord does not dominate such efforts, such knowledge and such fortunes.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301, Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has said “I have one aim—to have natural love and devotion for the Lord and be able to serve him without any selfish interest or goal, without expecting anything in return, such as the legendary fruits or rewards (in the form of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha) that would automatically accrue due to such service.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265 it is clearly stated that “Raghupati (Lord Ram, the king of the Raghu dynasty)

is overwhelmed by the devotion of his devotees, and he finds himself obliged to such devotees.”]

सो सुतंत्र अवलंब न आना । तेहि आधीन ग्यान बिग्याना ॥ ३ ॥

भगति तात अनुपम सुखमूला । मिलइ जो संत होइँ अनुकूला ॥ ४ ॥

sō sutantra avalamba na ānā. tēhi ādhīna gyāna bigyānā. 3.

bhagati tāta anupama sukhamūlā. mila'i jō santa hō'im' anukūlā. 4.

It (i.e. Bhakti) is independent, able to stand alone, fully empowered (to fulfill all the spiritual requirements of the aspirant), and is self-sufficient as it does not require or expect any other support to prop it up, to enhance its value and effectiveness.

On the contrary, Gyan and Vigyan are dependent upon Bhakti. [To wit, if one were to have access to Gyan and Vigyan, i.e. enlightenment and awareness of the reality and truth in a convincing, logical and effective manner, then he must have the virtue of Bhakti ingrained in him. Without being qualified in the spiritual field of Bhakti a spiritual aspirant cannot hope to fully benefit from either Gyan or Vidyan.]<sup>1</sup>  
(3)

Oh dear (brother Laxman)! Bhakti is pristine, unique, incomparable, awesome and fabulous. It is a fount from which sprouts happiness, bliss and peace; it is a harbinger of these glorious virtues; it is the root from which arises the grand tree that gives the aspirant the spiritual rewards represented by these eclectic virtues.

[And how is Bhakti obtained or accessed?] Attaining Bhakti is possible, it is made accessible when ‘Sants’ (saintly, pious, holy, devout, spiritually pure and enlightened people) become pleased with the seeker of Bhakti, when they are favourable towards him, and bless him with this virtue<sup>2</sup>. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Bhakti does not depend upon Dharma, Gyan, Vairagya or Yoga to lead the aspirant to his spiritual objective. Bhakti can do it independently on its own, on its own steam, and without seeking any help from any other spiritual tool. But Gyan or enlightenment as well as Vigyan or in-depth knowledge of the spiritual truth depends upon Bhakti. This is obviously because the term ‘Bhakti’ means to have faith and devotion, and to succeed in any endeavour one must have complete faith and confidence that the goal he has chosen for himself is the best goal in the world, a goal which will give him his desired fruits in their best form, that the medium he has chosen to reach this goal is also the best, the easiest and a well-established way of reaching the desired goal, and that it will be better for him to concentrate all his energy and efforts to reach the goal without getting distracted by so many way-side distractions that may divert his attention. Bhakti serves this purpose. It is easy, it is proved to be a time-tested, efficient and effective tool, and it is enough to follow this path without having to seek help from any other tools.

On the other hand, Gyan and Vigyan require a high degree of mental abilities, proficiency and focus in order to give the desired result. A person who has the aptitude for Yoga and acquisition of knowledge by studying the scriptures deeply can benefit from Gyan and Vigyan. These paths have many pitfalls and are arduous. Bhakti, on the other hand, is so easy and convenient that it can be followed even by an

ordinary creature who would otherwise fail miserably if he were to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul by following the other paths.

<sup>2</sup>The glories, honours, powers and virtues of *Sants* or saints have been enumerated and lauded in Ram Charit Mans. References: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 5-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38; (vi) Doha no. 46 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 46.

In Tulsidas' Vairagya Sandipani, the saints are extensively praised in its verse nos. 8-33.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, canto 3, verse no. 37-39, the characteristics of a truly pious and holy man are the following:--

“Those persons who are even-minded and stable, have equanimity and forbearance, are serene, placid, unruffled, unwavering, calm and balanced under adversities as well as favourable circumstances, both during sorrows, sufferings and troubles as well as under happy and joyous situations in this world; those who are without any desires and wants whatsoever; those who do not have any attachment to their worldly assets such as their wealth and sons, nor harbour any desires pertaining to them; those who have restrained, conquered and suppressed their sense organs and their wayward tendencies or the urge for their gratification; those who are of a serene, calm, peaceful and tranquil temperament and mind; those who are sincerely devoted and dedicated to you; those who are devoid of and free from all desires, greed, avarice, yearnings and ambitions of all kinds (37); those who are even-keeled, have equanimity, remain neutral, unaffected, indifferent and aloof even while going through the throes of destruction (unfavourable circumstances) or construction (favourable circumstances); those who are without encumbrances and attachments of any kind; those who abandon and forsake involvement in all types of worldly deeds and getting involved in various actions, i.e. do not regard himself as the ‘doer’ of any deed, nor expects any reward or punishment for it; those who are always the followers of Brahm (i.e. pursue the path of righteousness that leads to the supreme, eternal One) (38); those who are endowed with ‘Yam’ and other virtues (e.g. self-restraint of passions and doing penances and austerities); and those who are contented and satisfied with whatever comes their way—such persons who possess these virtues are truly ‘Sadhus’ (saintly, pious, holy, divine, pure in mind and heart). Whenever one is fortunate to get communion and a chance to interact with such saints, one develops endearment for and interest in your divine stories (i.e. in spiritualism) (39)”.

Bhakti is ‘incomparable, unique, awesome and fabulous’ because no other mean is as effective and easy as Bhakti to help the spiritual aspirant reach his spiritual goal with the least amount of hassle and facing the least number of troubles. It leads to the best form of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, from this entrapping world and its delusions, as well as its cycle of birth and death and their attendant horrors. It is easy to follow because it does not entail the severity of Yoga and Sanyas, or the high level of mental intellectual requirements needed to succeed in acquisition of Gyan and Vigyan, or being one one’s toe in the course of doing one’s deeds conscientious and righteously in accordance with the laws of Dharma, and so on.

In fact, these benefits come to a person who has Bhakti in him in a natural and automatic manner, without any special effort to be made on his part. The obvious reason for this is that Bhakti makes a man surrender himself to the Supreme Being,

and his care and well-being henceforth becomes the responsibility of the Lord. It is like the case of a child putting himself in the care of its loving parent; then the child has nothing to worry about, except, of course, to remain obedient, faithful and loyal to his parent, to have complete confidence in the parent that the latter is sure to take proper care of the child's future. This sort of unflinching and sincere commitment makes it obligatory upon the guardian to be extra vigilant for the welfare of his ward, because now the ward's doing and undoing, his success and rise or failure and fall will have a direct bearing upon the guardian's own credibility and competence.

Therefore, the devotee of the Lord, known as the 'Bhakta', lives peacefully and happily without a worry in the world as he has the Supreme Being himself worrying on his behalf! He sings like a lark the glories of the Lord, songs that are known as 'Bhajan'. All living beings want happiness, bliss, peace and comfort, and towards this aim they strive hard in this world. If he gets these much sought-after fruits or rewards in an easy way, and that too in a form which is sustainable and having immensity of dimension and depth, then there is no reason why he would not clasp it with both his hands. This is precisely the benefit of following the path of Bhakti. Mukti is attained easily by leaving everything in the hands of the Lord, and instead of wasting time worrying about so many things of this world the living being can now use the same time to live merrily by singing the Bhajans of the Lord.

'The person is greatly affected by the company he keeps'—this axiomatic principle is also applicable in the case of a student of Bhakti, the spiritual aspirant who wishes to adopt Bhakti has his chosen spiritual path from amongst the so many varied paths prescribed by the scriptures. Company of saints creates a positive environment conducive to spiritual pursuits. The saints practice Bhakti for the Lord, and their life is a living example of the benefits one gets by having Bhakti. So when a new aspirant keeps their company and watches them closely, he is convinced of the rewards that accompany Bhakti; he sees how Bhakti can be done in practical terms, and what kind of ecstasy is derived by constant communion with the Lord. In other words, the seeker of Bhakti sees it being demonstrated in practical life when he lives in the company of saints.]

भगति कि साधन कहउँ बखानी । सुगम पंथ मोहि पावहिं प्रानी ॥ ५ ॥

प्रथमहिं बिप्र चरन अति प्रीती । निज निज कर्म निरत श्रुति रीती ॥ ६ ॥

bhagati ki sādhana kaha'um' bakhānī. sugama pantha mōhi pāvahiṁ prānī. 5. prathamahiṁ bipra carana ati prīti. nija nija karma nirata śruti rīti. 6.

I (Lord Ram) shall now tell you (Laxman) in detail the way Bhakti can be obtained or accessed. It is an easy path, a convenient way by which a living being can attain me, the Supreme Being.

[To wit, by adopting Bhakti, the seeker can find his spiritual liberation and deliverance, his emancipation and salvation very easily and conveniently. He can merge his own Atma with the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma by the means of Bhakti.]<sup>1</sup> (5)

The first requirement is that a person who desires Bhakti should have respect and affection for the feet of a Vipra.

{A ‘Vipra’ literally means a person who is born in the social class that is known as Brahmin. But the intention here is different. We are dealing with Bhakti, so only a person who practices Bhakti is to be considered fit as being referred to as a Vipra here. The Brahmins have been traditionally given high regard in Hindu society because they used to be wise men who had a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, and therefore were the best sources for information and guidance. Like the case when a student would go to a teacher specializing in the subject in which the student wishes to be taught, the seeker of Bhakti should also go to a Brahmin or Vipra who himself practices Bhakti. Any other person would not be a proper guide for the seeker of Bhakti. Hence, the term ‘Vipra’ would mean a pious and holy person who worships the Lord God with extreme devotion and has surrendered himself to the Lord. In other words, only a Vipra who has Bhakti in him can become a seeker’s correct preceptor and guide.}

The second requirement is to follow the instructions and edicts of the Vedas diligently to lead a life of righteousness and probity in all affairs and in accordance with established traditions and the laws and tenets prescribed for the ‘Varna’ or the section of society to which the person belongs.

{To wit, to live according to the various laws of conduct as prescribed by the scriptures to regulate and maintain discipline across the different sections of the society, known as the ‘Varnas’, be conscientious in following one’s duties and responsibilities as sanctioned for the respective Varna to which the person belongs, and to voluntarily maintain order and decorum of the Varna to which a person belongs—this is the second way of practicing Bhakti. It is the second practical path of Bhakti.}<sup>2</sup> (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>After having first stressed that Bhakti is the easiest and most convenient way of attaining oneness with the Lord, or of obtaining freedom from this world and its horrors and entanglements, the Lord now outlines how Bhakti can be actually developed, how it can be actually accessed and practiced.

As has been said in an earlier note, Bhakti is ‘easy and convenient’ because now the spiritual future and welfare of the practitioner of Bhakti becomes the responsibility of the Lord God. It is like a child putting himself in the caring hands of his parent. Once this is done, the child becomes carefree, and he can now enjoy the pleasures of life without any worry about his future or daily needs. Likewise, once one has Bhakti, the Lord becomes responsible for his welfare and daily needs.

<sup>2</sup>In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of adoring and having devotion for the holy feet of saints. Valmiki says “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society).”

We see that in this verse, two paths have been outlined—one is to respect the elderly and learned men who are experienced in Bhakti and learn from them the practical way of doing Bhakti, and the second is to live an orderly life according to established tradition.

In other words, one must pay respects to those who are learned and senior, because when they are pleased they will be eager to initiate the new entrant in this spiritual fold and guide him along with sincere and good advice. Similarly, when one follows the well established laws of conduct and doing deeds righteously and in accordance with established procedures ordained by the scriptures, he will find all

avoidable problems automatically removed from his path, making the journey to his goal easier and less troublesome.

Why must one follow the path shown by the scriptures? Well, the scriptures show that path that is correct and apt; they have no vested interests to mislead anyone. The external world is overshadowed by misconceptions and delusions, and the mind and intellect of any living being are affected by the numerous corruptions and taints of this world. The advice that one gets from anyone, except the wise and enlightened ones, is not reliable, and there are greater chances of one falling in the same trap in which the advisor has himself fallen. So it is not good and prudent to risk one's future with such uncertain path, especially when an option of sure-hit and time-tested right and correct path is available in the form of the scriptures. No sensible man would like to jeopardize his entire life and risking his well-being by following a doubtful path when an option that is certain and sure is available at hand.

That is why it is advised in this verse that one should have the company of saints and follow the scriptures because both these two options are sure to take a spiritual aspirant to the correct goal along the correct path.

Now, let us read about the concept of 'Varnas' and 'Vipra or Brahmin'.

The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins\*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

In ancient Indian tradition, the kings and the ruling class belonged to the caste called 'Kshatriya', and their main job/vocation was giving protection and providing sustenance to their subjects belonging to the other three castes. To do this, they had to wage wars—some in defense and some in aggression because they wanted to expand their area of influence. But wars nevertheless involved bloodshed which any peace loving soul of Satwic tendency would abhor. So a king could be Satwic by temperament but Rajsic by occupation and compulsion. Those who were Satwic were prescribed the non-violent method of worship and sacrifices to Goddess Durga during peace times as described in Devipurān Mahābhagwat, Canto 46, verse nos. 15-17½, while those of Rajsic bearings were to do worship requiring animal sacrifices as described in verse nos. 17-21, especially in preparation for and during wars. Even today it is observed that the army is non-vegetarian in its food habits because the soldiers cannot kill their enemies in battle—as is required of them because of their vocation as a soldier—if they avoid killing and instead show mercy and compassion on their enemies. Perhaps this is the reason why meat-eating is never looked down in army; in fact, it is a normal diet amongst the Kshatriya class. Though mercy and compassion are indeed supremely good qualities, they are not meant for the battlefield

unless the enemy surrenders and relents. The world would have been a 'heaven-on-earth' if this quality prevailed in the battlefield! However, since Sri Ram was at war with a vicious, unforgiving, cruel and formidable enemy (Ravana), and a lot was at stake (e.g. the very existence of the world and its peace), and it was a no-holds-barred, fierce and uncompromising war, the second category of worship—animal sacrifice symbolising the death of the enemy—was prescribed for him by the Goddess. And this was precisely what Brahma and other Gods did as is evident in verse nos. 33.

Yajur Veda 31<sup>st</sup> Chapter, 11<sup>th</sup> Mantra says that Brahmins are the mouth of society, the Kshatriyas are its arms, Vaishyas are its stomach or abdomen, and Shudras are its legs. The body is regarded as a symbol of the society. As is obvious in this analogy, all these four units of the body must function properly and in close cooperation with each other in order that the body can survive and live comfortably and carry on with its assigned duties in an orderly fashion. The mouth is important because it is the medium by which the body takes food and speaks; the arms procure food and gives protection to the body against enemies; the stomach digests food and supplies the whole body with the energy needed by it; the abdomen holds all the internal organs; and the legs carry the body wherever it wants to go such as the place where food is available. Since food is the basis necessity of life, this instance is cited here. And the logic can be extended to everything else. Each component of the society must work properly in order that the whole society survives; each component is as vital as the other; each has its own importance in the bigger picture.

\*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 10.

The Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, paragraph no. 7 describes in a holistic way the virtues of a true Brahmin as the one who is highly wise, self-realised, erudite and enlightened about the Atma and the principles governing the true meaning of Brahmin and such religious signs as doing fire sacrifices, wearing the sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head, observing sacraments etc.

To quote this Upanishad—'A true Brahmin is a wise and enlightened person who treats the Atma, the pure consciousness, as the non-dual Principal of creation (i.e. who regards the Atma as a personification of the supreme Brahmin that is non-dual or Advaita and the only supreme Authority of creation), and for whom being steady in his meditation and contemplation as well as spiritual pursuit is the symbolic tuft of hair—such a person is deemed to be cleansed and made holy by whatever he does. This is because all his deeds are deemed to be auspicious and holy. [That is, he need not do special deeds such as fire sacrifices or observing of sacraments in order to wash off his sins or any kind of spiritual taints that might be adhering to him.]

He is deemed to have completed doing all religious and auspicious deeds required to be done by a man.



It must be understood that such an enlightened man is indeed a Brahmin for he is dedicated and devoted to Brahm (the Supreme Being), he is no less than a God, he is indeed a 'Rishi' (or a great sage), he is a 'Tapasvi' (or someone who is well endowed with the glorious virtues of Tapa, i.e. austerity and penance, and is steadfast in observing its tenets), he is the best follower of the tenets of the scriptures and an excellent spiritual aspirant, he is therefore the Guru (guide, teacher and preceptor) for the whole world.

A truly wise, enlightened and self-realised aspirant who understands the implications and import of what has been said above realises the truth of the statement that the pure conscious Atma standing for Brahm is the true identity of his. And therefore such an enlightened man declares 'It (Brahm; Atma; Truth; Consciousness) is me'.

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 19 describes who a true Brahmin is as follows—"A true Brahmin is one who wears the Yagya Sutra (the sacred thread worn during the performance of fire sacrifices, especially the symbolic one as narrated in verse no. 16), who employs the Pranav Mantra (i.e. the OM Mantra) for his religious needs (such as when doing Japa or repetition, Yoga or meditation, Dhyan or contemplation, etc.), and who is well-versed in the principles of Brahm Yagya (spiritual practices which are equivalent to a formal fire sacrifice but done in a subtle and symbolic manner which lead directly to the realisation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth known as Brahm).

The Gods (the term is a metaphor for the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, nobility etc.) are to be found in the diligent observance of the principles that define a man as a Brahmin. {If a man is a true Brahmin as outlined above, he is deemed to be living God in the sense that he would possess all the eclectic virtues that collectively defined as being 'godly'.}

The Hans (the enlightened Atma, the self-realised and Brahm-realised person) who adheres to the principles of Sutra (i.e. who follows the tenets that lead to Brahm-realisation, who offers his obeisance to the Supreme Being in the manner outlined in this Upanishad, who leads a life like a true Brahmin as described above) is deemed to be doing the Yagya (the fire sacrifice).

There is no difference between the Hans and Pranav. That is, there is no difference between the immaculate Atma, the pure conscious 'self' known as the Hans, and the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Pranav. {Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that produces vibrations of life in the ether that are heard in the form of Naad. These dynamic vibrations in the cosmic ether produce sound that is encapsulated in the monosyllabic word OM. Hence, the OM is a sound form or the cosmic Naad known as Pranav which stands for Brahm because it is the latter which has generated this sound. If the Atma is personified as a divine Swan known as Hans, the supreme cosmic Atma known as Brahm is personified in the form of Pranav which is a cosmic sound called Pranav, and which is represented by the word OM.} (19)."

The Par Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 8-13 describe who *is* a true Brahmin, and verse no. 14 describes who *is not*. Now, let us examine what these verses say.

First let us see *who is not a true Brahmin*:—"Verse no. 14 = Those Brahmins who are engrossed merely in performing rituals and observing sacraments, or who are engaged in the mundane affairs of the world are Brahmins only for name's sake (and not true Brahmins), because they live only to fill their stomachs and enjoy the fame,

comforts and pleasures that come with worldly respect. Such people go to hell at the end of their lives.

{They continue to take birth and die again, and during each life they undergo sufferings and miseries that are part and parcel of gross mundane existence. They do not find Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance, nor do they find peace and bliss that comes with self and Brahm realisation. They do not have true Gyan, and are only pretending to have it to fulfill their worldly desires. In short, they are not true Brahmins, they are imposters, and they do not do justice to the institution of Brahm-hood. They give the holy stature of being a Brahmin a bad name.

The question arises, who then is a true Brahmin? The answer is self-evident in the foregoing as well as the following verses. That is, only those who have true knowledge of Brahm, and the depth of wisdom and enlightenment to understand what the term 'Brahm' is all about, who do not hanker after external purity and formalities but lay stress on inner cleansing and sincerity of purpose are true Brahmins. Such people would not be much bothered about sporting a tuft on the head or wearing the sacred thread to prove that they are Brahmins, but would instead strive to inculcate the glorious virtues that are so typical of those who have become self and Brahm realised, who have really understood the truth and reality of things.} (14)."

Now, let us see *who is a true Brahmin*:—

“verse no. 8 = A person who has understood the real and true import of the term ‘Sutra’ (literally the sacred thread as well as the formula that unfolds the path of Brahm-realisation) is the one who is eligible to attain Moksha (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation), is a true Bhikshuk (a monk, a mendicant or a friar), is truly a Vedagya (one who is an expert in the Vedas and their tenets), is Sadachari (one who follows the path of truth and auspiciousness), and is a Vipra (a Brahmin; a learned and elderly man).

Such a man is not only holy himself but also makes those with whom he comes in contact holy and pure (8).

“verse no. 9 = The supreme transcendental Brahm who is the thread that has knitted together all the units of creation and holds them in place like beads in a rosary or a garland, the ascetic who wears this sacred thread (i.e. who accepts Brahm as the basic essence of creation and honours Brahm exclusively) is indeed said to be an expert ascetic who is well-versed in the philosophy of Yoga (9).

“verse no. 10 = A Brahmin, an expert ascetic who is well-versed in Yoga, and a person who is wise, learned and enlightened should abandon the external sacred thread, because the real thread that bestows spiritual liberation and deliverance is not the external thread made of a gross material (e.g. cotton thread or silk thread) but the symbolic sacred thread representing Brahm that is worn (accepted) internally.

When the sacred thread representing Brahm is symbolically worn internally, there is no fear of it ever getting defiled or polluted; it would permanently be holy and pure (10).

“verse no. 11 = Those who wear the sacred thread after fully understanding its metaphysical importance and spiritual significance, those who have realised that this sacred thread represents Brahm in its entirety are the ones who wear it in the true sense, and therefore are eligible for the benefits that accrue by wearing it. [For the rest, it is merely a formality that can fool the world into believing that the wearer is a

holy man, and nothing more. It would not serve them any real purpose except worldly praise.] (11).

“verse no. 12 = Those who wear the Shikha and the Sutra as symbols of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment which kindles spiritual awakening and truth-realisation) regard Gyan as the best thing in this world to acquire and aim for. This is because Gyan is the holiest and the purest thing in this world. [It shows the correct path to the aspirant, and never misleads him for some vested self-interest.] (12).

“verse no. 13 = Those who are wise and enlightened assert that those persons who understand that the Shikha (tuft of hair on the head) is as powerful and potent as the fire element itself are the ones who are true wearers of it. For the rest, they are merely sporting a crop of hair on the head, and nothing more (13).”

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethrens. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethrens. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma’s feet symbolising service.

Paingal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 and Canto 2, verse nos. 3 describe how the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama were used by the supreme Brahm to create different types of creatures in this creation. In the context of human beings, it would translate into the four groups into which the society was classified to indicate variations in the level of their general mental, intellectual and emotional development, their thought processes, temperaments, behaviours and bearings. Brahm stands for ‘truth and enlightenment’, and intelligent thinking as opposed to emotional and impulsive behaviour. All living beings that came into existence have ‘conscious life’ in them in as much as they show some or

the other sign that are characteristics of life in its myriad forms. But all forms of life cannot be treated as exalted and highly evolved because they lack the divine and eclectic virtues of having wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge that enables them to think intelligently, rationally, logically and analytically; all forms of creatures cannot discriminate between what is spiritually acceptable and what is not, they cannot decide for themselves the path to choose which would help them break the cycle of birth and death. This privilege is the exclusive domain of the human being. That is why humans are placed at the top rung of the evolutionary ladder. This is also why it is said that the Viraat Purush had revealed himself in his image of the human body, that the human body is a replica of the Viraat Purush. Now if this is the case, then only those amongst the humans who possess the highest and noblest virtues of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, intelligence and the ability to discriminate between the bad and the good on the one hand, and the grand virtues of having compassion, love, kindness and mercy, of having total devotion, faith and dedication towards the Truth and following this Truth with whole hearted diligence, of sincerely endeavouring to break free from the shackle of ignorance and delusions that had been trapping their soul for generations after generations on the other hand, can be truthfully and honestly called manifestations of Brahm, or an image of the Viraat Purush. Brahm has revealed himself in all the creatures of this creation, but what sets the humans apart from the rest of the creatures is the possession of the grand and magnificent virtues of Brahm in their best of forms, in the best of their vibrancy, vigour and colour. The human being depicts the powers, potentials and authority of the supreme Lord in all its majestic and grandiose form, and that is why the human being has been able to rule over the rest of the creation as its unquestioned master and lord.

This brings us to an interesting conclusion—if the human being is not able to display any of these noble, virtuous and divine qualities that he has inherited from Brahm as his image then there would be no difference between this human and the other creatures who are lower down in the evolutionary ladder. This is also why amongst the humans the Brahmins are regarded as the closest representatives of Brahm because they are deemed to possess the eclectic and holy virtues of Brahm in the highest ratio as compared to their other brethren. They have all the three Gunas in them, but the ratio of Sata Guna in them is higher than other two Gunas, making them as exalted, revered and honourable as Brahm. It does not imply that others are not images of Brahm, for there is nothing in creation that is not Brahm, but it is just that the degree and proportion of virtuous qualities that are hallmarks of Brahm are present in a greater proportion in Brahmins than other classes in society. All the creatures have their own individual place in creation, but even as all the subjects of a kingdom have their duties and position clearly marked out in order to maintain order and hierarchy, and all of them cannot claim to be called a ‘king’ and they cannot enjoy the same privileges as enjoyed by the king, all the other classes of the human race as well as the rest of the creatures cannot be treated alike.

Further, all creature have the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama in varying ratios, thereby establishing their relationship with Brahm, because the offspring acquires the genes of the parent. When all the three Gunas were present in equal proportion in Brahm, he was neutral, detached and did not depict any attributes as all the three Gunas cancelled each other out. The nearest analogy to visualise this is the ordinary sunlight—there are seven colours in it, but they cancel each other in such a way that we cannot discern them in their distinctive individual forms, but what we see is the colourless dazzling light of the sun. This divine and pious form of Brahm is

revealed in the renunciate ascetics, hermits, monks, friars, sages and seers, and other enlightened and self-realised persons who are regarded even higher than the Brahmins because they depict the best of virtues of Brahm, and that is also why they are called 'Brahm personified'. They represent Brahm's best form in existence. But with the polarization of Brahm's Gunas, the myriad creation and its inhabitant creatures came into being, each very different from the other and depicting Brahm's various Gunas in varying stages of polarization.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad-Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15 which describes their origin in graphic details, and also Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

*Reasons for classification*—The Niralamba Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 10 states the reason for the classification of the society in four classes as follows—"The skin, blood, flesh, bones and the Atma/soul have no caste, creed, colour or race. These have been conceived as a practical measure to regulate and control our day to day behaviours and interactions with each other (10).

{This is an important verse which clearly states that all are equal in the eyes of the scriptures. The different classes or castes or sects or creeds or races which the society has been divided and classified into are man made and artificial. It is just for the sake of convenience of the purpose of delineation of duties and to lay down procedure and guidelines for mutual interactions and determine one's specific place in the hierarchy of existence even as we have a system of hierarchical governance in place in modern society. For example, a Brahmin was supposed to be the teacher and guide for the rest of the society, and the Kshatriya was supposed to give protection to it, while its finances and material needs were looked after by the Vaishya, and it was manually served by the Shudra. This delegation of duties and responsibilities demanded that each person belonging to a particular class should adhere to the laws and regulations meant for that particular class to ensure uninterrupted carrying out of duties and prevention of friction and overlapping of functions causing unnecessary tension and duplicity. This segregation was therefore meant to make life regulated and easy, and not to say that one man was in anyway superior to another in terms of his essential being as a human and a living creature. This is because the Atma or soul, which is pure and conscious, is one in all the creatures, whether he is a man or a woman, a Brahmin or a Shudra. Further, other components of the body, such as the skin, blood etc., are obviously the same in all humans, and if taken in their fundamental and essential form they are the same in all living creatures, whether they are humans or animals. For example, blood when analysed in a chemical laboratory will show the same principal constituents whether it is taken from a Brahmin or from a Kshatriya; blood's constituents would remain the same for all segments of society. Similarly, skin and other parts of the body have no basic difference. The visible and other apparent differences that appear in different forms of life which are fundamentally the same is also supported by the Upanishads when they say that the Atma assumes different forms depending upon its past deeds and their accumulated effects, but the essential form of this Atma remains the same nevertheless. When we talk of 'life' we mean the entire living kingdom consisting of the plants and the animals, including the humans. This is the holistic view of the Upanishads.}

*Origin of the four Varnas*—The Param Hans Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 1 says that Brahma the creator had learned about the four Varnas and the laws governing them from his father Lord Adi Narayan, i.e. from Lord Vishnu in his primary form as Lord Viraat Purush from whose navel Brahma was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from it.

The Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6, and Canto 2, verse 1 describes the origin of these four classes in society. Let us see what it has to say on the subject.

“Verse no. 6, Canto 1—From this Brahma, the creator, emerged the rest of the creation as follows:--From his mouth came into being the Brahmins; from his arms were created the Kshatriyas; from his thighs evolved the Vaishyas; and from his legs were created the Shudras. From his Mana (mind) came into being the Moon; from his eyes evolved the Sun; from the ears arose the external wind (present in the entire cosmos) as well as the Pran (the vital wind in the form of breath that sustains life, as also the other vital winds that control other functions of the body of a creature); and finally from his heart sprouted the rest of creation [6].

{(1) These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance efficiently just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped and equal intensity of pain if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. All are equal in his eyes. The four classes had specific jobs cut out for them so that the society could function smoothly.

Mouth is used to advice and teach; hence the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethrens. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exists, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned because they represented the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Vedas. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas were those sons of Brahma who would do the needed by affording protection to their other brethrens. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour; merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life, such as production and distribution of food and generation of wealth to provide basic comforts. So he created the Vaishyas to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life on his behalf. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores and the service part, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/4/11-13, and Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

(2) The moon stands for emotions and sentiments of a creature, hence its origin in the Mana which is the epicenter of all emotive thoughts. The sun shows light to the world, hence its symbolic origin in the eye of the creator. The ears hear sound from all the directions, and sound has its origin in waves which travel in space through the medium of the ether, because sound cannot be either heard or can reach any place without any medium. This medium was called the wind, and since the ears make the presence of sound evident, the wind or air has its origin in the ears of Brahma. These ears are physically shaped like a radar or satellite dish antenna because they not only transmit sound waves but also receive them. They are like a 2-way radio receiver. And of course, the world has any relevance and importance if only the heart loves it and wishes to be enamoured with it. Once the heart starts to loathe it, or becomes dispassionate towards it, the world becomes irrelevant; therefore the world becomes non-existent as far as the creature is concerned.}

“Verse no. 1, Canto 2—From the creator’s Apaana wind (the vital wind which is inhaled and moves down in the body, thereby helping in digestion and excretory functions) was created the ‘Nishad’ community (the boatmen and elephant tamers), the ‘Yakshas’ (a type of demi-God who guards the treasure of the Gods), the ‘Rakshas’ (the ones with evil, pervert, sinful and demonic tendencies), and the ‘Gandharvas’ (celestial musicians; those junior Gods who were lower in the hierarchy of heavenly Gods).

From the bones of the creator were formed the mountains; from his body hairs came into being the members of the botanical kingdom, the various plants and vegetations, including the medicinal herbs; and from his forehead creased with anger evolved the God of wrath, or ‘Rudra’ [1].

{(1) The Nishad community was considered lower than the Shudras. In practical terms this refers to the fact that these people stayed outside the villages and cities, and had little interaction with those people who were regarded as more educated and cultured. The fishermen and others who took care of animals, such as horses, elephants etc. also belonged to this group. The Yaksha was the guard of the God’s treasury; here they were assigned the job of protecting the assets that would be generated by the other classes in social hierarchy. The society had all types of people; some of them were wicked and evil. They were the Rakshas. And the Gandharva was a soul who had aspired to be as exalted as a God but somewhere went astray from his path and became a junior God. All these designations imply that the creation created by the creator had all shades of creatures in it, and all of them were his sons because all were formed from a part of his body.

(2) Obviously Brahma got annoyed when his sons started bickering among themselves. So he got angry, and his forehead creased in annoyance. This metamorphosed into Rudra. The word Rudra means anger, wrath, vehemence etc. This Rudra was the God of tempest and destruction. He is also identified with Kaal or time and death, because Rudra sparked annihilation when the opportune time for destruction came. The terrible shaft of Rudra brings death and disease to cattle and man, just like plague/pestilence mentioned in the Holy Bible.}”

*Colour of the skin*—It ought to be noted here that the genesis of creation as outlined by the Upanishads describe the colour of the skin of the creatures that came into being. The colour of the skin was used symbolically to indicate the dominance of one or the other of the three basic Gunas, the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, in a particular individual that determines to which class of society he belongs, and which formed the

basis of this classification which depend heavily on the quality displayed by an individual to become eligible to belong to one or the other class. The Gunas displayed by him holds a greater importance than his mere birth in a particular section.

For example, in Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition it is said that Maya, which has created this entire world by its delusion creating powers, has the following three colours—white (fair; grey; all the light shades), dark (brown, black, yellowish and all shades of colours that are not essentially white) and blood red (or copper colour). Since the offspring gets the colour of the skin of the parent because the colour often is indicative of the race to which a particular species belongs, there would therefore be creatures having these three basic colours in varying hues and shades. Now what is the significance of these three colours? These *three colours* represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures. Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means ‘dark’ and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word ‘red’ is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour ‘white’ stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons. Refer also Shewata-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 4-5; Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3; Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 in this context.]

एहि कर फल पुनि बिषय बिरागा । तब मम धर्म उपज अनुरागा ॥ ७ ॥  
श्रवनादिक नव भक्ति दृढ़ाहीं । मम लीला रति अति मन माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi kara phala puni biṣaya birāgā. taba mama dharma upaja anurāgā. 7.  
śravanādika nava bhakti dṛṛhāhīm. mama līlā rati ati mana māhīm. 8.

The eclectic reward or fruit of this effort (i.e. having company of saints and leading a life according to the tenets of the Vedas or scriptures) is that one develops a deep and sincere sense of Vairagya from this world and the temptations of its material sense objects. The spiritual aspirant develops aversion to the world and its temptations for pleasures of the senses (because he understands that they will trap him in an endless cycle of miseries and torments from which he will find difficult to extricate himself later on).

{To wit, by remaining in the company of saints and study of scriptures to learn how one should lead a life that is considered good, one becomes aware of many things in life that he would have missed otherwise. For instance he begins to realise that true happiness and bliss comes not from pursuing the material objects of the world or appeasing the sense organs of the body but by seeking it inside his own self in the Atma that is a fountainhead of eternal bliss, peace and happiness, the Atma that is pure and un-adulterated consciousness as compared to the world and its sense objects that are gross and inane.



With the dawn of wisdom and realisation of the spiritual truth, one develops true renunciation, detachment and dispassion from all material sense objects of the world as well as the urge for self-gratification that arises from the sense organs. One begins to see that the world and its objects can never give true happiness and bliss. Whatever illusion of happiness and comfort that is created by this world to lure the creature towards it are like the bait shown to the fish to catch the latter. Besides this, since the world is imaginary and transient, all its charms and objects are also imaginary and transient. A wise man realises that none of such things that are temporary themselves can ever give him a fruit or reward that is long-lasting and real.}

When this happens, i.e. when Vairagya develops and takes a firm root in an aspirant's inner-self, the spiritual aspirant develops affection and a desire to follow the path leading to 'me'—i.e. the path leading to the Supreme Being, the path of one's liberation and deliverance from this world and all its tentacles, a path that would provide the aspirant his desired goal of emancipation and salvation, a path that would help him steer clear of all the pitfalls that come in his way to freedom, a path that is lit with the light of wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation that removes all forms of darkness symbolizing ignorance, a path that lifts his Spirit from the gross and temporal plane to the plane that has an ethereal, sublime and subtle dimension. This is known as the path to God-hood.

{By developing Vairagya, one distances himself from the artificial world and its equally artificial pleasures, and instead seeks happiness and bliss that is true and eternal by turning himself to the Lord who symbolizes or personifies the grand virtue of eternal bliss, happiness and peace that the spiritual aspirant so much longs to attain.}<sup>1</sup> (7)

The cumulative auspicious effect of the aforesaid positive way of living a life dedicated to me (i.e. the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram) is that the aspirant develops keen interest in practicing the nine forms of Bhakti, such as hearing my divine stories, divine deeds, divine glories and divine name. [This half of the verse can be interpreted as follows also—"The next step, i.e. the third step, towards developing Bhakti and making it firm, steady and robust is to follow its nine steps, one of which is to hear about my divine stories, divine deeds, divine glories and divine name."]<sup>2</sup>

This will strengthen one's faith in me; he will have true affection for me. His 'Mana' (heart and mind) would develop a longing for my divine stories and divine deeds and their accompanying divine glories. [The second half of this verse can be interpreted as follows also—"The next step, i.e. the fourth step, towards having steady and firm Bhakti in me is to have great internal affection for me, as well as a sincere longing to hear about my divine stories and deeds. This desire must come from within, i.e. it must sprout in one's hear and mind."]<sup>3</sup> (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When one follows the path shown by saints and scriptures, it is natural that his conduct and thoughts will be cleansed of all worldly taints and corruptions. Once he tastes the nectar of true contentedness, happiness and peace that comes by following a life of auspiciousness and righteousness as opposed to remaining engrossed in the pursuit of this selfish world and its cunning sense objects that act like the bait to catch the fish, he will voluntarily distance himself from the latter and turn towards the former.

‘Vairagya’ does not mean one must run away from the world and shirk his responsibilities. True Vairagya means one must not be attached or hooked to, or affected by any of the things of this world, or by the results of his deeds and actions in this world. Vairagya comes from within and not from without. Say, if the mind and heart are attracted towards the charms of the world and one forces himself to run away to the forest in the guise of a hermit, will such act serve any purpose except to increase his yearning and lust for the world instead of eliminating them? Forced Vairagya serves no purpose as it only stokes desires, greed, lust and passions further. It enhances his cravings instead of dousing them. The benefit from Vairagya comes only when it sprouts from within, when it is sincere, and when it is centered round wisdom and realisation of the truth and reality.

For instance, when one wishes to rise in life by being educated and acquiring skills, he will leave no stone unturned to acquire the best education that is available to him and be diligent and steadfast in his studies. Even if such a sincere student may not have the wherewithal for studying in a reputed college, he will still shine in life. On the contrary, if someone is forced into school or college by his parents or family or peer pressure though he has no earnest desire to study and acquire education and skills, then his learning and education will be mediocre at the best. He will spend his time in a fidgety manner, frittering it away and not deriving any worthwhile benefit from the opportunity that he has got to study in a good college.

Again, when one is really hungry he will enjoy food, no matter how bland it is, and this food is properly absorbed by the body as it is properly digested due to secretion of saliva and digested juices. On the other hand, if one eats even delicious things without having real appetite then this food will harm his body more than doing it any good. So likewise, if one has developed Vairagya in a sincere manner, out of realisation of the truth, then it will be steady and robust. Otherwise it will only create more problems for him.

The way leading to the Lord is very easy if one has developed Vairagya because then whatever one does is not done to serve one’s own self interest but to serve the Lord God. All such deeds and their results are offered to the Lord, and the sense of contentedness and fulfillment is of an ethereal dimension because now the objective is to serve the Supreme Being who is a provider of eternal peace, happiness and bliss instead of serving the gross body and its equally gross organs that are selfish and like a bowl of miseries and pain. A devotee of the Lord realises that the Supreme Being is a universal entity, that whatever is created in this world is one or the other form of the same divine Being, so he develops a sense of profound equanimity and equality in his approach to the world. He finds himself humbled by this realisation, and all his sense of pride and arrogance vanish. His approach and outlook in the world undergoes transformation, from being gross and selfish to being sublime and magnanimous.

The combined effect of all such spiritual endeavours is the upliftment of the soul of the aspirant.

<sup>2</sup>There are said to be *nine steps to Bhakti*. It is called ‘Navadha Bhakti’. ‘Navdha’ = nine fold; ‘Bhakti’ = devotion, dedication, submission, faith and love for the Lord God, or anyone else who is spiritually exalted, wise, enlightened, holy, pious and divine, such as for example one’s moral preceptor and guide, great saints and sages etc.

Lord Ram has himself preached about them to Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, to Chaupai line no.

9 that precedes Doha no. 36. We will read about them later on in this book when we come to these verses.

The aforesaid way of auspicious life is living in the company of saints and wise people, respecting elders who are wise and enlightened, living a life righteously according to the sanction of the scriptures, and developing a deep sense of renunciation from the deluding world and its material sense objects that trap the creature in a whirlpool of miseries, grief and torments. Obviously this is possible only in the community of saints where the singing of the Lord's glories is a routine affair. In this community one does not hear talk of worldly things, but only about the Lord and his magnificent deeds, divine glories and holy name. The sense of profound internal peace and bliss that is obtained in hearing about the Lord and his divine glories is so immense and soothing that the aspirant forgets about the world and its false charms in which he had sought the same peace and bliss earlier. When he begins to taste the sublime nectar of real peace and happiness which comes by hearing about the Lord, about his divine glories and holy name, and when the aspirant takes a dip in the pristine water represented by them, he attains ecstasy and thrill like the one he had never ever experienced while remaining submerged or engrossed in the affairs of the gross world. The world and its stories only gave him more worries, but the stories of the Lord dispelled such worries; the sounds of the world fuelled his desires and fears, but those pertaining to the Lord filled him with ecstasy and exhilaration.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 128, sage Valmiki also reiterates this virtue of listening attentively the divine stories and glories of the Lord so much so that the listener is never satisfied or contented by hearing them. He wants to listen more and more of them. His ears are like the vast ocean that never gets filled by the countless rivers symbolizing the Lord's divine glories and stories that continuously pour in it.

<sup>3</sup>One must not hear my stories to impress upon the world that he is a pious sort of person, or just to while away the time, or for purposes of entertainment, or to escape the drudgery of routine life and its affairs, or for anything else that smacks of pretensions, deceit and falsehood. The desire to hear about my divine and holy name, deeds, stories and glories must come sincerely from the heart, because it is only then that the mind and the sub-conscious will be focused on them. Otherwise there will be a lot of worldly distraction—i.e. though the person may sit through the narration of the story but his mind will be occupied elsewhere in the world. If this happens, then it is a sheer waste of time.

When one hears about the Lord and his divine stories from wise men who speak only the truth and explain the reality in understandable terms, when he sees for himself how happy, contented and blissful such men are, when he hears from them about the futility of pursuing the world and the great spiritual reward obtained by developing Bhakti for the Lord as a means of attaining eternal and robust peace and bliss on the one hand, and liberation and deliverance from the world of miseries and torments on the other hand, the hearer is motivated to hear more of it and test the teachings of these wise men for their practical implications. In a short while he realises the truth in what he hears, and comparing his experience with the world where he was constantly surrounded by horrifying worries and nagged by insurmountable problems with this world of profound bliss and happiness, he decides that it is Bhakti that will serve his interests best, it is Bhakti that will make his life fulfilled and contented and happy, it is Bhakti that can lead him to his objective of obtaining steady peace and eternal bliss in the easiest way, it is Bhakti that can

provide him liberation and deliverance from the cycle of spiritual problems most conveniently.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 128, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue whereby the devotee remains immersed in the thoughts of Lord Ram. He has great love and longing to hear about the Lord and his glorious deeds, his divine stories and his divine form.]

संत चरन पंकज अति प्रेमा । मन क्रम बचन भजन दृढ़ नेमा ॥ ९ ॥

गुरु पितु मातु बंधु पति देवा । सब मोहि कहँ जानै दृढ़ सेवा ॥ १० ॥

santa carana pañkaja ati prēmā. mana krama bacana bhajana dṛṛha nēmā. 9. guru pitu mātū bandhu pati dēvā. saba mōhi kaham̐ jānai dṛṛha sēvā. 10.

The next step (the fifth one) is to have affection and respect for the lotus-like holy feet of saints and pious people, and be devoted to them<sup>1</sup>.

The next step of Bhakti (i.e. sixth) is to adore the Lord and have unflinching devotion for him by employing all his faculties—such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds) and his Bachan (words, speech). Besides these, he must be steady in his Niyam (spiritual practices such as repeating the Lord's holy name, listening to the Lord's divine glories, regular worship and meditation on the Lord, as well as in general way living a life as prescribed by the scriptures)<sup>2</sup>. (9)

The next step (the seventh one) is to serve me faithfully, honestly, devotedly and diligently in the way of serving one's Guru (teacher, moral preceptor and guide), one's parents (father and mother), one's brothers (or peers, friends, companions, kith and kin), one's husband (applicable to a person's wife), and one's deity or the Lord to whom one is devoted—treating all of them as one of my forms, and therefore serving them with the conviction that it is me who is being served in their respective forms<sup>3</sup>. (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This is the fifth step for obtaining Bhakti. The 'lotus' flower is highly respected in the scriptures as a metaphor for the virtues of purity and cleanliness. This is because its petals are always clean inspite of the dirt and filth in the surrounding water of the pond where the lotus grows. A person who manages to remain aloof from the world and its delusions, corruptions and taints is compared to the lotus. The foot is that part of the body that is in constant touch with the ground, and it the part that becomes dirty first. The foot remaining clean inspite of it being in constant contact with dirt all around is a metaphoric way of saying that the concerned person is unaffected by the surrounding taints and impurities of the world. This is why this metaphor is used for the saints—because they live an ordinary life like the rest of the human race, but they manage to remain pure, holy and cleansed internally. None of the delusions and temptations of this material world ever affects their inner self. They remain engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord, submerged in the bliss and ecstasy that comes with realisation of the spiritual truth, and are perpetually in a state of meditation that enables them to live in a transcendental state of consciousness though externally they go about their routine life and affairs like ordinary people.

Another reason for comparing saints with a lotus is that just like the lotus flower that provides the nectar to the bee which comes to the flower seeking for it,

these saints provide the nectar of spirituality and the ambrosia of eternal bliss and happiness represented by Lord Ram's divine stories, name, glories etc. to all those devotees who come to them in search for it. Just like a number of bees hum around a lotus that is ripe with nectar, these devotees flock to the saints in their quest of Lord Ram's Bhakti.

To be 'devoted' to saints is to faithfully serve them and follow their instructions. After all, if a student does not obediently obey the instructions of his teacher then he will never learn the subject properly. The teacher on his part is always inclined to favour that student who is loyal, obedient, faithful and diligent in his studies as compared to one who creates mischief, is disobedient and shows disrespect to him. Every good teacher wishes to give the best he knows to his student because the latter is the teacher's best ambassador in the world. If the disciple rises and does good work in the world, the credit goes to the teacher. So naturally the saints would be most willing to impart the divine knowledge that the seeker wants if the latter serves them faithfully and diligently. Otherwise they will treat him as a source of nuisance and avoid him by a long barge pole. Therefore, it is in the interest of the spiritual aspirant to be devoted to the saints from whom he expects to gain insight on esoteric matters.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of adoring and having devotion for the holy feet of saints. Valmiki says "Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society)."

<sup>2</sup>The earnest devotee and the spiritual aspirant is prescribed this formula. (i) He must be focused on his spiritual practices, for anything done half-heartedly and with a distracted mind bears no fruit. (ii) He must do things in a righteous and proper manner, do them selflessly as a service to the Lord, and then offer all the results of such deeds to the Lord. This serves two major purposes—one, it makes him dispassionate towards the deeds and actions, and two, he does them calmly because he is not worried about their results which he is obliged to offer to the Lord. Further, since he is convinced that whatever he is doing is a service of the Lord God, all his actions and deeds automatically assume a holy nature and he does them with a pure mind and heart because it is an offering just like one offers something to a deity in a temple or any other shrine. (iii) He speaks the truth, never cheats anyone by speaking deceitfully or with vested interest in mind, is polite in his words, and is generally well spoken. His words and demeanours reflect his high mental caliber like a person of high birth and education. He gets acclaim and good friends; he fosters goodwill and brotherhood instead of hatred and ill-will. (iv) And he is diligent, steady and regular in whatever he does.

Even a cursory reading of these steps will show that they help a person to acquire the virtue of perfection, to become a noble human being. The Lord embodies all the good virtues and auspicious qualities in existence, and anyone aspiring to be near the Lord must acquire them, must develop them, must nurture them and practice them so that he does not look like an unwanted person in the company of holy people who surround the Lord. Not only this, these eclectic and divine virtues will make his life happy and joyous just like healthy life-style makes the physical body free from disease and so many other problems which in turn makes a person's life comfortable, peaceful, happy and enjoyable.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of worshipping, adoring and having devotion for Lord Ram. Valmiki says—“Oh Lord! He who worships you with his own hands daily, who has no other reliance or support except you, who is convinced that taking refuge in or having devotion for your holy feet is equivalent to going to a pilgrim place, who repeats your holy name which is the king of all divine names, and who worships you along with all the members of his family—verily, you should live in the heart of such a person.”

<sup>3</sup>This is in consonance with the grand philosophy of the Upanishads that teach that a truly wise, self-realised and enlightened man is he who sees the Lord in each living being. After all, the persons named in this verse have a direct bearing upon the life of a person, and they give him an opportunity to serve the Lord God in practical terms with the view that all of them are images of the same Lord.

Why, if a person says that he is wise enough to imagine the existence of the Supreme Being in lifeless stone idols by virtue of which he worships statues and icons in shrines and treating them as images of the Lord God, should he not see the same Supreme Lord in the form of a living being so close to him, a living being with flesh and blood, as a direct representative of the Lord God? Well, if he does not see the Lord in them, then truly he has no moral right to say that he worships the Lord in dead and lifeless stones and idols.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram that he should live in the heart of a person who shows respects his Guru more than the Lord, and serves the Guru in the best possible way he can.

Again, sage Valmiki further stresses that “Oh Lord, you should live in the heart of such persons who are friendly towards all and think of the good of all”—refer; Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, the first part of Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 130.

In the same context, Valmiki says “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society)”—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129.]

मम गुण गावत पुलक सरीरा । गदगद गिरा नयन बह नीरा ॥ ११ ॥

काम आदि मद दंभ न जाकें । तात निरंतर बस मैं ताकें ॥ १२ ॥

mama guna gāvata pulaka sarīrā. gadagada girā nayana baha nīrā. 11.  
kāma ādi mada dambha na jākēm. tāta nirantara basa main tākēm. 12.

The next step (i.e. the eighth) is to become so exhilarated and ecstatic while singing and narrating my divine glories and virtues that the body is thrilled and titillated, the voice is choked with surging emotions, and tears of love and ecstasy run down from the eyes<sup>1</sup>. (11)

My dear! I (the Supreme Being) have my permanent abode in the Mana (heart and mind) of those persons (devotees and spiritual aspirants) who have no trace of such vices as Kaam (passions, lust, yearnings etc.), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness,

hypocrisy), and Dambha (falsehood, deceit, conceit, pretensions, wickedness, crookedness etc.).

{If a man's heart and mind are free from these vices, the Lord lives close to him, in his inner-self. In other words, such persons become one like the Lord himself; they represent the Lord himself; they are as honourable and worthy of reverence as the Lord.}<sup>2</sup> (12)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>These are the physical signs of one being in a state of extreme happiness and ecstasy. The idea is that devotion and love for the Lord must be so deep seated and firmly established in one's inner self, one should have such longing for the love of God that as soon as he starts singing the Lord's divine story or his holy name, his body becomes overwhelmed with happiness and joy of the highest order so much so that tears flow involuntarily from his eyes, his voice becomes choked with surging emotions, and a thrill runs down his veins.

This state is also obtained during the higher stages of Yoga when an ascetic attains Samadhi, the transcendental state of existence of consciousness where the ascetic loses awareness of the body and the surrounding world, and lives in an ethereal plane that goes beyond the mundane and the ordinary.

Therefore, this state when the devotee sings the glories of the Lord and becomes thrilled with tears flowing down his eyes and voice choked is identical to the state of transcendental existence so much lauded and applauded in the spiritual field of Yoga.

Sage Valmiki has enumerated the many virtues which a person must possess if he expects that Lord Ram lives in his inner-being. These virtues are outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128, to Doha no. 131. During this presentation, the learned sage Valmiki says—"Lord Ram should live in the heart of such a person who loves the Lord more than his own life, for whom the Lord is the dearest one in this world (Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130)". Naturally therefore, if one remembers someone who is extremely dear to him he is bound to be thrilled and excited.

<sup>2</sup>This is the ninth form of Bhakti or sign of having devotion for the Lord—because once a person develops or inculcates or practices these virtues he is deemed to be free from all taints and internally cleansed so much so that the Lord now finds it fit to make his residence in the inner-self or the bosom of this devotee. Since the Lord can only live where there is purity of heart and mind, such a devotee is the proper place for the Lord to reside.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 130 in which sage Valmiki says that "Lord Ram should live in the heart of those persons who have no trace of vices such as Kaam (passions), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Maan (false sense of pride, ego and vanity), Moha (attractions for and infatuations with the world and its material sense objects, with the body and its organs), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (grief, sorrows, regrets, unhappiness and a sense of gloom and depression), Raag and Droha (attachments and attractions on the one hand, and animosity, ill-will and hatred on the other hand respectively), Kapat (deceit, conceit, falsehood, pretensions, wickedness, crookedness), and Maya (delusions and their attendant hallucinations and attachments with things that are false and imaginary).]

दो०. बचन कर्म मन मोरि गति भजनु करहिं निःकाम ।  
तिन्ह के हृदय कमल महुँ करउँ सदा बिश्राम ॥ १६ ॥

dōhā.

bacana karma mana mōri gati bhajanu karahim̐ nihkāma.  
tinha kē hṛdaya kamala mahum̐ kara'um̐ sadā biśrāma. 16.

[This is the tenth form of Bhakti.] He who has me as his only destiny and succour, he who completely depends upon me in his words and speech, his deeds and actions, and his mind and heart, he who has deep devotion for me and who worships me selflessly—verily, I always find rest and peace while living comfortably in his lotus-like heart. (Doha no. 16)'

{Using the faculty of speech in service of Lord Ram means that one speaks the truth, speaks polite words, speak things that help others and shows them the correct way, talks only of rightful things and auspicious subjects, never talks ill of others or uses deceitful words to serve his selfish ends, uses his power to speak to honour the Lord and praise his glories, to propagate rightful knowledge and good virtues by way of teaching and enlightening others about moral values and disseminating spiritual knowledge, and so on and so forth.

Using the deeds and actions as a means to serve Lord Ram means to do them selflessly, for the general welfare of the creatures, without any emotional attachment with them or their results, and offering both the deeds and actions and their results to the Lord.

Using the Mana (mind and heart) in the service of Lord Ram is to keep them cleansed of all negative thoughts and emotions, to keep them free from the corrupting effects of worldly taints such as countless attachments, delusions, desires, greed, passions etc. which act as moral impurities and spiritual drags that impede progress of the devotee towards his chosen goal, to keep the mind and heart focused on the Lord and his divine deeds, his holy name and his magnificent glories, and to serve and honour Lord Ram most sincerely and honestly, with full involvement of the mind, the sub-conscious and the heart. The mind, the sub-conscious and the heart which form the subtle component of the body must be entirely dedicated in the service of the Lord so much so that they are able to automatically guide the grosser components of the body, i.e. the various organs of perception and action, in being righteous, noble and conscientious in whatever they do. The control of the mind and heart is extremely important as they are the controlling authorities of all the deeds and actions which the physical body is involved in. An honourable mind and heart will make the body act and do whatever it does in an honourable manner.

Practicing these eclectic virtues makes a man cleansed of all worldly flaws and impurities, and he becomes holy and pious. Then it becomes possible for Lord Ram to live in his heart. When the Lord makes his presence felt inside the aspirant's inner-self, the latter experiences a high degree of bliss, peace and happiness that becomes permanent because once the Lord begins to live in his inner-being, there is no question of worldly delusions ever influencing him again. All his fears, miseries, sorrows etc. are dispelled for good, and he begins to enjoy beatitude and felicity.}<sup>1</sup>  
(Doha no. 16)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram the type of devotees in whose heart the Lord should live. During this narration the sage says—



(i) “he who has no other reliance or support, who completely depends upon Lord Ram (the Lord should live in his heart)—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129; (ii) “who believes that by taking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram he has gone to a pilgrim place, the Lord should live in his heart—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 129; (iii) “a person who expects only one reward for everything he does, and it is to have love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram—verily, the Lord should live in his heart like it were the Lord’s temple”—refer: Doha no. 129; (iv) “a person who has no destiny or succour except the Lord, Lord Ram should live in his heart”—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130; (v) “Oh Lord! He who loves you more than his own self, his own life, verily oh Lord, you should live in his heart as if it was your own auspicious residence”—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130; (vi) “for whom you (Lord Ram) is the only relation that matters, because you are his lord, friend, brother, father, mother and moral preceptor known as the Guru, verily you should live in his heart which is equivalent to your temple”—refer: Doha no. 130; (vii) “he who wants nothing ever, but has natural love, affection, faith and devotion for you, oh Lord you must always live in his heart because it is your own abode”—refer: Doha no. 131.]

चौ०. भगति जोग सुनि अति सुख पावा । लछिमन प्रभु चरनन्हि सिरु नावा ॥ १ ॥  
एहि बिधि गए कछुक दिन बीती । कहत बिराग ग्यान गुन नीती ॥ २ ॥  
caupāī.

bhagati jōga suni ati sukha pāvā. lachimana prabhu carananhi siru nāvā. 1.  
ēhi bidhi ga'ē kachuka dina bītī. kahata birāga gyāna guna nītī. 2.

Laxman felt very happy and contented by hearing this discourse on ‘Bhakti Yoga’ (i.e. on the combined influence that Bhakti and Yoga has on the spiritual well-being of a Jiva, the living being).

Laxman then bowed his head most reverentially at the holy feet of Lord Ram to thank him as well as to offer his obeisance to the revered Lord (who had preached him on so important a subject as the one narrated in the preceding verses). (1)

In this way, some days passed in peace and tranquility (at Panchavati) while Lord Ram would elaborately expound on the many principles associated with different metaphysical, theological and spiritual philosophies, such as the ones related to different aspects of Vairagya, Gyan, various Gunas, and such other esoteric concepts. (2)

सूपनखा रावन कै बहिनी । दुष्ट हृदय दारुन जस अहिनी ॥ २ ॥  
पंचबटी सो गइ एक बारा । देखि बिकल भइ जुगल कुमारा ॥ ४ ॥

sūpanakhā rāvana kai bahinī. duṣṭa hṛdaya dārūna jasa ahinī. 3.  
pañcabaṭī sō ga'i ēka bārā. dēkhi bikala bha'i jugala kumārā. 4.

{From now starts the narration of the famed Adventure of Lord Ram in the forest that commences with Supernakha’s misdeeds and her attempts to provoke the Lord into

committing adultery, and the subsequent chain of events that were set in motion and would culminate in the defeat and slaying of the demon king Ravana in the Great War of Lanka.}

There was a female demon named Supnakha<sup>1</sup> (or ‘Supernakha’) who was a sister of Ravana (the notorious king of the demons with his capital at Lanka). She was very wicked and foul in her heart, and was extremely cruel like a poisonous snake. (3)

One day she went to Panchavati<sup>2</sup> where Lord Ram dwelled with his wife Sita and brother Laxman (during the days of his forest sojourn). When she saw the two handsome princes (Lord Ram and Laxman), she was smitten by Lord Ram’s charm, and the evil of lust and passion so overwhelmed her that she lost her prudence and a sense of judgment. [This was because she, by birth, had the mind and nature of a ‘demon’ who neither have any self-control over their carnal desires, nor any trace of morality and scruples worth the name left in them.] (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This demoness got her name ‘Supernakha’ because she had large nails which were as wide as a winnow-fan. It also may mean one who has broad ears and long nails like that of a winnowing fan. ‘Supa’ = the winnowing fan or a winnow-basket; ‘Nakha’ = nails. Supernakha lived in the Dandakarnya forest, a dense, wild and intractable forest that was infested with ferocious animals and demons, and it separated the continent of ancient India into the Northern part that was civilized and the Southern territories that were mostly wild and inhabited by tribals and aboriginal people.

According to Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse no. 61, Ravana, her brother, got her married to a demon named Vidyujjihva and gifted the Dandakaranya forest to her as a marriage gift. (Refer: Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 2.1 of this Book.) In due course of time she became a widow, and then Ravana sent the demons Khar, Dushan and Trishira to protect her as she was now alone in a dense forest.

Being a demon by birth, Supernakha had a natural tendency to be immoral, wanton and promiscuous in her behaviour; she would roam around the world seeking sexual gratification. For this she would assume any form that suited her, and as soon as her lust was satisfied she moved on to hunt for a new prey in fresher grounds. It was during one of her such wanderings that she sighted Lord Ram and Laxman and fell for their exceptional charms and heavenly beauty.

Ravana had sent Khar and Dushan to this forest with another aim too—it was to guard the frontiers of his demon kingdom in the north which lay just south of the Vindhya Mountain range and north of the kingdom of Kishkindha, the kingdom of the monkey race. Khar and Dushan were sons of Ravana’s maternal aunt. A huge army of demons were in their command.

Lord Ram, along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, had come to reside at a place called Panchavati deep inside this forest. It is here that one day Supernakha saw the Lord, and was so extremely enthralled by the Lord’s charm and beauty that, being a pervert demoness who had no moral scruples worth the name, ventured to propose marriage to him.

We shall read in these verses that Supernakha tried to woo Lord Ram and provoke him to commit adultery. For this audacious temerity of hers, she was punished by being deformed for the rest of her life by having her ears and nose cut off by Laxman on the instructions of Lord Ram. This ‘cutting of nose and ears’ is a phrase that shames the person concerned, embarrasses him or her, puts the person in

the docks, and is usually employed for some serious form of mischief or evil deed or irreverent behaviour on his or her part.

<sup>2</sup>Panchavati—This was like an oasis, with a lot of greenery and vibrant bird and insect life, in the middle of the otherwise desolate and barren tract of land consisting of a formidably horrifying forest that had no life except thorny plants and poisonous trees and creepers extending to the horizon in dense clusters. Panchavati was situated near the banks of the river Godavari which flowed through the forest, and was around 24-25 miles from the hermitage of sage Agastya. This place is located near the modern city of Nasik in Maharashtra state of India.

It was so named as it had five (“Pancha” = five) huge banyan trees (“Vat” = banyan tree) that grew almost in a circle so as to provide shade over a large area that they covered. This made the place very welcoming as it was cool, comfortable and relaxing as well as congenial for a long stay. Its proximity with the river Godavari was an added bonus. So Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman decided to spend some time here. Actually this spot was advised to them by Sage Agastya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-18 that precede Doha no. 18.

Refer to Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 2-3 that describes how she discovered that Lord Ram lived in Panchavati. It so happened that one day while wondering in the forest she saw the marks of Lord Ram’s feet on the ground. These marks were like the lotus flowers and had signs of a goad and mace inside them; such marks are unique to the sole of the feet of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. They are so attractive and divine by their nature that anyone who sees them even once is pulled towards them automatically as iron is to a magnet. Actually this is the mystical way of the Lord by which his devotees are attracted naturally towards him even without their conscious knowledge, and by this means the merciful and kind Lord finds an excuse to ultimately grant liberation and deliverance to his devotees from this mundane gross world of transmigration.]

भ्राता पिता पुत्र उरगारी । पुरुष मनोहर निरखत नारी ॥ ५ ॥

होइ बिकल सक मनहि न रोकी । जिमि रबिमनि द्रव रबिहि बिलोकी ॥ ६ ॥

bhrātā pitā putra uragārī. puruṣa manōhara nirakhata nārī. 5.  
hō’i bikala saka manahi na rōkī. jimi rabimani drava rabihi bilōkī. 6.

[The saintly crow named Kaagbhusund told Garud<sup>1</sup>, the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the former to listen to the divine story of Lord Ram as follows—] ‘Oh Urgari (literally the one who is an enemy of serpents)<sup>2</sup>! It is said that a woman (who is wanton and lacking in morals and scruples) is liable to get easily sexually aroused at the sight of a man who is handsome and charming, irrespective of who he is, whether he be her brother, father or even a son. [This applied specially to Supernakha as she was a ‘demoness’ by birth, and so was inherently inclined to be exceedingly promiscuous, immodest and sexually pervert.] (5)

So, enchanted by the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram, Supernakha lost control over herself; she became very uneasy as she was unable to restrain the overbearing desire of lust and passion that overwhelmed her mind and heart. It is like the case of the gem known as ‘Suryakantamani (or the “rabimani”)<sup>3</sup>’ which starts glowing automatically

and radiating brilliant light in the presence of sun though the sun is not at all aware that the gem even exists. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We must remember here that Tulsidas, the poet-saint who penned this Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’, has cited four principle narrators of the story of Lord Ram which he is merely recounting—viz. (i) Lord Shiva as narrated to his consort Uma or Parvati\*1; (ii) Sage Yagyawalkya as narrated to sage Bharadwaj\*2; (iii) The saintly crow Kaagbhusund as narrated to Garud\*3, as is obvious from this verse; and (iv) Tulsidas’ own Guru (teacher)\*4.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, \*1 = Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 108; (iv) Doha no. 120.

\*2 = Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 47.

\*3 = Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64.

\*4 = Baal Kand, Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31.}

<sup>2</sup>This episode is being narrated by the crow-sage Kagbhusund to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the former to hear the divine story of Lord Ram. Hence, the narrator address the listener as “uragārī”—i.e. an enemy of serpents, because Garud, the celestial Eagle and the mount of Lord Vishnu, is a sworn enemy of poisonous serpents and gobbles them all up very easily.

<sup>3</sup>The word “rabimani” has two parts—viz. ‘rabi’ meaning the sun, and ‘mani’ meaning a gem; it is also called ‘Suryakantamani’ because it emanates rays of light in the presence of the sun. It is often called a ‘sun-stone’ too, and is probably a sort of crystal of the size of a small pebble that glows brilliantly in sunlight.

This metaphor is used here to imply that just like a sun-stone begins to automatically emanate light on its exposure to the sun, a woman’s natural passion and desire for love arises instinctively when she is exposed to a man whom she regards as being handsome and charming. She would then find it quite difficult to restrain her mind and heart from developing some sort of longing for this man she takes fancy to.]

रुचिर रूप धरि प्रभु पहि जाई । बोली बचन बहुत मुसुकाई ॥ ७ ॥  
 तुम्ह सम पुरुष न मो सम नारी । यह सँजोग बिधि रचा बिचारी ॥ ८ ॥  
 मम अनुरूप पुरुष जग माहीं । देखेउँ खोजि लोक तिहु नाहीं ॥ ९ ॥  
 तातेँ अब लगि रहिउँ कुमारी । मनु माना कछु तुम्हहि निहारी ॥ १० ॥

rucira rūpa dhari prabhu pahim jā'ī. bōlī bacana bahuta musukā'ī. 7.  
 tumha sama puruṣa na mō sama nārī. yaha samjōga bidhi racā bicārī. 8.  
 mama anurūpa puruṣa jaga māhīm. dēkhē'um̃ khōji lōka tihu nāhīm. 9.  
 tātē'm̃ aba lagi rahi'um̃ kumārī. manu mānā kachu tumhahi nihārī. 10.

Hence, she assumed a charming form of a beautiful young lady<sup>1</sup> and went to the Lord (Sri Ram). Once there, she spoke very sweetly, with a broad and enticing smile on her face. (7)

She told Lord Ram thus: 'Indeed there is no man (as handsome and charming) as you are, and neither is there any other woman who is as alluring as me (in beauty and charm). It looks that the creator had made great deliberations before he made the two of us, for it is obvious that he made us for each other, and then devised this opportunity for our meeting. (8)

I had been searching in the three worlds (heaven, earth and nether worlds) for a man befitting me, and for whom I may develop a liking, but to no avail; for in all sooth I could not find a single individual who would suit me<sup>2</sup>. (9)

This is the reason I have remained a virgin till now. However, after seeing you I feel enchanted. I seem to have developed a natural sense of attraction and longing for you, for I have begin to love you, which makes my mind and heart convinced, to some extent, that at last I have found someone who is suitable to become my companion as he seems compatible to me and suitable to my tastes<sup>3</sup>. (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Supernakha knew that she was an ugly demoness, and so therefore if she goes and proposes to Lord Ram in her original form it is sure that he will reject her. So she assumed the form of a beautiful lady.

<sup>2</sup>This acknowledgement by Supernakha—that she had been roaming freely in the world searching for a man to marry, which implies that she gazes intently at all the men she meets, looking him up and down like a customer examines a cattle for sale in the cattle-market, and even testing them by brief flings of pretended romance—shows that she was a lady with an extremely loose character and low morals. To wit, she has revealed her bad and immoral character unwittingly herself, for no lady of good birth and family would roam around alone looking for a mate like the way Supernakha had done; it's vulgar and promiscuous.

<sup>3</sup>By saying that she is satisfied by Lord Ram's personality 'to some extent' shows that she has kept the option open—because as soon as her lusts would be satisfied she would make an exit from the relationship citing the reason that her partner did not suit her 'completely'. So she has warned Lord Ram to be careful of her intentions by saying that she has found some comfort in him only to some degree; not fully, but partially.]

सीतहि चितइ कही प्रभु बाता । अहइ कुआर मोर लघु भ्राता ॥ ११ ॥  
गइ लछिमन रिपु भगिनी जानी । प्रभु बिलोकि बोले मृदु बानी ॥ १२ ॥  
सुंदरि सुनु मैं उन्ह कर दासा । पराधीन नहिं तोर सुपासा ॥ १३ ॥  
प्रभु समर्थ कोसलपुर राजा । जो कछु करहिं उनहि सब छाजा ॥ १४ ॥

sītahi cita'i kahī prabhu bātā. aha'i ku'āra mōra laghu bhrātā. 11.  
ga'i lachimana ripu bhaginī jānī. prabhu bilōki bōlē mṛdu bānī. 12.

sundari sunu mairiṁ unha kara dāsā. parādhīna nahim tōra supāsā. 13.  
prabhu samartha kōsalapura rājā. jō kachu karahim unahi saba chājā. 14.

Lord Ram glanced towards Sita (to indicate to Supernakha that he had a wife, and so could not accept her proposals). Then he answered her, saying, ‘My younger brother (Laxman) is a bachelor yet (as he has no wife who accompanies him in the forest; so if you do wish to marry, go and propose to him)<sup>1</sup>.

[Oh enchantress, listen. I am a married man, and have a loyal wife with me. How is it possible, then, that I can become your companion. No, it isn’t possible under any condition; it would be totally unrighteous and unethical to even imagine of this evil thought. Look, you will never succeed in seducing me, take it for granted. However, if you still persist, I give you an option—my younger brother has not brought his wife along, and you can try your seductive tricks on him if you manage to succeed. So go to him.]’ (11)

Then she went to Laxman, who recognized her to be the sister of their enemy (Ravana). He glanced at Lord Ram (to get a hint of what the Lord wants), and then said to her sweetly, (12) ---

---‘Oh beautiful and enchanting lady! Look, I am a mere servant or an attendant of him (i.e. of Lord Ram)<sup>2</sup>. Since I am not independent, you will not feel comfort that you expect from my company (as a servant or an attendant has to do what his Lord wills, and his time and energy is occupied in serving his Lord). (13)

Lord Ram is the king of Ayodhya and is all-able. Whatever he does is well suited to him. [So you would do well to become the Lord’s companion as he is a king, and you will have greater pleasures and comforts like a queen enjoys if you keep his company as compared to me who is not free but bound by my Lord’s commands.] (14)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word Lord Ram used for his younger brother Laxman is “ku’āra”; it means a boy, a young man, a prince; it also means one who is unmarried.

It is remarkable that Lord Ram has called Laxman a ‘Kumar (ku’āra)’. Of course he was a young prince and was like the Lord’s son\*, and of course he was indeed a young boy. But was he ‘unmarried’? Yes of course; from the practical point of view Laxman was indeed leading a life of a bachelor, the life of a ‘Kumar (ku’āra)’, during the fourteen years that he spent with Lord Ram in the forest, though he was married and a wife named Urmila that he left behind at Ayodhya at the time of accompanying Lord Ram and Sita to the forest. By leading a life of strict celibacy for fourteen long years Laxman had made a great personal sacrifice to serve his beloved Lord Ram and look after the Lord’s personal safety, needs and comforts in the forest like a faithful follower and a loyal servant is expected to do; it was also the advice given by Laxman’s mother to him#. It was a sort of severe Tapa (penance and austerity) that Laxman did, and this Tapa bestowed upon him the natural powers that come to a person who does Tapa. To wit, by the virtue of this ‘Tapa’, i.e. observance of strict vows of celibacy, both physical and mental, Laxman acquired special mystical powers of stupendous proportions that enabled him to easily overcome all the formidable hurdles and the fiercest of enemies that he and Lord Ram had to face in the forest.

In all sooth therefore, Lord Ram wasn’t wrong when he called his younger brother a ‘Kumar (ku’āra)’. It was in fact an honour that the Lord granted to his

younger brother; it was an acknowledgement on the part of the Lord of the sacrifices that Laxman had made for his sake, and for the cause of the gods.

\*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75.

# Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 75 along with Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

The situation is simple and uncomplicated. There are two princes and one lady in that lonely place in the depth of the forest, and no other soul is seen anywhere around. When Supernakha approached Lord Ram disguised as a young virgin, it is but common sense that Lord Ram immediately knew that there was something wrong and suspicious as no ordinary woman would be found in the middle of an un-inhabited forest which was infested with fierce demons and wild animals. Hence, the presence of a lonely woman, who could move freely and fearlessly in a horrifying forest merely in search of a mate, itself was something exceptionally impossible to believe and incongruous enough to raise a grave suspicion about her true identity and real intentions.

Another reason why Lord Ram could instantly realize that there was something gravely wrong with this lady is that Sita was with him, and still Supernakha proposed to him—something that no sensible woman, who is a stranger, would do in the presence of another woman of the household. Besides this, no formal introductions were made by Supernakha and no time was given by her for some kind of close acquaintance to develop with the inhabitants of the hermitage before she could have gathered courage to propose; she just came in uninvited and bluntly said ‘I want to make love to you’. It is absolute nonsense and uncivilized to do so. So surely Lord Ram knew that this lady was great imposter out to cheat and trap him.

So the Lord looked towards Sita to indicate to Supernakha that he is ‘not available as he has a wife with him’. But obviously Laxman had no companion—so she was free to propose to him.

Does this mean that Lord Ram was testing his brother’s character? No, no; it is not that at all. The Lord knew that Laxman had an immaculate character; the Lord was only trying to tease Supernakha and make her get angry so that the Lord’s divine mission of eliminating the cruel demons could be started. And as the things developed, everything went according to the Lord’s planning, for soon Supernakha became furious and the Lord asked Laxman to cut off her nose and ears to punish her for her impertinent behaviour when she threatened to kill and eat Sita. This was the spark that ignited the fire that reduced to ashes the scourge of the demon race.

<sup>2</sup>In verse no. 11 Lord Ram has glanced at Sita to convey a silent message that he has a wife with him. Now, in verse no. 12 Laxman glanced at Lord Ram with the same intent to tell Supernakha in verse no. 13 that he is not a free man himself as he is a servant of the Lord. If Lord Ram is engaged to Sita and therefore cannot entertain Supernakha, Laxman says that he too is engaged as an attendant to serve his Lord Ram, and hence he too is not free to entertain her.]

सेवक सुख चह मान भिखारी । व्यसनी धन सुभ गति बिभिचारी ॥ १५ ॥

लोभी जसु चह चार गुमानी । नभ दुहि दूध चहत ए प्रानी ॥ १६ ॥

sēvaka sukha caha māna bhikhārī. byasanī dhana subha gati bibhicārī. 15.  
lōbhī jasu caha cāra gumānī. nabha duhi dūdha cahata ē prānī. 16.

[Laxman supported his contention that he is not a free man to do whatever he wishes to do because he is like a servant of Lord Ram, and a servant is never free, by citing some examples of how certain things are impossible under certain situations. He cited the following examples to dissuade Supernakha from her pursuit—]

A servant who desires comfort and happiness, or a beggar who expects honour and respect, or a person addicted to some sort of vice (such as gambling, drugs, wine, women etc.) wishing to accumulate wealth, or a promiscuous and lascivious man wanting a good fate for himself (i.e. a good name and honour after death) [15], or a greedy man hoping to have a good name and fame, or a messenger who is egoist and haughty wishing to be successful in his mission, or a doubtful man who is uncertain of what he does and aims for hoping to achieve any of the four celebrated fruits in life<sup>1</sup>—well, all such persons are so utterly stupid that they expect to get milk by milking the sky [16]<sup>2</sup>! [Therefore, you, Supernakha, should abandon any hope of getting a positive response from me.]’ (15-16)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The four best fruits or rewards that one gets for success in life are the following: (i) Artha = financial well-being; (ii) Dharma = fame got by being righteous and noble; (iii) Kaam = fulfillment of all worldly desires; and (iv) Moksha = spiritual welfare by way of salvation and emancipation of the soul.

<sup>2</sup>Laxman tries to convince Supernakha that she should not expect any happiness even if he accepts her proposal because he is servant of Lord Ram, and anyone who serves another should not expect the joy and pleasures that comes with freedom. If a person who is under an obligation to serve someone expects joy and happiness that comes to a free man then he is an outright fool like the case of the persons listed in these two verses.

To wit, it is impossible for a diligent servant to have personal comfort and pleasure as he is always on his toes to carry out the orders of his master. He does not know when the master would summon him and order him with a task to be done.

Similarly, a man who has stretched out his hand before someone to beg for something should never expect to have any respect for himself; by begging he is deemed to have forfeited his dignity and self-respect.

A man addicted to some bad habit such as gambling, betting, drugs, wine and women would spend all his money in the pursuit of his vices; he would even pawn his family heirlooms to satisfy his addiction. This makes it impossible for him to accumulate any wealth.

A man coveting other persons’ wives and women can never hope to live in peace in this world, and when he dies his soul never rests in peace either; his conscience pricks him all through his life; he is reviled while alive, and he is condemned even after death.

A greedy and covetous person is never at peace, and this nature of his makes him impulsively do things that bring ill-fame and dishonour to him.

A messenger must be calm and poised and cool-headed, for if he is haughty and arrogant and loses his self-restraint he is certain to ruin the chances of attaining success in the mission for which he has been sent by his lord as an emissary.



A person who is not resolute and determined and focused on the task at hand, a person who is not certain of the correctness of the path he has chosen for himself, a person who does not even know the goal he is expected to reach, and a person who is not confident in his steps, and dithers and demurs every now and then—such persons never attain success in any enterprise.

Verily indeed, they are vainly trying to draw milk from the sky. To wit, they are merely day-dreaming and building castles in the sky, hoping for things that can never materialize.]

पुनि फिरि राम निकट सो आई । प्रभु लछिमन पहिं बहुरि पठाई ॥ १७.  
लछिमन कहा तोहि सो बरई । जो तृन तोरि लाज परिहरई ॥ १८ ॥

puni phiri rāma nikṭa sō ā'ī. prabhu lachimana pahim bahuri paṭhā'ī. 17.  
lachimana kahā tōhi sō barā'ī. jō tṛna tōri lāja parihara'ī. 18.

At being thus rebuffed by Laxman, she (Supernakha) came back to Lord Ram. The Lord sent her to Laxman once again<sup>1</sup>. (17)

Laxman then sternly rebuked her, saying that only a person who has no shame, dignity and self-respect worth the name in him would ever think of marrying her. (18)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Supernakha was so maddened by passions that she lost all sense of self-respect and modesty. She ran to and fro between the two brothers like a shuttle-cock. She was rebuked by Lord Ram as well as by Laxman.]

तब खिसिआनि राम पहिं गई । रूप भयंकर प्रगटत भई ॥ १९ ॥  
सीतहि सभय देखि रघुराई । कहा अनुज सन सयन बुझाई ॥ २० ॥

taba khisi'āni rāma pahim ga'ī. rūpa bhayaṅkara pragaṭata bha'ī. 19.  
sītahi sabhaya dēkhi raghurā'ī. kahā anuja sana sayana bujhā'ī. 20.

Then (when Laxman finally rebuked and insulted her by saying that only a shameless man would think of marrying her), she became extremely peeved and frustrated. Fretting and fuming in anger, she resumed her original fearful form of an abhorable demoness and went once again to Lord Ram. (19)

As Supernakha approached the Lord of Raghus (Lord Ram; raghurā'ī) menacingly, the Lord observed that Sita was very terrified. So he made a sign to his younger brother (Laxman) with a subtle movement of his eyes<sup>1</sup>. (20)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>By now Supernakha has shown her true form—a fierce demoness with a huge body and sharp pointed nails. She lunged fearfully at Lord Ram and Sita in order to attack them. This scared Sita out of her wits. Then Lord Ram glanced at Laxman and winked at him to signal to him to punish the demoness. And how did Laxman punish Supernakha? This is narrated in Doha no. 17 herein below.

The Lord had to first prove to Sita and the world that the fine lady whom the Lord would punish is not an ordinary woman but a demoness. So he made her go to and fro between himself and Laxman so she gets mad with anger, and this would help reveal her true identity—that of a fierce and cruel demoness. Now when the punishment would be carried out, no one would raise a finger against Lord Ram or Laxman for having harmed an ordinary human lady.

Supernakha was now attacking Lord Ram and Sita with a vengeance, and surely in this situation it became necessary for Lord Ram to act in self defense. If he did not do anything, Supernakha would have certainly injured Sita with her dagger-like nails.]

दो०. लछिमन अति लाघवँ सो नाक कान बिनु कीन्हि ।  
ताके कर रावन कहँ मनौ चुनौती दीन्हि ॥ १७ ॥

dōhā.

lachimana ati lāghavam̐ sō nāka kāna binu kīnhi.  
tākē kara rāvana kham̐ manau cunautī dīnhi. 17.

Laxman, on getting a hint from Lord Ram, swiftly cut-off the ears and nose of Supernakha, and by this singular act he (as well as Lord Ram) had virtually challenged Ravana<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 17)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Supernakha's deformation was an open challenge thrown to the demon king Ravana, who also happened to be her brother, to come and settle scores with Lord Ram and Laxman if he dares to do so. This event of cutting of Supernakha's nose and ears laid the foundation of the war that would ultimately lead to the slaying of Ravana and elimination of the cruel demons for which Lord Vishnu had to come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to fulfill his promise made to the Gods and Mother Earth.

The Lord had to find an excuse using which he would be able to complete his mission on earth, and Supernakha unwittingly provided this excuse to the Lord.

Every action of the Lord God is for the long-term good of a living being though in the beginning it looks very bad for him. Lord Ram wished to pull Supernakha back from her evil ways of being excessively promiscuous and highly morally degraded as she has accepted herself that she went around the world searching and testing for men who would fit to be her husband. It goes without saying it in clear terms that she must have established conjugal relationships with countless males in order to ascertain whether they suited her or not. It is obviously highly immoral and shameful to do so, but she did it. So the Lord got her deformed so that now onwards no male would be attracted to her, and she would be forced to abandon her immoral life, and instead, lead a life of restraint and abstinence.

There is an ancient text called 'Garga Sanhita' in which a detailed story of Supernakha is narrated. It is said here that since Lord Ram cannot refuse to fulfill the desire of anyone who comes to him seeking anything, he was obliged to live up to his own vows and reputation on this count. Though the Lord had to refuse Supernakha's proposals during this particular point of time, but he had to recompense her for it. So the Lord blessed her that in his next incarnation as Lord Krishna during the next Yuga (era) known as Dwapar, he would oblige her. It is believed that Supernakha became

the celebrated Kubja, the old hunchback, whom Lord Krishna blessed during his manifestation.

Supernakha's episode has also been narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-20. The interesting point in this narration is that it clarifies why Lord Ram had ordered Laxman to cut the ears and nose of this demoness. It was because Supernakha, having failed to lure Lord Ram and Laxman into falling in the trap laid by her, had lunged at Sita to take revenge by killing her, at which Lord Ram had ordered Laxman to chop-off her nose and ears as a punishment (verse nos. 18-20).]

चौ०. नाक कान बिनु भइ बिकरारा । जनु स्रव सैल गेरु कै धारा ॥ १ ॥

खर दूषन पहिं गइ बिलपाता । धिग धिग तव पौरुष बल भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

nāka kāna binu bha'i bikarārā. janu srava saila gēru kai dhārā. 1.

khara dūṣana pahim̐ ga'i bilapātā. dhiga dhiga tava pauruṣa bala bhrātā. 2.

With her nose and ears chopped-off, she looked most fearsome and horrifying, and blood poured out from her gashed body like thick streams of deep ochre colour gushing out from the crevices of a huge mountain. (1)

Weeping and lamenting woefully, she rushed to Khar and Dushan (her protectors and cousin brothers), cursing and swearing at them, 'Woe to you both the brothers; shame betide to your manhood and valour; fie upon you.' (2)

तेहिं पूछा सब कहेसि बुझाई । जातुधान सुनि सेन बनाई ॥ ३ ॥

धाए निसिचर निकर बरूथा । जनु सपच्छ कज्जल गिरि जूथा ॥ ४ ॥

नाना बाहन नानाकारा । नानायुध धर घोर अपारा ॥ ५ ॥

सूपनखा आगें करि लीनी । असुभ रूप श्रुति नासा हीनी ॥ ६ ॥

tēhim̐ pūchā saba kahēsi bujhā'ī. jātudhāna suni sēna banā'ī. 3.

dhā'e nīsicara nikara barūthā. janu sapaccha kajjala giri jūthā. 4.

nānā bāhana nānākārā. nānāyudha dhara ghōra apārā. 5.

sūpanakhā āgēm̐ kari līnī. asubha rūpa śruti nāsā hīnī. 6.

They were stunned when they saw the horrible condition of their sister. Upon enquiry she narrated the whole episode to them and explained the cause of her misery.

When they (Khar and Dushan) heard everything, they immediately summoned an army (of demons, to seek revenge). (3)

A huge army of fierce demons swarmed around in multiple groups and launched a ferocious and vicious attack. They appeared like huge winged mountains of dark soot covering the entire length and breadth of the sky, from one end to the other of the horizon. [The demon army covered the whole sky and moved forth rapidly like foreboding dark clouds that appear before a severe thunder-storm.] (4)

The demons rode different types of vehicles, and they had various shapes and sizes. They held multiple types of weapons, were countless in numbers, and were exceedingly fierce and horrifying. (5)

They kept Supernakha in the vanguard of the attacking force, and this portended an evil omen for them as she had an inauspicious form without a nose and ears<sup>1</sup>. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Supernakha was in the front of the attacking demon forces as she wanted to tell Lord Ram and Laxman that she has now come to settle a score with them quickly. She was extremely angry and burning with rage; she wished to lead from the front to show the two brothers who she actually was, to show them that they had played with fire while rebuking and deforming her, and that now they would have to pay a heavy price for their act. By being in the front she wished to signal that it was she who has come to seek revenge for her insult and deformation, and that she was a powerful lady who had a mighty army at her command.

But in the process something else was not taken into account by the mad demons who were destined to doom by providence—and it was that Supernakha's deformed body was an evil sign before the commencement of battle. Everyone looks for a good omen before starting on a mission, and in this case unfortunately the sign was bad. Had the demons been wise and left with any common sense they would have not allowed her to be in the front of the army as she had had an evil and ominous form with blood gushing out of her wounds and with her ears and nose cut-off. This form is never considered auspicious and good omen for any enterprise, let alone a decisive battle where death and destruction stares in the face.

In the final analysis, perhaps this evil form of Supernakha decided the course of the battle between the demons and Lord Ram which was soon to follow—as this evil omen had already decided the fate, which was defeat and complete extermination of those who willingly and voluntarily invited death by foolishly holding this evil sign of Supernakha's inauspicious form as an insignia, a mascot or a coat-of-arm of the army.

Indeed, Supernakha played a pivotal role in the destruction of the demon race as it was she whose lustful actions had sowed the seed that culminated in the epic War of Lanka that led to the killing of Ravana.

One cannot fail to observe here that after all it was a woman's secret and suppressed desire for sensual gratification that had burst out into the open in the form of a volcanic eruption symbolized by the battle that would ensue now between Lord Ram and the demons Khar and Dushan, and later on transform into a no-holds barred war that resulted in the annihilation of her own family.]

चौ०. नाक कान बिनु भइ बिकरारा । जनु स्रव सैल गेरु कै धारा ॥ १ ॥

खर दूषन पहिं गइ बिलपाता । धिग धिग तव पौरुष बल भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāka kāna binu bha'i bikarārā. janu srava saila gēru kai dhārā. 1.

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With her nose and ears chopped-off, she looked most fearsome and horrifying, and blood poured out from her gashed body like thick streams of deep ochre colour gushing out from the crevices of a huge mountain. (1)

Weeping and lamenting woefully, she rushed to Khar and Dushan (her protectors and cousin brothers), cursing and swearing at them, ‘Woe to you both the brothers; shame betide to your manhood and valour; fie upon you.’<sup>1</sup> (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The episode describing how Supernakha incited Khar and Dushan to confront Lord Ram in order to avenge the cutting off her nose and ears by the Lord, and the subsequent no-holds-barred battle between the demon army led by the two demons commanders and Lord Ram that culminated in the slaying of these two great demon warriors who guarded the frontiers of the demon kingdom of Lanka and were close lieutenants of Ravana, the king of demons, has also been narrated in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 21-35.]

तेहिं पूछा सब कहेसि बुझाई । जातुधान सुनि सेन बनाई ॥ ३ ॥  
 धाए निसिचर निकर बरूथा । जनु सपच्छ कज्जल गिरि जूथा ॥ ४ ॥  
 नाना बाहन नानाकारा । नानायुध धर घोर अपारा ॥ ५ ॥  
 सूपनखा आगें करि लीनी । असुभ रूप श्रुति नासा हीनी ॥ ६ ॥

tēhiṁ pūchā saba kahēsi bujhāī. jātudhāna suni sēna banāī. 3.  
 dhāē nīsicara nikara barūthā. janu sapaccha kajjala giri jūthā. 4.  
 nānā bāhana nānākārā. nānāyudha dhara ghōra apārā. 5.  
 sūpanakhā āgēm kari līnī. asubha rūpa śruti nāsā hīnī. 6.

They were stunned when they saw the horrible condition of their sister. Upon enquiry she narrated the whole episode to them and explained the cause of her misery.

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[Note—<sup>1</sup>Supernakha was in the front of the attacking demon forces as she wanted to tell Lord Ram and Laxman that she has now come to settle a score with them quickly. She was extremely angry and burning with rage; she wished to lead from the front to

show the two brothers who she actually was, to show them that they had played with fire while rebuking and deforming her, and that now they would have to pay a heavy price for their act. By being in the front she wished to signal that it was she who has come to seek revenge for her insult and deformation, and that she was a powerful lady who had a mighty army at her command.

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असगुन अमित होहिं भयकारी । गनहिं न मृत्यु बिबस सब झारी ॥ ७ ॥  
 गर्जहिं तर्जहिं गगन उड़ाहीं । देखि कटकु भट अति हरषाहीं ॥ ८ ॥  
 कोउ कह जिअत धरहु द्वौ भाई । धरि मारहु तिय लेहु छड़ाई ॥ ९ ॥

asaguna amita hōhiṁ bhayakārī. ganahim na mṛtyu bibasa saba jhārī. 7.  
 garjahim tarjahim gagana urāhīm. dēkhi kaṭaku bhaṭa ati haraṣāhīm. 8.  
 kō'u kaha ji'ata dharahu dvau bhāī. dhari mārahu tiya lēhu chaṛāī. 9.

Manifold bad omens appeared then, and they were horrifying and pretenders of doom. But the demon hordes were so overwhelmed by the call of destiny that destined their death that they paid no heed to any sign that should normally have warned them of their impending doom. (7)

They yelled and jumped madly as they moved swiftly across the sky (to attack Lord Ram). When one group of demons saw the others groups of demons in an excited mood, they too became exhilarated (as if they were going on a picnic to celebrate some great event)<sup>1</sup>. (8)

Some of them instigated others by commanding that they must catch the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) alive, and then snatch their lady (Sita) after killing them both<sup>2</sup>. (9)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The demons were so confident of themselves and their might that they had no fear of anything. They thought that it would be literally a cake-walk for them to vanquish Lord Ram and Laxman and snatch Sita from them. They did not realize that they were walking into their own graves!

<sup>2</sup>They wanted to kill their enemies, which in this case were Lord Ram and Laxman, as a prudent military strategy because if an enemy is allowed to escape or is spared death then there were great possibilities that he would create some sort of mischief for the conqueror at a later date.

We have proof of this in the story of the Ramayan itself. Lord Ram had spared Marich from death at the time of protection of the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. The Lord had used a headless arrow to hit Marich, and this arrow flung him to a remote island near Lanka where Marich lived in fear of the Lord. Later on Marich was forced by Ravana to become a deer with a golden hide in order to abduct Sita. Had Lord Ram slayed Marich at that time then perhaps the event that led to the abduction of Sita by Ravana would have been avoided.]

धूरि पूरि नभ मंडल रहा । राम बोलाइ अनुज सन कहा ॥ १० ॥  
लै जानकिहि जाहु गिरि कंदर । आवा निसिचर कटकु भयंकर ॥ ११ ॥  
रहेहु सजग सुनि प्रभु कै बानी । चले सहित श्री सर धनु पानी ॥ १२ ॥

dhūri pūri nabha maṇḍala rahā. rāma bōlā'i anuja sana kahā. 10.  
lai jānakihi jāhu giri kandara. āvā nisicara kaṭaku bhayaṅkara. 11.  
rahēhu sajaga suni prabhu kai bānī. calē sahita śrī sara dhanu pānī. 12.

The whole firmament was filled with dust due to the advancing demon army. [It was like the case of a severe thunder-storm that is usually preceded by a blinding dust-storm in the dry plains that see the first rain of the season.]

Lord Ram called his brother (Laxman) and said to him—(10)

‘Brother, take Janki (Sita) along and go inside the cave of the mountain. Look, a fierce demon army is approaching rapidly<sup>1</sup>. (11)

Be alert and careful.’

Hearing the words (instructions) of the Lord, he (Laxman) went away with Sita as directed; he held his bow and arrow at the ready (to meet any eventuality)<sup>2</sup>. (12)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram knew that the battle that was to happen now would be spine-chilling, and it would be so horrifying and bloody that Sita would die of terror if she had to witness it. Besides this, it would be an added burden upon him during the thick of battle if his attention was diverted for the safety of Sita; he would not be able to focus entirely on the enemy if Sita was around. Further, seeing her, the demons would create more problems for him than imagined. So the Lord decided that it was prudent to keep Sita out of sight. And there was no safer place to hide than a cave.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Ram had sent Laxman with Sita in order to give her protection in case some demon got the wind where she is kept. Secondly, since Laxman was the one who had cut-off the nose and ears of Supernakha, the Lord wished to remove him from sight so as to avoid the chances of his being singled out by the vicious and ferocious demons for direct attack. In his absence the chances were that the demons would be confused as to who was the real culprit who had deformed Supernakha, and the confusion and disorder in their ranks about the proper target to attack would give Lord Ram the much needed time to finish them off before they gather their wits together.]

देखि राम रिपुदल चलि आवा । बिहसि कठिन कोदंड चढ़ावा ॥ १३ ॥

dēkhi rāma ripudala cali āvā. bihasi kaṭhina kōdaṇḍa carhāvā. 13.

Now, when Lord Ram observed that the demon horde has finally arrived, the Lord smiled<sup>1</sup> and raised his most formidable and powerful bow, stringing it to make it ready for attack (i.e. to shoot arrows at the attacking enemy). (13)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Why did Lord Ram smile? He wondered as to how the luck has favoured him, and how Providence plays its game. The Lord's mission was to eliminate the cruel demons, and he had come all the way from heaven for this purpose. He had travelled barefoot from his capital at Ayodhya to the distant lands of the Dandakarnya forest. It would have been very cumbersome and difficult and impractical to find the demons who were either scattered around the vast realm of the earth or lived in their fortified city of Lanka across the ocean. Luck so favoured the Lord that now he would not have to take the trouble of going to them to kill them, for they have come on their own to jump into the pit of a raging fire which destiny had lit for them in the form of battles with the Lord.

Providence is indeed so powerful a force that it can bring together at the same spot elements that under ordinary circumstances are poles apart, elements that can never ever be expected to interact begin to have a close encounter under the compelling influences of Providence.

Another reason for the Lord smiling is that he was amused as to how a single woman could be the cause of a huge calamity.]

छं०. कोदंड कठिन चढ़ाई सिर जट जूट बाँधत सोह य्यों । १ ।

मरकत सयल पर लरत दामिनि कोटि सों जुग भुजग ज्यों ॥ २ ॥

कटि कसि निषंग बिसाल भुज गहि चाप बिसिख सुधारि कै । ३ ।

चितवत मनहुँ मृगराज प्रभु गजराज घटा निहारि कै ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kōdaṇḍa kaṭhina carhā'i sira jaṭa jūṭa bāmdhata sōha kyōm̐. 1.

marakata sayala para larata dāmini kōṭi sōm̐ juga bhujaga jyōm̐. 2.

kaṭi kasi niṣaṅga bisāla bhuja gahi cāpa bisikha sudhāri kai. 3.

citavata manahum̐ mṛgarāja prabhu gajarāja ghaṭā nihāri kai. 4.



When Lord Ram stringed his bow to make it ready and lifted his arms to tie his long matted hairs into a tight tuft on his head, it seemed that two serpents are engaged in a duel with countless streaks of lightening emanating from the top of a mountain of emerald<sup>1</sup>. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

The Lord girded up his quiver at his waist, held his formidable bow in his long arms, and sharpened his arrows as he gazed steadily at his enemy (the attacking army of the demons) as if a lion (“mṛgarāja”; the lord of the animals) watches at a huge horde of wild elephants (gajarāja) advancing towards it like a bank of dark clouds (ghaṭā)<sup>2</sup>. (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In this metaphor, the ‘two serpents’ are represented by the Lord’s two arms; the ‘mountain of emerald’ is the Lord’s dark-complexioned radiant body; the ‘summit’ is his head; and the ‘countless streaks of lightening’ represent the dazzle of the stringed bow and the sharpened arrows that reflected sunlight. As the Lord’s arms are lifted to tackle the strands of hairs and tie them tightly on the head into a tuft, the bow and the arrow in the Lord’s hands swung and swayed in all directions, producing streaks of light that gave an impression that two serpents were combating with each other even as streaks of lightening strike at them atop a mountain of emerald.

<sup>2</sup>The lion is not afraid of the elephant; when an elephant approaches a lion menacingly, the latter never runs away out of fear, but cleverly maneuvers its moves so as to overcome even a wild and mad elephant. The lion would swiftly jump on the back of its victim and dig its sharp teeth and claws into the head and the back of the neck of the victim, without giving the elephant a chance to understand what is happening, then gnawing and biting at its flesh and tearing out its nerves till it is dead.

In this metaphor, Lord Ram is compared to the fearless lion that is ready to pounce upon his enemy, the elephant; and the demon army is compared to the huge horde of wild elephants that is running wildly towards the lion in order to crush it to death.

Since the demons are approaching the Lord via the path of the sky they are compared to the dark clouds rolling up the horizon in a menacing manner.]

सो०. आइ गए बगमेल धरहु धरहु धावत सुभट ।

जथा बिलोकि अकेल बाल रबिहि घेरत दनुज ॥ १८ ॥

sōraṭhā.

ā'i ga'ē bagamēla dharahu dharahu dhāvata subhaṭa.  
jathā bilōki akēla bāla rabihi ghērata danuja. 18.

Demon warriors who were colossal in size and most terrifying in their demeanours came rushing at the Lord, shouting ‘catch him; catch him’. The sight resembled the event when fierce demons close in on the rising sun to grab it, finding it alone and still of a tender age (a young sun which is yet not powerful or hot enough to burn the demons by its sheering heat)<sup>1</sup>. (Sortha no. 18)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The demons, who are called ‘Nishachar’, meaning nocturnal creatures, for they love darkness as well as evil that it symbolizes, have a natural aversion to

sunlight. So as soon as they see the sun rising in the horizon they try to grab it, but they can't go too close to the sun because though it is still young and cool it is still hot enough to scorch them as soon as they come too close to it. So though the demons lunge at the rising sun to destroy it in its nascent stage but they fail in their attempt and recoil when they face the sun's heat.

In the present case as applied to Lord Ram and the attacking army of demons, Lord Ram is the 'young sun' as he is alone and young in age, while the enemy is like the 'demons who try to destroy the rising sun' but recoil in horror as soon as they come too close to it due to the sun's natural heat that goes on increasing with the passage of every moment.

According to ancient mythological accounts, there is a story attached to this metaphor. It is narrated in an ancient text called 'Hemadri' as well as in the 'Vishnu Puran', Part 2, Section 8, verse nos. 50-57. Briefly it is as follows:-

A great demon race is called 'Mandeha'; they are supposed to be twenty-thousand in numbers. These demons had a curse-cum-blessing from the creator Brahma that they would have to die everyday though their bodies would remain imperishable. It's such a paradoxical curse indeed, resulting in a situation whereby these demons die and take birth daily, and in an attempt to escape death they try to kill the sun so that they won't have to die.

Therefore the story goes that these demons called Mandeha attacked the sun when it rose in the morning so that they won't have to die at the end of the day and suffer the agony of death and taking a birth again the next day. Now it so happened that Brahmins used to offer oblations to the rising sun in the morning while chanting the famed Gayatri Mantra, which is a spiritual formula specially formulated for worshipping the sun, and it is one of the most powerful Mantras with intense cosmic energy encrypted in its words. When water was sprinkled at the sun while muttering this Mantra, its drops became so highly charged with energy that they became like hot arrows, and when they fell on the attacking demons who surrounded the infant sun it resulted in these demons getting scorched and scalded as if boiling water was poured on them. The rising sun thus remained unharmed. But due to Brahma's blessing that their bodies won't die, these demons were revived once again before the end of the day. So in the evening they attacked the sun once again to ensure that it does not rise in the next morning.

This mythological story is cited here to describe the scene when Lord Ram stood surrounded by fierce demons who wanted to kill him but could not venture close enough due to the Lord's inherent dynamism and spiritual energy which repelled them like the heat of the sun and the spiritual powers of the Gayatri Mantra.]

चौ०. प्रभु बिलोकि सर सकहिं न डारी । थकित भई रजनीचर धारी ॥ १ ॥  
 सचिव बोलि बोले खर दूषन । यह कोउ नृपबालक नर भूषन ॥ २ ॥  
 नाग असुर सुर नर मुनि जेते । देखे जिते हते हम केते ॥ ३ ॥  
 हम भरि जन्म सुनहु सब भाई । देखी नहिं असि सुंदरताई ॥ ४ ॥  
 जद्यपि भगिनी कीन्हि कुरूपा । बध लायक नहिं पुरुष अनूपा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu bilōki sara sakahirṁ na ḍārī. thakita bha'ī rajanīcara dhārī. 1.  
 saciva bōli bōlē khara dūṣana. yaha kō'u nṛpabālaka nara bhūṣana. 2.  
 nāga asura sura nara muni jētē. dēkhē jitē hatē hama kētē. 3.  
 hama bhari janma sunahu saba bhā'ī. dēkhī nahirṁ asi sundaratā'ī. 4.  
 jadyapi bhaginī kīnhi kurūpā. badha lāyaka nahirṁ puruṣa anūpā. 5.

When the demon army saw the Lord (Ram) they were so much stunned (by the Lord's majesty, charm, beauty and the aura of divinity that emanated from him) that they could not shoot even a single arrow at him, and they developed a cold feet as soon as they came near the Lord.

[To wit, Khar and Dushan, the commanders of the demon army, as well as their demon soldiers were absolutely stumped and awe-struck at the magnificent sight of the Lord that charmed them to such an extent that they stood as if paralysed on their path, and gazed at the Lord in stunned amazement.] (1)

Khar and Dushan summoned their chief minister and confided in him about their amazement, 'He (Lord Ram) appears to be a princely jewel in the entire human race.

[To wit, our opponent, i.e. Lord Ram, does not seem to be an ordinary person; we are of the view that this gentleman is the best human we have ever seen or met in our whole lives. Surely he is some exceptional person, for just look at his magnetic personality and divine aura the like of which we have never ever encountered in our lives. He is surely someone who not deserve the rough treatment we are about to hand out to him. We have developed a tender feeling for him.] (2)

We have seen, we have vanquished and we have killed countless creatures till now, such as the Naags (serpents who rule the subterranean world), the Asurs (demons who dared to oppose us), the Surs (the gods), the Nars (human beings), and Munis (sages and hermits), --- (3)

---But oh brothers, listen. We must admit that we have never ever seen such grandness of majesty and such astounding beauty throughout our lives; never indeed since our births have we ever seen such a magnificent sight as we behold now! (4)

We are of the view that though it is true that he (Lord Ram) has deformed our sister (Supernakha) but he is surely not worthy of dying as he is indeed peerless.

[To wit, we are not able to suppress the tender feeling that has aroused in our hearts for this prince and become so heartless as to kill him cruelly. Though it is true that we are demons yet we too have at least some rudimentary form of sentimental feeling of tenderness present in our hearts. We feel hesitant to be rough and cruel towards this prince. One thing more—now we see why our sister fell for this prince! When he has charmed us so much then it is but natural that he must have enthralled our sister and captivated her imagination manifold times more as she is a woman after all. After all, it was our sister who had approached this prince and tried to impose her will on him, which may have annoyed him so much that he was provoked to deform her as punishment. We know that our sister has an immoral and promiscuous nature, and so the blame for this sorry affair also has to be shared by her. We are of the view that this prince could be excused if he agrees to pay some form of compensation to us for disfiguring our sister. So let us see what happens before deciding further what has to be done.] (5)

देहु तुरत निज नारि दुराई । जीअत भवन जाहु द्वौ भाई ॥ ६ ॥  
मोर कहा तुम्ह ताहि सुनावहु । तासु बचन सुनि आतुर आवहु ॥ ७ ॥

dēhu turata nija nāri durā'ī. jī'ata bhavana jāhu dvau bhā'ī. 6.  
mōra kahā tumha tāhi sunāvahu. tāsu bacana suni ātura āvahu. 7.

So therefore, if he gives us his woman (i.e. Sita, Lord Ram's wife), whom he has hidden from us somewhere, then we shall let the two brothers go back alive to their place (from where they came to this forest).

[To wit, if this prince, i.e. Lord Ram, is ready to pay the penalty for disfiguring our sister then we can let the two brothers off without any harm. And this penalty is this: they have to surrender the lady who accompanies them, and whom they have hidden somewhere from us because they feared that we would immediately grab her even before they could try to protect her. This shows that they are sore affright of our might, for as soon as they harmed our sister they realized their mistake and guessed rightly that she would go back and call for revenge, in which case her companions are sure to attack with full force those who had harmed her. So the elder prince, i.e. Lord Ram, was clever enough to decide to send the main culprit, his younger brother Laxman who had actually cut-off our sister's nose and ears, and the lady, i.e. Sita, into hiding so as to get them out of harm's way and protect them from immediate retribution should we arrive to seek revenge. Well, well; it is now clear that they are on the defensive and on the back-foot, for otherwise they wouldn't have hidden their woman, and neither would have the main culprit who had deformed our sister, i.e. the younger prince (Laxman) gone into hiding. Hence, if the two brothers agree to our condition then we shall not harm them and let them go back to their homes. And what is deal: They must give us the lady who accompanies them to settle this matter amicably.] (6)

[Khar and Dushan instructed their ministers as follows—] So therefore, go to him (Lord Ram) and convey our message. Then listen to what he has to say, and come back to us quickly. (7)

दूतन्ह कहा राम सन जाई । सुनत राम बोले मुसुकाई ॥ ८ ॥  
हम छत्री मृगया बन करहीं । तुम्ह से खल मृग खोजत फिरहीं ॥ ९ ॥  
रिपु बलवंत देखि नहिं डरहीं । एक बार कालहु सन लरहीं ॥ १० ॥  
जद्यपि मनुज दनुज कुल घालक । मुनि पालक खल सालक बालक ॥ ११ ॥

dūtanha kahā rāma sana jā'ī. sunata rāma bōlē musukā'ī. 8.  
hama chatrī mṛgayā bana karahīm. tumha sē khala mṛga khōjata phirahīm. 9.  
ripu balavanta dēkhi nahīm ḍarahīm. ēka bāra kālahu sana larahīm. 10.  
jadyapi manuja danuja kula ghālaka. muni pālaka khala sālaka bālaka. 11.

The messengers immediately went to Lord Ram and conveyed the message of the demons to him. When the Lord heard it he smiled<sup>1</sup>, and replied, --- (8)

[<sup>1</sup>Why did the Lord ‘smile’? Lord Ram ‘smiled’ because the demons’ proposal was so absurd that no man of self-respect would ever agree to it. Besides that, the Lord ‘smiled’ that he would soon fulfill the wish of the demons, which was that they wanted to have Sita, because in a little while Ravana would come to abduct Sita and take her away to Lanka, and the Lord would allow him to do so; for the Lord fulfills the wishes of all, even his enemies! Further, there is one more reason for the Lord ‘smiling’: he was amused that these demons have themselves shown him the way by which the Lord could easily eliminate them and fulfill the promise he had made earlier to the Gods and Mother Earth. And this ‘way’ was to use Sita as a medium by which the Lord’s mission could be successfully accomplished. Perhaps this is why after this incident the Lord thought over the matter and decided to let Sita go with Ravana voluntarily—so that he could go to the citadel of the demons at Lanka and finish them off there itself before they find time and are able to gather their wits to spread all over the earth and escape him.]

--- ‘We are Kshatriyas (warriors) who roam in the forest to hunt wicked and cruel animals (or creatures) like you (the demons). (9)

We are not afraid at all that the enemy is mighty strong and powerful. In fact if Kaal (death itself personified) itself comes to us to challenge us we would gladly accept it and boldly face it in a battle. (10)

Though we are humans but you must note it that we are reputed to be destroyers of cruel and wicked creatures represented by the demon race; we are also protectors of hermits, sages and seers, and we find pleasure in tormenting and teasing wicked fellows like those children who would playfully puncture and cut small insects and worms to derive enjoyment from such acts.

[To wit, though we are young and tender to look at, but we are made of a sterner stuff than what you think of. We are not going to be so easily brow-beaten by you and your boastful bluster that you will kill us by the mere force of your numbers. Come, we accept your challenge for a duel.] (11)

जौं न होइ बल घर फिरि जाहू । समर बिमुख मैं हतउं न काहू ॥ १२ ॥  
 रन चढ़ि करिअ कपट चतुराई । रिपु पर कृपा परम कदराई ॥ १३ ॥  
 दूतन्ह जाइ तुरत सब कहेऊ । सुनि खर दूषन उर अति दहेऊ ॥ १४ ॥

jauṁ na hō'i bala ghara phiri jāhū. samara bimukha mair̥ṁ hata'um̃ na kāhū.  
 12.

rana caḍhi kari'a kapaṭa caturā'ī. ripu para kṛpā parama kadarā'ī. 13.  
 dūtanha jā'i turata saba kahē'ū. suni khara dūṣana ura ati dahē'ū. 14.

Look; if you do not have the courage (to fight with me) then go back home. I do not attack anyone who turns around and shows his back in the battle-field.

[To wit, I don't harm a coward. So if your lords, Khar and Dushan, are trying to make peace with me because they are afraid of dying in a battle with me, and to hide their fear they are pretending to be reasonable and avoid a confrontation by offering to strike a ridiculous bargain, that we give away our lady to our enemies if we wish to go back alive, then listen—I don't harm cowards. If you can't face me

then go back peacefully and without fear, for I am not going to shoot you in your back.] (12)

After launching an open war and challenging one's opponent for a duel, then trying wicked means to avoid confrontation and playing smart by pretending to be merciful on one's enemy or opponent, is nothing but high degree of cowardice and fearfulness.

[To wit, once your lords Khar and Dushan, who are known demons who lack any mercy and compassion in their hearts, launched an attack on us, why are they now worried about our going back home alive? Why can't they kill us if they can and then take our lady as a trophy of battle if they have the guts to do so instead of offering to make a deal with us that we voluntarily submit our lady to them for the fear of our own lives? Say, which warrior worth his salt and name would agree to such a funny and outright ridiculous proposal? So go to your lords and tell them to go back instead of their telling us to go back!] (13)

The messengers went back immediately and conveyed Lord Ram's message to the demons Khar and Dushan. The Lord's answer burnt their heart and set it afire.

[To wit, there was nothing more humiliating for the demons than the Lord's answer that implied that they were cowards and afraid to fight with him. This rebuke infuriated them no end, and it was like pouring oil in the fire of hate that was already smouldering in their hearts.] (14)

छं०. उर दहेउ कहेउ कि धरहु धाए बिकट भट रजनीचरा । १ ।  
सर चाप तोमर सक्ति सूल कृपान परिघ परसु धरा ॥ २ ॥  
प्रभु कीन्हि धनुष टकोर प्रथम कठोर घोर भयावहा । ३ ।  
भए बधिर ब्याकुल जातुधान न ग्यान तेहि अवसर रहा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ura dahē'u kahē'u ki dharahu dhā'ē bikaṭa bhaṭa rajanīcarā. 1.  
sara cāpa tōmara sakti sūla kṛpāna pariḡha parasu dharā. 2.  
prabhu kīnhi dhanuṣa ṭakōra prathama kaṭhōra ghōra bhayāvahā. 3.  
bha'ē badhira byākula jātudhāna na gyāna tēhi avasara rahā. 4.

[When the emissaries came back and conveyed to the demons Khar and Dushan the stern reply that Lord Ram had given to their message, they were extremely infuriated as never in their lives had they ever been subjected to such a scalding rebuke.]

Their (Khar-and-Dushan's) hearts burnt in the fire of revenge, and they ordered their demon soldiers 'go and catch him forthwith'. At this order, fierce demon warriors lunged forward at the Lord (Sri Ram) [1]; they were armed to the teeth with formidable weapons such as arrows, bows, iron clubs, lancets, spears, scimitars and double-edged swords, maces and heavy battle-axes [2]. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

The Lord (Sri Ram) wished to first issue a warning signal to these mad demons (before actually launching his counter-attack)<sup>1</sup>, and so he twanged his stringed bow loudly, with a reverberating sound that was terrifying and deafening. (Chanda line no. 3)

This twang of the bow sent shivers through the spine of the attacking demon warriors who became deaf by its shrill sound that stunned them out of their wits and made them so sore agitated with fright that they virtually lost consciousness of themselves, and so dazed that they lost bearing of their surroundings<sup>2</sup>. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram wished to warn his attackers first of the fate that stares them on their face should they continue with their misadventure under the influence of death so that later on no one would raise a finger at the Lord that he should have given his enemy a chance to escape death.

<sup>2</sup>The twang of the Lord's bow was so loud and shrill that for some time the demons became stupefied and deaf in their ears; and this terrified them a lot as never in their lives had they ever had the chance to face an enemy who would fearlessly stand his ground against their onslaught. These demons were accustomed to seeing their enemies fleeing from them in terror as soon as they heard of their arrival, and not even the mighty gods had the guts to face them. So they did not expect such a welcome at the hands of a human being, Lord Ram, as they had faced now. This situation in itself was sufficient to cause enough consternation and heart-burn for the demons, and when the Lord pulled the strings of his bow to release it with a mighty twang, the shock waves struck the demons like a sledge-hammer. They were taken aback, and swooned and stumbled in their path.]

दो०. सावधान होइ धाए जानि सबल आराति ।  
लागे बरषन राम पर अज सज बहु भाँति ॥ १९ ( क ) ॥  
तिन्ह के आयुध तिल सम करि काटे रघुबीर ।  
तानि सरासन श्रवन लगि पुनि छाँड़े निज तीर ॥ १९ ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

sāvadhāna hō'i dhā'ē jāni sabala ārāti.  
lāgē baraṣana rāma para astra sastra bahu bhām̐ti. 19 (a).  
tinha kē āyudha tila sama kari kāṭē raghubīra.  
tāni sarāsana śravana lagi puni chām̐rē nija tīra. 19 (b).

The attacking demons realized that their opponent was not an easy target who could be rushed over and crushed so effortlessly, and that the enemy was strong, formidable and powerful. So these demons gathered their wits together and became alert while resuming their attack with renewed vigour.

They began showering countless types of missiles and weapons of all sorts upon Lord Ram with a vengeance. (Doha no. 19-a)

The brave Lord of the Raghus ("raghubīra"; Lord Ram) neutralized and destroyed all the weapons and missiles of the demons by cutting them into small splinters as small as sesame seeds. [To wit, Lord Ram rapidly shot arrows so powerful and effective that almost immediately fragmented the missiles etc. shot by the demons at the Lord.]

After having effectively neutralized the arms of the demon forces, the Lord went into an offensive mode, pulling the string of his bow back to his ears (to make it

as taut as possible) and then shooting his own volley of arrows at the virtually disarmed (and demoralised) demon army. (Doha no. 19-b)

छं०. तब चले बान कराल । फुंकरत जनु बहु ब्याल ॥ १ ॥  
 कोपेउ समर श्रीराम । चले बिसिख निसित निकाम ॥ २ ॥  
 अवलोकि खरतर तीर । मुरि चले निसिचर बीर ॥ ३ ॥  
 भए क्रुद्ध तीनिउ भाइ । जो भागि रन ते जाइ ॥ ४ ॥  
 तेहि बधब हम निज पानि । फिरे मरन मन महुँ ठानि ॥ ५ ॥  
 आयुध अनेक प्रकार । सनमुख ते करहिं प्रहार ॥ ६ ॥

chanda.

taba calē bāna karāla. phuṅkarata janu bahu. 1.  
 kōpē'u samara śrīrāma. calē bisikha nisita nikāma. 2.  
 avalōki kharatara tīra. muri calē nisicara bīra. 3.  
 bha'ē krud'dha tīni'u bhā'i. jō bhāgi rana tē jā'i. 4.  
 tēhi badhaba hama nija pāni. phirē marana mana mahum'ṭhāni. 5.  
 āyudha anēka prakāra. sanamukha tē karahim prahāra. 6.

The terrible arrows shot by the Lord sped forth like so many hissing serpents flying through the air. (Chanda line no. 1)

When Lord Ram became infuriated in battle, countless formidable arrows of immensely terrifying nature shot forth in rapid volleys. (Chanda line no. 2)

Seeing the sharp arrows coming directly at them with terrifying speed, the horrified demon warriors turned their backs and ran for their lives, scattering like nine pins here and there. (Chanda line no. 3)

The three demon brothers (Khar, Dushan and Trishira) became extremely exasperated and angry when they saw their army running away from the battle-field; they shouted at the retreating demon warriors, warning warned them of dire consequences if they ran away, saying 'mind everyone of you; if anyone runs away from the battle-field, we will kill him ourselves'<sup>1</sup>.

At this stern warning and realizing that their death was certain if they tried to escape from the battle, the retreating demons turned once again towards the battle-field (to launch a fresh attack on the Lord in a last-ditch attempt in a do-or-die situation)<sup>2</sup>. (Chanda line nos. 4-5)

They attacked the Lord from the front with renewed vigour, shooting many types of weapons and missiles at him. (Chanda line no. 6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The three demon brothers had stationed themselves strategically on the three sides of the battle-field to monitor the developments on the ground. They had sent their advance troops for the first wave of attack, holding back reserves for the second assault should the first fail. When they saw that their warriors were turning on their heels to escape death, they were angry and dumb-founded as never before had they



ever faced such a situation in the battle-field, especially more remarkable and astonishing because in this case their opponent was a single person and not an army. They must have rubbed their eyes to make sure that what they were wide awake and not seeing dream, but the stark reality of the battle-field!

<sup>2</sup>The poor demon soldiers had no choice: death was certain for them, either as brave warriors who die fighting, or as cowards who would be put to death by their commanders Khar, Dushan and Trishira if they tried to flee. So they wisely chose to die at the hands of Lord Ram, embracing death like true warriors. This decision had its own rewards—for when the Lord slayed them he also ensured the deliverance of their souls, a benefit these demon warriors would have been denied had they died at the hands of their vile and fallen masters Khar, Dushan and Trishira. This fact is expressly endorsed in Doha no. 20-a herein below.]

रिपु परम कोपे जानि । प्रभु धनुष सर संधानि ॥ ७ ॥  
छाँड़े बिपुल नाराच । लगे कटन बिकट पिसाच ॥ ८ ॥  
उर सीस भुज कर चरन । जहँ तहँ लगे महि परन ॥ ९ ॥  
चिक्करत लागत बान । धर परत कुधर समान ॥ १० ॥  
भट कटत तन सत खंड । पुनि उठत करि पाषंड ॥ ११ ॥  
नभ उड़त बहु भुज मुंड । बिनु मौलि धावत रुंड ॥ १२ ॥  
खग कंक काक सृगाल । कटकटहिं कठिन कराल ॥ १३ ॥

ripu parama kōpē jāni. prabhu dhanuṣa sara sandhāni. 7.  
chāmṛē bipula nārāca. lagē kaṭana bikaṭa pisāca. 8.  
ura sīsa bhuja kara carana. jaham̐ taham̐ lagē mahi parana. 9.  
cikkarata lāgata bāna. dhara parata kudhara samāna. 10.  
bhaṭa kaṭata tana sata khaṇḍa. puni uṭhata kari pāṣaṇḍa. 11.  
nabha uṛata bahu bhuja muṇḍa. binu mauḷi dhāvata ruṇḍa. 12.  
khaga kaṅka kāka sṛgāla. kaṭakaṭahim̐ kaṭhina karāla. 13.

Observing that the enemy has become excessively aggressive and furious, daring to die in a no-holds barred conflict, Lord Ram mounted his specially empowered arrows known as ‘Narach (nārāca)’ and shot multitudes of them at the infuriated enemy. The result was that the evil demons began to be cut into pieces. (Chanda line nos. 7-8)

Torn and sliced pieces of their chests, heads, shoulders, arms and legs flew everywhere and landed on the ground (like so many meteors striking the earth). (Chanda line no. 9)

The demon warriors yelled horrifyingly when they were hit by the sharp arrows that pierced their bodies and cut-off their heads even as their dismembered torsos fell on the ground with a heavy resounding thud like so many mountains collapsing (into rubble, after an explosion). (Chanda line no. 10)

The bodies of the demon warriors were chopped into hundreds of pieces, but still they got up again to fight by the power of deception (pāṣaṇḍa) that they possessed. (Chanda line no. 11)

Many arms and heads were flying through the sky (like so many meteors and unknown flying objects); and countless headless trunks were running helter-skelter on the ground in the battle-field (like so many phantoms). (Chanda line no. 12)

Flesh eating birds such as vultures, kites and crows, as well as animals such as jackals and hyenas wrangled for their share of flesh in a blood-curdling and cruel manner. (Chanda line no. 13)

[Note—The spine-chilling and gut-churning scene of death, destruction and horror that is usually observed in any battle-field has been brought alive here. Later on when we read the war at Lanka such horrifying scenes would once again be described with exceptional clarity.

More of it follows in the verses herein below.

This Chanda is called a 'Tomar Chanda'. It is unique form of poetic composition that suits narration of battle scenes as 'Tomar' is also the name of a weapon. It is an iron club that is employed to bludgeon the enemy to death; it is also the name of the battle-ram used to break through the gate and walls of enemy forts. A 'Tomar Chanda' has four lines in each stanza, and each line has 12 Matras or syllables of the Hindi language. However, the last stanza is odd. In our present Chanda it will be noted that the last stanza consists of only one line, i.e. Chanda line no. 13.

When this Chanda is recited it resembles the fast paced, staccato rhythm like that of the beating of war drums.]

छं०. कटकटहिं जंबुक भूत प्रेत पिसाच खर्पर संचहीं । १ ।  
 बेताल बीर कपाल ताल बजाइ जोगिनि नंचहीं ॥ २ ॥  
 रघुबीर बान प्रचंड खंडहिं भटन्ह के उर भुज सिरा । ३ ।  
 जहँ तहँ परहिं उठि लरहिं धर धरु धरु करहिं भयकर गिरा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kaṭakaṭaḥiṃ jambuka bhūta prēta pisāca kharpara sañcahīm. 1.  
 bētāla bīra kapāla tāla bajā'i jōgini nañcahīm. 2.  
 raghubīra bāna pracanda khaṇḍaḥiṃ bhaṭanḥa kē ura bhuja sirā. 3.  
 jaham̐ tatham̐ parahiṃ uṭhi larahiṃ dhara dharu dharu karahiṃ bhayakara girā. 4.

Jackals and hyenas howled and wrangled with each other<sup>1</sup>; ghosts, devils and other forms of spirits and fiends (bhūta prēta pisāca) collected blood and flesh in hollowed-out skulls of fallen warriors.

[<sup>1</sup>Refer: Chanda line no. 13 of the previous group of Chandas herein above.]  
 (Chanda line no. 1)

Phantoms<sup>2</sup> (bētāla) picked up skulls of dead warriors in their hands and struck them like one strikes cymbals; and female phantoms called Yoginis<sup>3</sup> (jōgini) danced merrily around.

[<sup>2</sup>According to the Purans, the ‘Vetals’, or phantoms, are a sort of ghosts who are believed to be superior to ordinary ghosts. They usually live in the cremation grounds. They are also said to be attendants of Lord Shiva, the third God of the Trinity who is responsible for the conclusion of creation, and therefore, symbolically of death.

<sup>3</sup>Yoginis are a sort of female phantoms who reside in cremation grounds and rush to battle-fields where they dance merrily at the spectacle of death and destruction; according to legend they are a form of goddess Kali, the goddess of death, as well as of Durga, the goddess of war.] (Chanda line no. 2)

Lord Raghubir’s (i.e. Lord Ram’s) fierce and potent arrows are striking hard at their targets, cutting into pieces the chests, shoulders and heads of the demon warriors<sup>4</sup>.

[<sup>4</sup>Refer: Chanda line no. 8 of the previous group of Chandas herein above.] (Chanda line no. 3)

These dismembered parts of the warriors fall here and there on the ground in the battle-field; then they rise once again, stumbling and tottering, to fight; shouting and yelling terribly: ‘catch them; grab them’<sup>5</sup>.

[<sup>5</sup>Refer: Chanda line nos. 9-11 of the previous group of Chandas herein above.] (Chanda line no. 4)

अंतावरीं गहि उड़त गीध पिसाच कर गहि धावहीं । ५ ।

संग्राम पुर बासी मनहुँ बहु बाल गुड़ी उड़ावहीं ॥ ६ ॥

मारे पछारे उर बिदारे बिपुल भट कहँरत परे । ७ ।

अवलोकि निज दल बिकल भट तिसिरादि खर दूषन फिरे ॥ ८ ॥

antāvarīm gahi uṛata gīdha pisāca kara gahi dhāvahīm. 5.

saṅgrāma pura bāsī manahūṁ bahu bāla guṛī uṛāvahīm. 6.

mārē pachārē ura bidārē bipula bhaṭa kahamṛata parē. 7.

avalōki nija dala bikala bhaṭa tisirādi khara dūṣana phirē. 8.

Vultures catch hold of one end of the dead warriors’ intestines and fly away with it, while devilish spirits and fiends hold the other end of the intestines and try to drag them away. (Chanda line no. 5)

This sight gives the impression that so many children of a town symbolized by the battle-field are flying kites and vying with each other to gain an upper hand in their competitive bid<sup>1</sup>.

[<sup>1</sup>In this imagery, the vultures are the ‘kites’ because they are air-borne, the phantoms are the ‘children’ who are running on the ground trying to fly their kites, and the intestines are the ‘strings’ of these kites, one end of which is attached to the kite symbolized the vultures and the other end is in the hand of the phantoms who symbolize children.] (Chanda line no. 6)

Countless demon warriors were killed, had their hearts torn out and chests sheared, and were bludgeoned to the ground; so many of them are yet not dead, for they lie in the battle-field wailing, groaning and moaning half-alive. (Chanda line no. 7)

Observing the distressful condition of their forces, the three demon commanders Khar, Dushan and Trishira turned their attention to Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 8)

सर सक्ति तोमर परसु सूल कृपान एकहि बारहीं । ९ ।  
 करि कोप श्रीरघुबीर पर अगनित निसाचर डारहीं ॥ १० ॥  
 प्रभु निमिष महँ रिपु सर निवारि पचारि डारे सायका । ११ ।  
 दस दस बिसिख उर माझ मारे सकल निसिचर नायका ॥ १२ ॥

sara sakti tōmara parasu sūla kṛpāna ēkahi bārahīm. 9.  
 kari kōpa śrīraghubīra para aganita nisācara ḍārahīm. 10.  
 prabhu nimiṣa mahum̐ ripu sara nivāri pacāri ḍārē sāyakā. 11.  
 dasa dasa bisikha ura mājha mārē sakala nisicara nāyakā. 12.

Countless demons started raining various types of fierce weapons, such as powerful arrows, clubs, spears, spikes, battle-axes, tridents and swords (sara sakti tōmara parasu sūla kṛpāna) angrily on Lord Ram all at once (ēkahi bārahīm)<sup>1</sup>.

[<sup>1</sup>Refer: Doha no. 19, along with Chanda line no. 2 that precede it, and Chanda line no. 6 that follow it.] (Chanda line nos. 9-10)

The Lord (Sri Ram) neutralized all the missiles (sara nivāri) of the enemy very swiftly in a few moments (or seconds; “nimiṣa mahum̐”); and then he retaliated with his own volley of powerfully potent arrows (pacāri ḍārē sāyakā)<sup>2</sup>.

[<sup>2</sup>Refer: Doha no. 19 herein above.] (Chanda line no. 11)

He (Lord Ram) shot ten arrows at the heart of each of the demon commanders, and all these arrows slammed home with precision. (Chanda line no. 12)

महि परत उठि भट भिरत मरत न करत माया अति घनी । १३ ।  
 सुर डरत चौदह सहस प्रेत बिलोकि एक अवध धनी ॥ १४ ॥  
 सुर मुनि सभय प्रभु देखि मायानाथ अति कौतुक कर्यो । १५ ।  
 देखहिं परसपर राम करि संग्राम रिपुदल लरि मर्यो ॥ १६ ॥

mahi parata uṭhi bhaṭa bhirata marata na karata māyā ati ghanī. 13.  
 sura ḍarata caudaha sahasa prēta bilōki ēka avadha dhanī. 14.  
 sura muni sabhaya prabhu dēkhi māyānātha ati kautuka karyō. 15.  
 dēkhahīm parasapara rāma kari saṅgrāma ripudala lari maryō. 16.

The demon warriors fall to the ground, but get up mysteriously to fight once again. They were employing deceptive techniques of which they were masters<sup>1</sup>.

[<sup>1</sup>Refer: Chanda line nos. 10-11 that precede this present group of Chandas, and follow Doha no. 19 herein above.] (Chanda line no. 13)

The gods (who were watching the proceedings from the heaven) became worried and sore affright as they saw that these wicked spirits (“prēta”; the fiendish spirits of dead demons) who knew countless tricks were fourteen thousand in number, while the Lord of Ayodhya (“avadha dhanī”; Lord Ram) was alone and fighting these multitudes single-handedly. (Chanda line no. 14)

When the Lord (Sri Ram) realized that the gods and sages had got terrified, he revealed his own masterly skill at creating deceptions [15] by which all the demons were misled to think that their companions were Lord Ram, and therefore they fought with each other and killed one another without the Lord’s slightest intervention [16]!

[To wit, the demon warriors saw Lord Ram everywhere around them. So they killed their own friends and other demon warriors in the belief that they were killing their enemy Lord Ram. By employing this maverick trick the Lord was able to get rid of the demon army quickly without any further effort.] (Chanda line nos. 15-16)

[Note—This Chanda is called a ‘Geetika Chanda’. It is so called as it can be sung melodiously with a sonorous voice, like a ‘song’, a ‘Geet’. This sort of composition is soothing for the nerves as compared to the previous style called Tomar Chanda which is a war song that excites and arouses the nerves.]

दो०. राम राम कहि तनु तजहिं पावहिं पद निर्बान ।  
करि उपाय रिपु मारे छन महुँ कृपानिधान ॥ २० ( क ) ॥  
हरषित बरषहिं सुमन सुर बाजहिं गगन निसान ।  
अस्तुति करि करि सब चले सोभित बिबिध बिमान ॥ २० ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

rāma rāma kahi tanu tajahim pāvahim pada nirbāna.  
kari upāya ripu mārē chana mahum’ kṛpānidhāna. 20 (a).  
haraṣita baraṣahim sumana sura bājahim gagana nisāna.  
astuti kari kari saba calē sōbhita bibidha bimāna. 20 (b).

All the demons died while pronouncing the (holy) name of Lord Ram repeatedly (rāma rāma kahi tanu tajahim), which granted their souls instant liberation and deliverance (pāvahim pada nirbāna)<sup>1</sup>.

By this means the Lord who is a treasury of mercy and compassion (kṛpānidhāna) was quickly able to slay all the enemies. (Doha no. 20-a)

When the demons were eliminated, the gods showered flowers over the victorious Lord from the sky (heaven), and played their trumpets to celebrate the happy occasion.

All the gods offered their prayers and sung eulogies lauding the glories of the Lord; then they went back to their respective abodes aboard different types of wonderful air-planes. (Doha no. 20-b)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When the demons began to hallucinate and each one of them saw that he was surrounded by multiple forms of Lord Ram, their enemy, all of them were astonished and terrorized beyond measure. Out of fear and astonishment they began to shout ‘Ram, Ram’. But this proved a boon for them and their souls, as this word ‘Ram’ is not merely an ordinary name but a divine Mantra, which is a mystical formula used during spiritual practices to attain emancipation and salvation of the soul. Thus, even unwittingly, the soul of these demons got liberation from their evil bodies, and they found deliverance from the cycle of birth and death in this gross world of transmigration.]

This is why Lord Ram is called ‘krpānidhāna’; the Lord ensured that even his enemies, though they were evil and sinful, should get the reward of coming close to him and saying his holy name ‘Ram’. And the best blessing that a creature can be granted is liberation from the horrors of life with its endless miseries and pains in this world of transmigration. Deliverance of the creature’s soul is the best spiritual reward that one can ever have, and the merciful Lord Ram granted this rare privilege to these demons.

The gracious Lord had no personal enmity with any one of these demons for he knew that their souls were inherently pure, and it was their bodies that were sinful. And when the body was slain and the soul liberated from its captivity, it regained its holiness and purity once again by uttering the holy Mantra ‘Ram, Ram’ which is all-purifying and the most holy of all the holy Mantras. Incidentally, it ought to be noted that according to the Upanishads, especially the ‘Ram Tapini Upanishad’ and the ‘Ram Rahasya Upanishad’ of the Atharva Veda tradition, this word ‘Ram’ is also called a ‘Tarak Mantra’, i.e. a spiritual formula that grants liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation to the creature. So when the demons uttered “Ram” while dying, they got a reward that is inherent in and integral to this holy Mantra—and it was deliverance of their soul.]

चौ०. जब रघुनाथ समर रिपु जीते । सुर नर मुनि सब के भय बीते ॥ १ ॥  
तब लछिमन सीतहि लै आए । प्रभु पद परत हरषि उर लाए ॥ २ ॥  
सीता चितव स्याम मृदु गाता । परम प्रेम लोचन न अघाता ॥ ३ ॥  
पंचबटीं बसि श्रीरघुनायक । करत चरित सुर मुनि सुखदायक ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jaba raghunātha samara ripu jītē. sura nara muni saba kē bhaya bītē. 1.  
taba lachimana sītahi lai ā'ē. prabhu pada parata haraṣi ura lā'ē. 2.  
sītā citava syāma mṛdu gātā. parama prēma lōcana na aghātā. 3.  
pañcabaṭīṁ basi śrīraghunāyaka. karata carita sura muni sukhadāyaka. 4.

When Lord Ram, the Lord of the line of kings descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya (raghunātha), vanquished the enemy (i.e. the demons) in the battle, all the gods, the humans and the sages (who lived in terror of these demons) became fearless<sup>1</sup>. (1)

When the battle was over, Laxman brought Sita to where the Lord was. He fell at the feet of the Lord who cheerfully raised him and embraced him<sup>2</sup>. (2)

Sita affectionately looked at the dark-complexioned and delicate form (*syāma mṛdu gātā*) of Lord Ram, feeling exhilarated and full of joy so much that tears of affection welled up in her eyes that were unable to satisfy her as she gazed at her beloved Lord intently (nor were they able to restrain these tears from coming out and sliding down her cheeks)<sup>3</sup>. (3)

In this way, Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) lived in Panchavati and did many deeds that gave a lot of joy and happiness to the gods and the sages. (4)

{Thus ends the episode that describes the slaying of the demons Khar, Dushan etc. as well as the deformation of Supernakha that sowed the seed and prepared the ground for the ultimate elimination of Ravana and the rest of the evil, sinful and cruel demons.}

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word for Lord Ram used here is “*raghunātha*”, i.e. the ‘Lord of the Raghu line of kings’. This word signifies the importance of Lord Ram slaying the cruel demons who had been endlessly tormenting humble creatures, because it indicates that though there had been otherwise great and excellent kings in this dynasty but no one had been able to free their subjects from the horror of the demons till now; it was Lord Ram who was the first to do so.

Another important point to note is that this incident took place deep inside a dense and uninhabited forest called Dandakaranya; only sages, hermits and ascetics lived in such secluded places in order to pursue their religious objectives without disturbance from the hustle and bustle of life in this world. The news of the arrival of Lord Ram had already spread like wildfire in the forest, and all the hermitages around the place had become aware of the Lord’s presence. Prior to coming to the Panchavati area where this battle with the demon army took place, the Lord had visited the hermitage of sage Agastya, and it was the sage who had himself advised the Lord to spend time here. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-18 that precede Doha no. 13.}

So therefore everyone was alert; all important developments related to the Lord was eagerly heard and shared; and all the news spread quickly through the different hermitages by the word-of-mouth means. Hence, Supernakha’s deformation and the subsequent elimination of a major part of the demon forces led by well-known commanders Khar, Dushan and Trishira who were deputed by the king of the demon race, i.e. Ravana, to guard the outer fringes of the demons’ extended kingdom, was something so significant and epochal that it could not be kept secret for long. Whenever a fierce battle is fought, there is so much noise and clamour caused by the clash of energetic enemies as well as arms and armaments of all sorts and varieties, and so huge an amount of dust is raised up into the sky, that those living miles away become aware of this calamitous event, and it cannot pass unnoticed.

So, the news of this first-of-its kind and rarest-of-rare development when a single prince would eliminate an entire army consisting of blood-thirsty, ferocious and vicious demons of countless numbers who were armed to the teeth, and who yelled at the top of their lung-power and raised hell by their spine-chilling war-cries, could not have remained unknown amongst the sages, seers, hermits and ascetics, and their disciples, who lived in hermitages far and near. As for the gods, they had personally witnessed the battle from the sky. {Refer: Doha no. 20-b herein above.}

<sup>2</sup>Laxman had been instructed by Lord Ram to take Sita and hide inside a cave for the purpose of their safety. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 10-13 that precede Doha no. 18 herein above.}

Once the battle ended and the din-and-dust subsided, Laxman came out of the cave with Sita, and returned happily to Lord Ram. He fell at the Lord's feet in joy even as the Lord picked him up and embraced him affectionately.

<sup>3</sup>To wit, Sita felt so extremely fortunate and happy that Lord Ram was not harmed by the onslaught of the fierce demons who had attacked him from all the sides. While inside the cave she must have heard the deafening clatter of the battle-field, and would have peeped out a little to actually see and imagined much more of what may have been actually happening on the ground. She was extremely nervous and sore affright, fearing of the worst. So it is natural that when she saw her beloved Lord Ram virtually unscathed she felt very fortunate and filled with joy.

She closely observed the body of Lord Ram to see if there were any wounds. It is such a remarkable thing and a miraculous one at that, that though a torrent of sharp weapons had been raining on the Lord mercilessly, no serious sign of a wound was to be observed. Sita was overwhelmed with emotions; she could not stop gazing at the Lord both in love as well as in admiration. Tears moistened her eyes, and no matter how hard she would try to restrain them some drops must have involuntarily slid down her cheeks.

The fact that Lord Ram's delicate body was not wounded in the fierce attack of the demons itself proved that the Lord was no ordinary human being, but that he was a Divine Being, the Supreme Lord of the world himself in a human form.

The Lord pulled off this miracle without anyone being suspicious of his true form because there was no one present to observe the battle that took place in the deep forest; the demons who were witnesses had all died, and the gods of course knew who the Lord actually was, so there was no chance of this secret leaking to alert the demon king Ravana that the prince whom he will face in the future and who will eventually kill him is not a human being but the Supreme Being himself.

We will read soon, however, that Ravana did become suspicious of the Lord's true identity for he knew that it is impossible for anyone to kill Khar, Dushan and Trishira along with their huge army, but he was still in doubt. Had he known that Lord Ram's body did not suffer any wounds, he would have been certain of the Lord's Divinity and in all probability he would either had run away to hide somewhere or surrendered without resistance. In both the cases, the main objective of the Lord for which he had come down to earth from heaven, which was to eliminate the demons and save the earth and its creatures from their horrors and torments would not have been fulfilled, for the merciful Lord would not kill anyone who has either surrendered or has cowardly run away from the battle-field. In this eventuality, the mission would have remained unaccomplished.]

धुआँ देखि खर दूषन केरा । जाइ सुपनखाँ रावन प्रेरा ॥ ५ ॥  
 बोली बचन क्रोध करि भारी । देस कोस कै सुरति बिसारी ॥ ६ ॥  
 करसि पान सोवसि दिनु राती । सुधि नहिं तव सिर पर आराती ॥ ७ ॥

dhu'ām' dēkhi khara dūṣana kērā. jā'i supanakhāṁ rāvana prērā. 5.  
 bōlī bacana krōdha kari bhārī. dēsa kōsa kai surati bisārī. 6.



karasi pāna sōvasi dinu rātī. sudhi nahim tava sira para ārātī. 7.

{Now starts the second phase of the story—when Supernakha went to instigate Ravana against Lord Ram, pleading with him to take revenge for her deformation and the killing of her cousin brothers Khar and Dushan along with their army.}

When Supernakha observed the dust that was raised when Khar and Dushan fell dead on the ground, she slithered away from there surreptitiously, and went straight to Ravana to incite him<sup>1</sup>. (5)

Once there, she spoke to him angrily with a shrill voice and a provocative tone, admonishing him sternly: ‘Woe to you as you have forgotten about and have neglected the condition of your realm and wealth. (6)

You drink and get so intoxicated that you sleep day and night, oblivious of every thing around you, for you are unaware that a formidable enemy is literally right up at your head (“**tava sira para**”; i.e. he is knocking at your doorstep, and you are unaware of this danger because you are a drunkard, and your senses and wisdom have been dulled by you remaining intoxicated)<sup>2</sup>. (7)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Now, when Supernakha observed that the huge column of dust that was kicked up during Lord Ram’s battle with the armies of Khar and Dushan was finally subsiding, and an eerie silence had descended on the battle-field, she realizing that the demon army was finished. So then she dashed to Lanka to plead her case with Ravana, and also to inform him that the main outpost of his kingdom on the mainland that was manned and guarded by his two trusted warriors, Khar and Dushan, has fallen to his enemy. This was the first instance when Ravana would become personally involved in the conflict, and which set off a chain of events that culminated in the famed War of Lanka and the subsequent elimination of the ferocious demons along with their king Ravana.

This episode of Supernakha going to the court of Ravana to instigate him against Lord Ram has also been narrated in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 38-61.

Where did Supernakha meet Ravana? Well, it was in his court, in full view of the demon courtiers who were in attendance, and not privately inside his palace. This will be clear shortly below in Doha no. 21-b.

<sup>2</sup>To wit, you are so stupid that you think that you have no enemy as you have conquered the gods and their king Indra. In your over-confidence of invincibility and deluded to think that there is no one powerful enough to challenge your might, you drink and sleep all day and night so much so that you have neglected the demon kingdom and do not take regular report of what is happening in your realm. Look—a formidable enemy is right up knocking at your very gate, ready to usurp your kingdom and push you out into oblivion, and yet you sleep soundly as if everything was fine. Aren’t for example you aware that the mighty Khar and Dushan are dead in battle, and their entire army is finished? How stupid you are!]

राज नीति बिनु धन बिनु धर्मा । हरिहि समर्पे बिनु सतकर्मा ॥ ८ ॥

बिद्या बिनु बिबेक उपजाएँ । श्रम फल पढ़ें किएँ अरु पाएँ ॥ ९ ॥  
 संग तें जती कुमंत्र ते राजा । मान ते ग्यान पान तें लाजा ॥ १० ॥  
 प्रीति प्रनय बिनु मद ते गुनी । नासहिं बेगि नीति अस सुनी ॥ ११ ॥

rāja nīti binu dhana binu dharmā. harihi samarpē binu satakarmā. 8.  
 bidyā binu bibēka upajā'em̃. śrama phala parhēm̃ ki'em̃ aru pā'em̃. 9.  
 saṅga tēm̃ jāti kumantra tē rājā. māna tē gyāna pāna tēm̃ lājā. 10.  
 prīti pranaya binu mada tē gunī. nāsaḥiṁ bēgi nīti asa sunī. 11.

[Supernakha gave some instances of well known and time-tested maxims to impress upon Ravana that importance and urgency of being vigilant.]

Kinghood without knowledge of politics, accumulation of wealth without virtues, doing good deeds without offering them to Lord Hari (the Lord God) [8], acquiring knowledge without having the wisdom and the ability to judiciously employ this knowledge—are all in vain. To wit, all these activities fail to produce the desired result if not done properly and in accordance to these axioms. [9] (8-9)

Further, it is also heard (i.e. it is a well-known proverb) that all the following persons come to ruin: viz. (a) a person who has renounced the world but keeps company of some sort, (b) a king who is given bad advice, (c) a person who has knowledge and enlightenment but also has pride, ego and haughtiness (as these negative traits dilute and corrupt as well as neutralize the gain obtained by the former), (d) a person who drinks wine and hopes to maintain dignity, decorum and self-respect [10], (e) a person who claims to be friendly but lacks sincerity and affection for his companion, and (f) a person who has expertise or skill but at the same time is haughty and arrogant—all such persons unwittingly negate whatever positive value that might be attached to their good virtues [11]. (10-11)

[Note—Supernakha was Ravana's sister, so she was within her rights to preach him on these principles, though this glorious lecture was more to instigate him and provoke him to take revenge on Lord Ram than to actually wish for his good.]

सो०. रिपु रुज पावक पाप प्रभु अहि गनिअ न छोट करि।  
 अस कहि बिबिध बिलाप करि लागी रोदन करन ॥ २१ (क) ॥  
 sōraṭhā.

ripu ruja pāvaka pāpa prabhu ahi gani'a na chōṭa kari.  
 asa kahi bibidha bilāpa kari lāgī rōdana karana. 21 (a).

One must never underestimate the danger arising from an enemy, a disease, fire, sins, an able lord or master, and serpent in the erroneous belief that they are small and trifling (and can be easily handled). [For no one can know or predict what great danger and inconvenience any of these aforesaid entities can cause to a person who is not sufficiently alert about them.]

Saying this, she (Supernakha) wailed, lamented and wept inconsolably in a variety of ways. (Sortha no. 21-a)

दो०. सभा माझ परि व्याकुल बहु प्रकार कह रोइ ।  
तोहि जिअत दसकंधर मोरि कि असि गति होइ ॥ २१ ( ख ) ॥  
dōhā.

sabhā mājha pari byākula bahu prakāra kaha rō'i.  
tōhi ji'ata dasakandhara mōri ki asi gati hō'i. 21 (b).

She fell on the ground in the middle of the court (of Ravana), extremely agitated and crying woefully. Lamenting and grieving, she asked Ravana scornfully, 'Say, oh the ten-headed one (Ravana), should I be subjected to this pitiful and miserable condition while you are alive?'<sup>1</sup>

[<sup>1</sup>“To wit, aren't you ashamed of yourself, tell me, that your sister has been deformed and her ears and nose cut off by a stranger who has openly insulted you by humiliating your sister? Is he not challenging your majesty by killing your demon cousins Khar and Dushan, and annihilating their army single-handedly? And you drink and sleep as if nothing has happened. Wake up before it's too late.”] (Doha no. 21-b)

चौ०. सुनत सभासद उठे अकुलाई । समुझाई गहि बाँह उठाई ॥ १ ॥  
कह लंकेस कहसि निज बाता । केइँ तव नासा कान निपाता ॥ २ ॥  
caupāī.

sunata sabhāsada uṭhē akulāī. samujhāī gahi bām̐ha uṭhāī. 1.  
kaha laṅkēsa kahasi nija bātā. kē'im̐ tava nāsā kāna nipātā. 2.

When the courtiers of Ravana heard about the most unfortunate development that arising out of Supernakha's deformation and the subsequent decimation of the demon army led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira, an event that pointed to some grave danger of a calamitous nature that stared the demon race on its face, they were all dumbstruck and perplexed; they got up with a start, and were sore agitated (because they could not believe what they heard).

Ravana, meanwhile, tried to politely reassure his sister, and lifted her from the ground by holding her arms. (1)

The king of Lanka (“laṅkēsa”; Ravana) asked her, ‘Tell me what actually happened; who has cut off your nose and ears?’<sup>1</sup> (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In the previous verses Supernakha has not told Ravana what had actually happened that led to her disfiguring and the subsequent death of the demon warriors led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira. She was so much agitated and extremely angry when she arrived in a great huff and burst into the court of Ravana breathlessly, panting and puffing and cursing and wailing in grief as if some great calamity has befallen the demons, and though she was its first victim yet she managed to survive

the ordeal to come to report to Ravana even as other warrior demons who dared challenge the enemy had perished. This was meant to drive home the urgency of the situation and set alarm bells ringing.

Ravana and his courtiers were so much taken aback at this sudden and unexpected turn of events that they were left speechless. It was beyond their remotest imagination that the ferocious sister of their powerful Lord Ravana, the invincible king of the demon race, and who herself was strong enough to fend for herself and destroy her tormentor, if there was any, who would be stupid enough to challenge her, would one day be reduced to such a pitiful and helpless condition that she would have her body disfigured by having her nose and ears chopped off, with deep wounds from which flowed thick hot blood that had yet not dried to form crusts. This singular unbelievable sight was enough to chill the atmosphere into a death-like graveyard, and paralyse every demon courtier present at the moment in the court of Ravana.

No one dared to move; Ravana stepped forward from his throne and politely lifted up his sister from the ground where she lay prostrate writhing in agony and anger, showing empathy for her and soothing her nerves with kind words, hinting to her that he will surely take revenge on her behalf, but first she must tell him what had actually happened.]

अवध नृपति दसरथ के जाए । पुरुष सिंघ बन खेलन आए ॥ ३ ॥  
 समुझि परी मोहि उन्ह कै करनी । रहित निसाचर करिहहिं धरनी ॥ ४ ॥  
 जिन्ह कर भुजबल पाइ दसानन । अभय भए बिचरत मुनि कानन ॥ ५ ॥  
 देखत बालक काल समाना । परम धीर धन्वी गुन नाना ॥ ६ ॥  
 अतुलित बल प्रताप द्वौ भ्राता । खल बध रत सुर मुनि सुखदाता ॥ ७ ॥

avadha nṛpati dasaratha kē jā'ē. puruṣa siṅgha bana khēlana ā'ē. 3.  
 samujhi parī mōhi unha kai karani. rahita nisācara karihahim dharani. 4.  
 jinha kara bhujabala pā'i dasānana. abhaya bha'ē bicarata muni kānana. 5.  
 dēkhata bālaka kāla samānā. parama dhīra dhanvī guna nānā. 6.  
 atulita bala pratāpa dvau bhrātā. khala badha rata sura muni sukhadātā. 7.

[Supernakha replied—] ‘They (i.e. those who have caused so much horror for me and killed my cousins and their army) are the sons of the king of Ayodhya<sup>1</sup>. They are like lions amongst the human beings, and it appears that they have come to the forest to hunt. (3)

I have observed their attitude, and from their behaviour and actions I have a firm conviction that they are out to destroy the demon race and eliminate all of them from the surface of the earth<sup>2</sup>. (4)

Oh the ten-headed One (i.e. Ravana). Sages, seers and hermits (who are so afraid of you that they remain away from view and live a subdued life of subjugation) have recently become fearless on account of their support and strength of arm<sup>3</sup>. (5)

On the face of it they look like young adolescent boys, but this is a mirage as in reality they are extremely courageous and valiant, experts in archery as they are

skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, and are endowed with countless other excellent qualities<sup>4</sup>. (6)

In all sooth and without gainsay, these two brothers indeed have no match for their strength, glory, gallantry and valour. It is certain that they are determinedly engaged in the slaying of the demons, and granting joy and happiness to the sages, seers and hermits (and I have no doubt about it)<sup>5</sup>. (7)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 17 earlier in this narration. In this verse Laxman has told Supernakha who Lord Ram was—i.e. he was the prince of Ayodhya, and since he was the Lord's brother (Chaupai line no. 11), it also identified him as another prince of Ayodhya.

<sup>2+5</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 19. Here, Lord Ram has told the messenger of Khar and Dushan this thing—that they are born as Kshatriyas, the warrior race, and roam around in the forest looking for devils like these demons whom they are willing to engage and kill, like children who playfully kill insects by pricking them to death, in order to maintain peace and tranquility on earth as well as to give relief to holy men such as sages and hermits.

Supernakha had been by the side of Khar and Dushan when they had attacked Lord Ram with the demon army. So when their messenger came back to report to them the answer given by Lord Ram, it is sure she had heard it. This is how she came to know about the determination of the two brothers.

<sup>3</sup>To wit, Supernakha tried her best to provoke Ravana by throwing an open challenge to him when she said: “The sages, seers and hermits whom you had subjugated by the might of your arms have now lost all fear; they roam around boldly in the forest defying your authority, as if sneering at you and challenging you to come and try harming them if you dare. Say, is this defiance acceptable to you? Your power structure and authority are crumbling, and if everyone starts losing fear of you like these sages are currently doing, then say what majesty will be left for you to boast of like the way you presently do so often?”

<sup>4</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 19. Even the otherwise emotionless and cruel demons Khar and Dushan were struck by the ethereal charm of Lord Ram and Laxman; they had for a moment all but forgotten about the humiliation their sister Supernakha had undergone at the first divine sight of the two brothers.]

सोभा धाम राम अस नामा । तिन्ह के संग नारि एक स्यामा ॥ ८ ॥  
 रूप रासि बिधि नारि सँवारी । रति सत कोटि तासु बलिहारी ॥ ९ ॥  
 तासु अनुज काटे श्रुति नासा । सुनि तव भगिनि करहिं परिहासा ॥ १० ॥  
 खर दूषन सुनि लगे पुकारा । छन महुँ सकल कटक उन्ह मारा ॥ ११ ॥  
 खर दूषन तिसिरा कर घाता । सुनि दससीस जरे सब गाता ॥ १२ ॥

sōbhā dhāma rāma asa nāmā. tinha kē saṅga nāri ēka syāmā. 8.  
 rūpa rāsi bidhi nāri samvārī. rati sata kōṭi tāsū balihārī. 9.

tāsu anuja kātē śruti nāsā. suni tava bhagini karahiṃ parihāsā. 10.  
khara dūṣana suni lagē pukārā. chana mahum̐ sakala kaṭaka unha mārā. 11.  
khara dūṣana tisirā kara ghātā. suni dasasisa jarē saba gātā. 12.

His name is ‘Ram’, and very handsome, being an epitome of beauty and charm<sup>1</sup>. With him is a lady with a dark-complexion (saṅga nāri ēka syāmā). (8)

This particular lady is a virtual treasury of beauty and charm; indeed the Creator (‘Vidhi’) had painstakingly endowed her with these glorious and excellent physical qualities, for a hundred-thousand ‘Ratis’<sup>2</sup> appear to have been sacrificed in order to create her<sup>2</sup>. (9)

His (i.e. Lord Ram’s) younger brother (Laxman) has cut my nose and ears; when they heard that I am your sister they laughed at me (to tease me with excessive sarcasm in their voice and expression)<sup>3</sup>. (10)

When I rushed to Khar and Dushan to call them to my rescue, and they immediately responded by scurrying to take revenge with the full might of their army, he (Lord Ram) had killed the entire demon force quickly in a few moments.’ (11)

When the ten-headed Ravana heard that Khar-Dushan and Trishira had been killed, he was so extremely indignant, peeved and angry that his body literally burnt as if on fire. [To wit, this was a personal affront on his self-respect and dignity that was too much for him to cope with silently. He wringed his hands and cursed under his breath, resolving to seek retribution.] (12)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 19 where we read Khar and Dushan too had made a similar observation.

<sup>2</sup>‘Rati’ is the patron goddess of physical beauty and charm; she is the consort of Kaamdeo, the god of love and beauty.

<sup>3</sup>Now we see that Supernakha has started telling lies. Lord Ram and Laxman had never laughed at her, irrespective of whose sister she was. She was hell-bent on instigating Ravana, and so would use all tricks she could think of to accomplish her objective. By telling Ravana that her tormentors had teased her more because she happened to be his sister she touched a raw nerve; it had now turned into a matter of ego, of self-respect and dignity of the king of the demons, when such an insinuation is made against him in full public court as was the case presently.

Ravana had never in his imagination thought that one fine day he would be forced to hear such indignities being heaped on his name, with such bold impunity! So it is but natural that he was filled with an extreme feeling of indignation and hate.]

दो०. सूपनखहि समुझाड़ करि बल बोलेसि बहु भाँति ।  
गयउ भवन अति सोचबस नीद परइ नहिं राति ॥ २२ ॥  
dōhā.

sūpanakhahi samujhā'i kari bala bōlēsi bahu bhām̐ti.  
gaya'u bhavana ati sōcabasa nīda para'i nahim̐ rāti. 22.

He (Ravana) comforted Supernakha in various ways, telling her about his strength and powers to reassure her that she would be fully revenged<sup>1</sup>.

Then he went to his palace, lost in deep thought and pondering gravely on the implication of what he had heard. He was so overcome with worry that he could not sleep that night<sup>2</sup>. (Doha no. 22)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer Doha no. 21-b herein above where Supernakha has asked Ravana if it was ever possible that she would suffer this kind of extreme misery while he was alive. So here Ravana answers that doubt of hers by telling her not to worry as he is strong and powerful enough to teach her tormentors a bitter lesson while avenging for the humiliation to which she has been subjected.

<sup>2</sup>Ravana lay wide awake in the night, wondering if it is ever possible for a human being to kill such formidable demon warriors as Khar, Dushan and Trishira. He concluded that since this is not feasible under any circumstance, it is sure and certain that the Supreme Being has finally arrived to eliminate the demons and free the earth from their ruthless cruelty.

This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23. For details see Section 5.1.3 herein above in this Chapter no. 5.]

{The following verses, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23 herein below, tell us how confounded and bewildered Ravana was after hearing Supernakha's report. He was not certain what the truth of the matter was, for the very fact of Khar and Dushan getting killed by a prince of Ayodhya called Lord Ram was in itself unbelievable and an unexpected bit of bad news that was most shocking, as these two demon commanders were famed for their strength, dare devilry and ferocity. How could it ever happen that an ordinary human prince, no matter who he was, would ever be able to even face these two most powerful demon commanders, let alone kill them, as they were not alone but had the support of a huge contingent of demon army known for its ruthlessness? Surely, there was something very grave and serious in the matter, and the issue needed thorough investigation as it directly concerned the safety and security of the entire demon race.

The reason given in Ram Charit Manas here is the same as the one given in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 57-61. The reader should note that the context is also the same in both these Ramayans, viz. Supernakha's entreaty with Ravana to take revenge upon Lord Ram who had deformed and gravely insulted her by cutting off her nose and ears, something that had resulted in humiliation of the entire demon race, and if Ravana neglects it for any reason whatsoever, then it would certainly adversely affect his reputation, self respect and dignity; it would seriously undermine his authority and portray him as being a coward when faced by a true warrior. The world would say that Ravana was able to run over the gods, sages and holy men, as well as ordinary creatures because they didn't have the wherewithal to oppose him, but when he faced a true warrior in the person of Lord Ram, who could match him, he simply hid his face and ran away on some excuse.

Ravana became thus excessively alarmed, and intuitively he realized that there is much more than what meets the eye. After all it was not a joke for someone to openly challenge his authority by insulting his own sister Supernakha, and then when the demons Khar and Dushan, who were Ravana's maternal aunt's sons whom he had assigned the task to protect the outer borders of his vast demon kingdom from intrusion by outsiders, went to intercede on behalf of Supernakha with an army of the choicest demons who were known for their ferocity and mercilessness, they too were killed with the whole of the demon army. So therefore, Lord Ram, who had done all this single-handed, is surely and certainly not an ordinary human being.

That means, thought the pensive Ravana, is it true that the Supreme Being has finally decided to come down to earth to kill him and uphold the sanctity of the prophesy of Brahma that had ensured that some human being would one day kill him in spite of his otherwise being immune to death from any other source (refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 51-53/1), or that of Nandi, the mount of Shiva, who had also cursed him that one day he would be killed by a human being (refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 84-89), or of king Anaranya of Ayodhya who had cursed Ravana that one of his descendants would crush his pride and kill him (refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 226-118).

The past came to haunt Ravana like a ghost baring its teeth, with a tongue dripping blood, in the frightening darkness of the dooms-day night.}

चौ०. सुर नर असुर नाग खग माहीं । मोरे अनुचर कहँ कोउ नाही ॥ १ ॥

खर दूषन मोहि सम बलवंता । तिन्हहि को मारइ बिनु भगवंता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sura nara asura nāga khaga māhīm. mōrē anucara kham' kō'u nāhīm. 1.  
khara dūṣana mōhi sama balavantā. tinahi kō mārā'i binu bhagavantā. 2.

[When Supernakha told Ravana everything that had happened and how Lord Ram had rebuked and insulted her by chopping-off her ears and nose, and after that how he had slayed the entire demon army led by her cousin brothers Khar and Dushan, Ravana became very worried and thoughtful.

He could not sleep that night (Doha no. 22) and had a hunch that his days are finally numbered as the Supreme Being appears to have come personally to kill him. So he wondered—]

‘Verily indeed, amongst the gods, the humans, the demons, the serpents (representing all the terrestrial creatures), and the birds (representing all those who live in the sky, such as the demi-gods, spirits etc.)—none of them, not a single living being for that matter, have the power and the ability to stand against the might of any of my followers (i.e. any of the demons who serve me). No one can face any one of my followers; that is for sure. (1)

Khar and Dushan<sup>1</sup> were as strong and valiant as I am; say who can kill them except the Lord God himself. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Khar and Dushan were the sons of Ravana's maternal aunt—refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse no. 62. They were assigned the task of protecting



the outer borders of the demon kingdom, and were stationed in the formidable forest known as Dandakaranya from where Lord Ram stayed with his wife Sita and brother Laxman at the time of Supernakha's deformation and the subsequent abduction of Sita by Ravana.

Khar and Dushan had sought revenge for the insult of their sister Supernakha by attacking Lord Ram with a huge army of ferocious, vicious and battle-hardened demons. The Lord had easily and quickly eliminated all of them. This story is narrated in full in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20; and in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-35.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 180 that also reiterates this fact that all the members of the demon race of which Ravana was the king were stunningly strong and invincible in their own rights, and every single demon was so powerful and valiant that he could virtually conquer the whole world single-handedly.]

सुर रंजन भंजन महि भारा । जौं भगवंत लीन्ह अवतारा ॥ ३ ॥  
तौ मैं जाइ बैरु हठि करऊँ । प्रभु सर प्रान तजें भव तरऊँ ॥ ४ ॥

sura ranjana bhanjana mahi bhārā. jauriṁ bhagavanta līnha avatārā. 3.  
tau mairiṁ jā'i bairu haṭhi kara'ūṁ. prabhu sara prāna tajēṁ bhava tara'ūṁ. 4.

This being the case, and if my suspicions are not without foundation that it is indeed true that the Supreme Being who is the provider of happiness to the Gods and the Lord who removes the fear of the burden of the mundane world and its associated miseries and torments from the heart and the mind of all living being—if that Lord God has actually manifested himself (in the human form of Lord Ram), (3) ---

---Then I will surely go and establish animosity with him willingly, and without a second thought about it, so that I would be killed by the Lord's arrows, and thereby attain deliverance from this mundane gross world of transmigration. (4)

होइहि भजनु न तामस देहा । मन क्रम बचन मंत्र दृढ़ एहा ॥ ५ ॥  
जौं नररूप भूपसुत कोऊ । हरिहउं नारि जीति रन दोऊ ॥ ६ ॥

hō'ihi bhajanu na tāmasa dēhā. mana krama bacana mantra dṛṛha ēhā. 5.  
jauriṁ nararūpa bhūpasuta kō'ū. hariha'um' nāri jīti rana dō'ū. 6.

My body is so sinful and vile that I neither can I worship the Lord with it nor can I have devotion for him through its medium. I am very certain about it, and I am convinced of this fact in my mind and heart. So therefore, I will resolutely carry out my decision honestly, and I will do anything needed to be done by my words and deeds that my objective is achieved.

[To wit, now that I am convinced that the Supreme Lord has come personally to kill me, an event that is sure to liberate my soul that is trapped in this vile body of mine and provide it with deliverance, no matter what happens I will stick to my

decision and do everything within my means that the Lord does kill me. I will go to any extent, even if it is an action that is most contemptible like stealing Sita, but I will go about it nevertheless with a greater good of my soul in view.] (5)

On the other hand, if Ram is not what I think him to be, i.e. if he is an ordinary human prince instead of being a personified form of the Supreme Being, then I will keep his wife after abducting her and vanquishing the two (Lord Ram and his brother Laxman) in the battle-field.’<sup>1</sup> (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>These two verses, verse nos. 5 and 6, lay the ground for the rest of the story. Ravana had two things in his mind—one was to find deliverance if Lord Ram happened to be the Supreme Being, and the other was to usurp another woman as was his habit if the husband turns out to be an ordinary human being. This doubt in the mind of Ravana proved to be a virtual boon for the rest of the world as well as for the soul of the huge demon race.

For had Ravana had alone fought with Lord Ram in his hermitage at Dankakarnya itself before trying to take away Sita, then surely the Lord would have killed him as he did Khar and Dushan. In this case the rest of the demons would have escaped death, and that would have meant two things—one, the scourge of the demons would have remained intact because other close kins of Ravana, such as his fierce son Meghanad, and his brother Kumbhakarna would have survived to lead the demon race, and they would have continued unabated the reign of terror started by Ravana. And secondly, none of their souls would have had the golden opportunity to find liberation and deliverance from the cage of the demon body in which all of them were trapped.

But as it fortunately turned out, Ravana took away Sita to Lanka, and this forced Lord Ram to go to Lanka to launch a fierce war to rescue her. And in this war almost the entire demon race was eliminated. This ensured that the burden the earth faced from the cruelty and horrors spread by the demons under the command of Ravana ended once and for all in its entirety. But as it happens in all wars, not all demons died, for some who did not side with Ravana and did not participate in the war managed to live. The chief amongst such demons who survived the war was Vibhishan, Ravana’s own younger brother who had sided with Lord Ram at the beginning of the war. This ensured that only the good demons survived to carry on the lineage of the great sages Pulastya and Visrava to which Ravana and his line of demons belonged, instead of complete annihilation.

There is another way of looking at the decision which Ravana took—to take away Sita to Lanka instead of fighting Lord Ram in the forest itself. He had learnt of the fate of Khar and Dushan, and he was also aware that they had a huge army to support them. All of them were killed by Lord Ram. This scared the wits out of Ravana, and he could not muster sufficient courage to face Lord Ram alone in the battle-field. Besides this, he thought that if indeed Lord Ram is the Supreme Being as he was almost sure the Lord was, then why not let the other demons too have the benefit of liberation and deliverance at no extra effort by forcing them all to die in the battle fighting the Lord. For Ravana was sure that the Supreme Lord is so merciful and compassionate that he cannot allow any single demon to go to hell if the latter is killed in a battle in which the Lord himself is a participant.

Ravana correctly deduced that the nearness with the Lord itself is a blessing par-excellence in itself, and no soul can ever remain condemned if it happens to have the shadow of the Lord fall upon it. So in this aspect Ravana proved himself to be

selfless and gracious king of the demon race in as much as he ensured the spiritual welfare of all the demons instead of thinking of the deliverance of his soul alone.]

चला अकेल जान चढ़ि तहवाँ । बस मारीच सिंधु तट जहवाँ ॥ ७ ॥

इहाँ राम जसि जुगुति बनाई । सुनहु उमा सो कथा सुहाई ॥ ८ ॥

calā akēla jāna caḍhi tahavām̐. basa mārīca sindhu taṭa jahavām̐. 7.  
ihām̐ rāma jasi juguti banāī. sunahu umā sō kathā suhāī. 8.

[After long contemplation and deep thought, Ravana decided to act proactively and stop procrastinating. He had but no choice left: If he demurred and let this event go unchallenged, it would clearly mean submission and defeat even without a fight, which would make him a coward and show him in utterly poor light. For any brave warrior worth his name and salt, this eventuality is equivalent to death, if not worse. And on the other hand, if he went on the offensive there were two options that could happen—one was that he would die at the hands of the Supreme Being, for no one except the Supreme Lord could kill him, and so find emancipation and salvation for himself; and the other option was that he would conquer his opponent, the two human princes who have dared to challenge him, and restore the dignity and honour of his name and glory. So both ways he had nothing to lose, thought he wisely indeed. So therefore—]

He (Ravana) boarded his air-plane all alone and went to the place near the shore of the ocean where Marich lived<sup>1</sup>. (7)

Lord Shiva (who is the primary narrator of this wonderful story of Lord Ram) told his consort Uma (or Parvati), ‘Listen Uma. Now I shall tell you about the most interesting but mysterious device that Lord Ram devised (to carry forward his mission of eliminating the demons) back here in his hermitage (where Supernakha was deformed by Laxman and the demon army was killed by the Lord). (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Marich and other demons had come to defile the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. Lord Ram had killed all of them, but he had shot Marich with a headless arrow; so he escaped death but was flung afar to an island in the middle of the ocean where he lived in fear of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

It was here that Ravana had gone to engage Marich to give shape to his plans to kidnap Sita.

Why did Ravana, who was reputed to fear none, not even the powerful gods, choose to go alone? This is clear in the previous Chaupai line no. 1-3 where we read his extreme sense of bewilderment when he learnt that the mighty demons Khar and Dushan, who were comparable to him in gallantry, valour, strength and power, would be killed by a single human being; and so he deduced that their killer is not an ordinary human as he apparently appears to be, but the almighty Supreme Being who has finally come to remove the suffering of the earth caused by the demons by eliminating them.

Since he was a king of the demon race he kept a close watch over all the developments on earth, to ensure that no one would dare to raise a challenge to him

and his writ remained steady in all the corners of the earth. So his messengers must have surely briefed him about the slaying of Tadka, Subahu and other demons earlier, at the time Lord Ram had gone to protect the sacred fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra; but Ravana did not give their killing any great importance as he thought that the sage must have become exceedingly angry at them for defiling his fire sacrifice and may have taken the help of some warrior king to get rid of the offenders. Besides this, that area where Tadka etc. were killed was far away from Lanka and beyond the outer boundaries of the realm over which Ravana had the unquestioned sway of his authority. So he chose to look the other way.

But Khar, Dushan and Trishira were demons of a different mould, for they equaled Ravana in all respects of strength, power and abilities. More than that, the geographical area where they were killed was closer home, raising the dangerous spectre of an enemy in the back-yard who could attack any time. So when Ravana heard from Supernakha of their killing, along with their formidable army of able and most ferocious and vicious demon warriors, by a single person (Lord Ram), he was absolutely stunned and caught by a fierce grip of fear.

To wit, he became exceedingly alarmed. He prudently thought that if he takes his huge army when he goes to retaliate it would not be a wise thing as this is sure to raise a mighty din because the demons won't go quietly, they would yell and shriek even as they leave Lanka, which would let everyone in the city know where they are headed to, and in case they meet the same fate as the army of Khar and Dushan, what face would Ravana then have to show his citizens. Should this happen, it would be like being buried alive for him for he had never known defeat, and he had always returned from his campaigns a victor.

This unseemly event would have left him defenseless and most highly embarrassed in front of his own subjects; he would become an object of ridicule and laugh, and aside of losing self-respect and dignity he will have to face prospect of losing confidence of his subjects. The demons obeyed Ravana more out of fear of punishment for disobedience than out of any sense of respect for him; so once they find that their king has become vulnerable there were chances of revolt or mutiny.

Therefore he thought that it would be wise and prudent to avoid an immediate direct confrontation with Lord Ram in a remote area which is far away from his fortified fort at Lanka, and it would be wiser and militarily far-sighted to manipulate things to his advantage by compelling his enemy to come to his fort at Lanka, as then he would have all the strategic advantages of being on his own turf rather than far away in an alien land.

There were other reasons also for Ravana choosing to go alone to kidnap Sita. He was aware that many in his own family as well as in the city of Lanka were antagonized against him and internally hoped for his doom. One was his own brother Vibhishan whose devotion for Lord Vishnu, whom Ravana treated as his arch enemy, was well known; and later on Vibhishan did join Lord Ram when he was publicly rebuked by Ravana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8 where we read that it was Vibhishan who had disclosed to Hanuman the place where Sita was kept at Lanka; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Doha no. 41 where Ravana insulted Vibhishan and the latter decided to join Lord Ram's camp in disgust.}

His other brother Kumbhakarna was also not one of his admirers, for during the battle when Ravana asked him to pick up arms and go fight Lord Ram, Kumbhakarna had strongly admonished Ravana for his evil intentions which are sure

to bring destruction upon him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 64 where Kumbhakarna has not only chided Ravana for his madness but has also praised Vibhishan for joining Lord Ram.}

Amongst his citizens also there were many who did not like his unwarranted confrontation with Lord Ram for the sake of a woman. Once sterling example is that of the old demoness Trijata who had openly predicted Ravana's death and victory for Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 12; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.}

Ravana was aware of this situation; so he feared that if it was disclosed that he is going on a mission to abduct Sita and fight her husband Lord Ram if he obstructs, then there were fair chances that one of his brothers would make a coup-d-etat and usurp his crown while he was away, and he would be joined by those demons who were quietly against his rule but kept quiet out of fear till the opportune time came. This would have been catastrophic for Ravana. So he decided to keep his plans strictly confidential.]

दो०. लछिमन गए बनहिं जब लेन मूल फल कंद ।

जनकसुता सन बोले बिहसि कृपा सुख बृंद ॥ २३ ॥

dōhā.

lachimana ga'e banahim jaba lēna mūla phala kanda.  
janakasutā sana bōlē bihasi kṛpā sukha bṛnda. 23.

When Laxman had gone to the forest to collect firewood and edible roots and fruits, Lord Ram, who is a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion, smilingly told Sita, the daughter of Janak, as follows --- (Doha no. 23)

[Note—It is clear from this Doha that whatever Lord Ram confided with Sita was not known to Laxman. And what was this secret? It is narrated in the verses that follow herein below.

Two things are to be noted here: viz. (i) Lord Ram kept his plan for the future secret from Laxman, as he spoke about it to Sita when Laxman had gone away to the forest to collect firewood and eatables, and (ii) the Lord smiled while speaking to Sita.

The answer to the first question, 'why did Lord Ram kept the plan secret from Laxman', is that the Lord wanted Laxman to behave in an absolutely normal way as if the developments that would soon take place were great misfortunes that have suddenly come to haunt the two brothers. This would serve two purposes: one, the demons won't get any hint that everything is stage-managed with the sole aim of eliminating them because Laxman's reactions and attitude would be genuinely like a person going through the throes of a horrifying experience while already enduring the painful destiny devised for him by the cruel Creator; and second, it would help Laxman's excellent character and wonderful virtues such as courage, resilience, loyalty, faith, devotion, gallantry, valour and glory to shine through.

The second question is: 'why did the Lord smile'? The Lord smiled because what was to follow was though very unusual and unconventional but willingly undertaken by the Lord in order to carry out his duty as the Supreme Lord of the

world to eliminate the cruel demons so that the reign of terror they had spread all over could be ended, and the subjects of his kingdom could live in peace. Lord Ram smiled because he would now need Sita's active cooperation in the events that would soon unfold, events that ordinarily would be too repulsive and abhorable for Sita even to think of let alone her actively participating in them, such as her allowing herself to be abducted by Ravana and being held captive by him in his palace at Lanka, but it was absolutely essential to do it so that the Lord could carry out his master-plan of eliminating the scourge of the demons and protect the future of this world from their continuing reign of horrors and torments.

The Lord smiled so as to assure Sita that though the events that will unfold now onwards would make it necessary for both the Lord and Sita to behave like ordinary human beings who are in deep distress, but she must rest in peace that all of it is pre-planned by the Lord, and therefore there is no need for her to worry for her safety or get unduly alarmed mentally. It's a thing to be enjoyed by her like one enjoys a sport.]

चौ०. सुनहु प्रिया ब्रत रुचिर सुसीला । मैं कछु करबि ललित नरलीला ॥ १ ॥

तुम्ह पावक महुँ करहु निवासा । जौ लगि करौं निसाचर नासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu priyā brata rucira susilā. mair̥m kachu karabi lalita naralīlā. 1.  
tumha pāvaka mahum̐ karahu nivāsā. jau lagi karaum̐ nisācara nāsā. 2.

Lord Ram told Sita, 'My dear, listen. You have been steadfastly loyal to me and strict in your vows of fidelity, and you have indeed been most courteous and virtuous (and there is no doubt about it)<sup>1</sup>.

However, I (who am the Supreme Lord of this world) have to perform certain fascinating acts like an ordinary human being (in order to fulfill my divine mandate due to which I had been constrained to come down to earth in the form of a human)<sup>2</sup>.  
(1)

During the time I am engaged in eliminating the demons, you must dwell in the 'fire element' (tumha pāvaka mahum̐ karahu nivāsā)<sup>3</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram wished to reassure Sita, his chaste and loyal wife, that the drama which is to play out soon—during which the Lord would maneuver things in such a mysterious way that when the demon king Ravana would abduct her the Lord would not be able to save her—will never mean at all that he doubts her integrity and devotion to him. His leaving her for sometime and allowing her to be taken away by the demon king Ravana is part of the grand plan by which the Lord wished to eliminate the evil demons; so it has to be acted out to perfection because greater issues are at stake, and personal emotions should not be allowed to ruin the grand plan.

<sup>2</sup>The divine mandate of Lord Ram was to free the earth from the horrors and cruelty unleashed by the evil demons. It was a promise Lord Vishnu had made to the Gods and Mother Earth. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186 to Doha no. 187.}

Since the demon king Ravana had obtained a boon from Brahma, the creator, that he would not be killed by anyone except a human being, it was imperative for Lord Ram to act perfectly like a human being in order to uphold the sanctity of Brahma's words. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 177.}

This is the primary reason why all the acts and deeds of Lord Ram were like those of an ordinary person.

This is also one of the reasons why he kept Laxman out of the game-plan, so that Laxman may never act in a supernatural way in a huff when faced with some anxious moments, and give a hint about the Lord's true identity, no matter how grave and distressful the situation may be, for it would have surely alerted the demons who would have then escaped forthwith and go into hiding. If that happened, the Lord's strategy would have collapsed, and he would have failed to eliminate all of them in one go.

Lord Ram's doubts about Laxman disclosing the reality of who Sita and Ram were was not totally unfounded as Laxman was known to be of a short-temper, and when he got angry he did not bother about the consequences of what he said. There are earlier evidences for it when Laxman lost his patience when he thought some harm would come to his beloved Lord. We have instances to prove this point. For example, during the 'bow breaking ceremony' at Janakpur when no body had been able to lift and break the bow that would have entitled him to marry Sita, and so it appeared that she would have to remain unmarried, king Janak was extremely distressed and he had expressed his anguish by lamenting that the earth has become devoid of a true warrior. At that time Laxman rose up angrily to counter Janak and sternly rebuke him publicly for making this disparaging remark when Lord Ram was present in the assembly and had yet not been given a chance to try his hand at the bow. It was an august assembly and a solemn occasion, when all the great kings and princes of the time had assembled, and Janak was himself a wise king of great repute who was old enough to be shown due respect that Laxman would have shown to his own father king Dasrath. So to rebuke king Janak publicly was not something that can be regarded as being polite and good mannered by any account on the part of Laxman; yet he vented his anger without bothering about decorum and niceties of behaviour. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254.}

Immediately after this incident came another occasion when Laxman's short-temper was revealed. It so happened that no sooner had Lord Ram broken the bow than sage Parashuram arrived angrily to punish him who has dared to break Lord Shiva's bow, because the sage regarded Shiva as his revered deity. At that time also Laxman fearlessly faced Parashuram and boldly answered him back, going to the extent of teasing and rebuking him with impunity so much so that the whole assembly trembled in fear for it was something most unexpected as one is not supposed to stand up and answer a great sage on his face. By-and-by, Lord Ram intervened and sorted out the matter, calming the sage and preventing any further damage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

A third occasion for such exhibition of anger by Laxman was at the time when Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, had come to the forest to meet the Lord and try persuading him to go back to his capital. Bharat was accompanied by a huge entourage, and Laxman thought that he was coming to fight and get rid of them, i.e. Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, in the forest while they were alone and without the

support of any army, after which Bharat would be able to rule, unopposed, over the kingdom. So he got up and vehemently criticized Bharat without waiting to ascertain the facts, and declared that he would kill all of them single-handedly if Lord Ram would give him the signal. In this instance also Lord Ram intervened to calm him down, telling him that his fears were totally unfounded and uncalled for as Bharat was not the type of brother Laxman thinks him to be. Even the gods advised Laxman to act with wisdom. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233.}

To wit, Lord Ram thought it prudent to keep his plan secret from Laxman so as to avoid it being leaked by him if he gets annoyed and frustrated at the demons.

See also note appended to Doha no. 23 herein above; and Chaupai line no. 5 herein below.

<sup>3</sup>The advice of Lord Ram for Sita to dwell in the ‘fire element’ is very interesting and has great significance; it is more than what meets the eye.

The Beej Mantra (the essential spiritual formula by which any deity is known and worshipped, and which represents that particular deity’s cosmic energy and powers) for Lord Ram is the Sanskrit word ‘Rām’ (pronounced as Raang). Now, this is also the Beej Mantra for the Fire God, or the ‘fire element’ at the subtle level. So by advising Sita to abide in the ‘fire’, Lord Ram has ensured that she lives safely in the protection of the Fire God. The ‘fire’ is the most potent force in creation; it can reduce anything to ashes if it goes wild. So when Sita is protected by this cosmic fire, no harm would ever come to her.

There are other reasons as well for Lord Ram asking Sita to live in the protection of the ‘fire’. Soon Ravana would abduct her, and if she lives surrounded by the fire element it would ensure that her purity and holiness would not at all be compromised when Ravana takes her away and holds her captive in Lanka.

The all-knowing Lord Ram knew that soon Hanuman would burn Lanka, and so it was necessary to give Sita the shield of the fire element so that she does not get scorched in the searing heat at that time.

This very incident, of Sita entering the ‘fire’ to live there till the demons were eliminated, proves that she was not an ordinary human being, for no living human can ever hope to survive after entering fire. Though Sita had a visible body that resembled a woman, but her true form was ethereal and subtle, and it coincided with the form of the ‘fire element’ in its energy and dynamism.

So the merger, Sita and Fire, was as natural and seamless as two separate samples of burning fire coming close to coalesce with each other. When two candles are held so close that their wicks touch each other, we see only one flame; and when these two candles are separated again their flames too light up and burn independently. Likewise, when the demons were all finally killed and the Lord’s mission was accomplished, Sita remerged from the ‘fire element’ to have an independent existence.

And for how long did Sita live inside the fire element? It was for ‘one year’—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 3.]

जबहिं राम सब कहा बखानी । प्रभु पद धरि हियँ अनल समानी ॥ ३ ॥

निज प्रतिबिंब राखि तहँ सीता । तैसइ सील रूप सुबिनीता ॥ ४ ॥

लछिमनहूँ यह मरमु न जाना । जो कछु चरित रचा भगवाना ॥ ५ ॥



jabahim̐ rāma saba kahā bakhānī. prabhu pada dhari hiyam̐ anala samānī. 3.  
 nija pratibimba rākhi taham̐ sītā. taisa'i sīla rūpa subinītā. 4.  
 lachimanahūm̐ yaha maramu na jānā. jō kachu carita racā bhagavānā. 5.

When Lord Ram had clearly explained everything to her, Sita enshrined the Lord in her heart and entered the fire<sup>1</sup>. [Later on when the mission of elimination of the evil demons has been successfully accomplished, she would remerge from the fire to regain her original physical form.] (3)

Sita left behind an 'image' (or a reflection, a shadow, an apparition; "nija pratibimba") that completely resembled her in form, manners, politeness and other characters. (4)

Even Laxman did not know anything about this mysterious event as devised by the Lord (Sri Ram)<sup>2</sup>. (5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>An interesting episode regarding this 'image or apparition of Sita' is narrated in Skanda Puran, Vaishnav Khand (part), Bhumi-Varaaha (section). This story is that there was a Rishi Kanya (the daughter of an illustrious sage) named Veda-vati. She was meditating upon Lord Vishnu when Ravana saw her; he forcefully tried to take her away but she burnt herself in the sacrificial fire to save her honour. The Fire God became very angry and decided to use her to destroy Ravana. So at the time Sita voluntarily entered the fire, the Fire God brought Veda-vati, who was disguised to resemble Sita in all possible ways, and kept her in Sita's place to fulfill his vows of using her to kill Ravana. At the end of the War of Lanka, Sita was brought by the Fire God and handed over to Lord Ram, and at that time he prayed to Lord Ram to bless Veda-vati as she had not only played a crucial role in helping the Lord accomplish his mission but had also assumed the form of Sita for a while which entitles her to be accepted by the Lord. Then the Lord blessed her that during Kali-yuga (the fourth era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction) she would become a non-placental daughter of Akash (the 'sky'), and at that time she would be accepted by him in his cosmic form. 'Non-placental' implies that she won't have a gross physical form like ordinary creatures, and would have an ethereal form that coincides with the subtle form of her parent, i.e. the 'sky as an element'.

<sup>2</sup>See notes appended to Doha no. 23 and Chaupai line no. 1 herein above. When even Laxman was unaware of these developments, there is no question that any of the gods knew it, except of course the Fire God in whose custody Sita was kept.]

दसमुख गयउ जहाँ मारीचा । नाइ माथ स्वारथ रत नीचा ॥ ६ ॥  
 नवनि नीच कै अति दुखदाई । जिमि अंकुस धनु उरग बिलाई ॥ ७ ॥  
 भयदायक खल कै प्रिय बानी । जिमि अकाल के कुसुम भवानी ॥ ८ ॥

dasamukha gaya'u jahām̐ mārīcā. nā'i mātha svāratha rata nīcā. 6.  
 navani nīca kai ati dukhadāī. jimi aṅkusa dhanu uraga bilāī. 7.

bhayadāyaka khala kai priya bānī. jimi akāla kē kusuma bhavānī. 8.

Meanwhile, Ravana went to Marich's place and bowed his head before the latter, as he was very selfish and most wicked<sup>1</sup>. (6)

There is an axiom that when an evil and wicked person bows and shows undue respect to someone it portends great sorrows and misfortunes for the latter just like the cases when the goad is held at an angle (just before it is struck viciously at the enemy), the bow is bent (i.e. its string is pulled tight before an arrow is shot at the enemy), the serpent twists its body and stoops with its head low (just before it flings itself on the enemy and bites him viciously with its fangs), or the cat crouches (just before lunging forward and grabbing its victim, such as a rat, firmly between its sharp teeth). (7)

The seemingly friendly words of a person who is inherently wicked, vile and pervert are as dangerous and fearful as the blooming of flowers without the proper season<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Ravana never bowed before anyone, let alone another demon, all of whom he regarded as his subjects, for he was known to be exceedingly haughty and rough in his interaction with one and all. So when he acted most politely and in a friendly manner at the time of meeting Marich, the latter became alarmed as this was not in Ravana's nature, and he guessed rightly that there was something serious that is yet hidden from view, and a very grave development is in the offing. Ravana acted meekly because he was driven by selfish needs, which was to take the help of Marich to kidnap Sita. We will soon read that this show of politeness was short-lived because when Marich tried to dissuade Ravana from the misadventure he had planned, the latter threatened to kill him if he did not comply.

<sup>2</sup>When some natural calamity is about to occur, unusual things begin to happen. And one such thing is blooming of un-seasonal flowers. For example, if flowers that are usually seen during the winter months grow during the summer, it indicates that the earth is cooling faster than expected, and with an early onset of winter, the cycle of seasons would be disrupted. This is definitely not a good sign by any account.

So when Ravana acted humbly by speaking sweetly to Marich, it signaled to the latter that things are very bad, and some ominous news waits to be told.]

दो०. करि पूजा मारीच तब सादर पूछी बात ।

कवन हेतु मन व्यग्र अति अकसर आयहु तात ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

kari pūjā mārīca taba sādara pūchī bāta.

kavana hētu mana byagra ati akasara āyahu tāta. 24.

Marich welcomed his guest (Ravana) by worshipping him (to show his respect). Then he said respectfully, 'My dear (tāta). Prithee tell me, what is the reason you have come here alone and with an air of extreme urgency so much so that you did not even

have the time to announce your coming? You look extremely agitated, utterly perturbed, and distressed beyond measure.’ (Doha no. 24)

चौ०. दसमुख सकल कथा तेहि आगें । कही सहित अभिमान अभागें ॥ १ ॥

होहु कपट मृग तुम्ह छलकारी । जेहि बिधि हरि आनौं नृपनारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dasamukha sakala kathā tēhi āgēm. kahī sahita abhimāna abhāgēm. 1.  
hōhu kapaṭa mṛga tumha chalakārī. jēhi bidhi hari ānauṁ nṛpanārī. 2.

Ravana, the ten-faced one (dasamukha), who was shameless and was driven by ill-fate, haughtily narrated all the developments to him (Marich). (1)

Then he came straight away to the point, commanding Marich: ‘You must assume the form of a deer so that I can take away the wife of the king<sup>1</sup> (“nṛpanārī”; Sita, the wife of Lord Ram).’ (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Supernakha had already told Ravana that the two brothers were the sons of the king of Ayodhya—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 22.

So Ravana now refers to Lord Ram as a ‘king’ because he would ascend the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya when he returned home.

Why did Ravana plan to take away Sita instead of fighting the two brothers in the forest itself if his only aim was to take revenge for his sister’s humiliation and the killing of the demon army led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira? The probable reasons are the following:

It is said in Valmiki’s Ramayana that when the demon named Akampan reported to Ravana about the killing of Khar, Dushan etc., he wished to go immediately to fight with and punish Lord Ram and Laxman for it. But Akampan warned him that the two brothers were not like others whom Ravana had so easily subdued in the past, and it is for certain that he will himself be defeated if he fought alone with the two brothers. So it would be wiser for him to steal their woman and force them to come to his fort at Lanka where he would have the support of his extensive army of most powerful demons as well as his own family members such as his invincible son Meghnad who had defeated Indra, the king of gods, and his brother Kumbhakarna who had the strength of thousands of wild elephants. Ravana therefore decided to play safely and avoid a direct confrontation with Lord Ram in the forest; so he instead brought Sita to Lanka to force his enemy to come to his own battle-field where he would have an upper hand by all means.

Akampan reasoned that since Lord Ram loved his wife Sita exceedingly, so when he discovers that she has gone away, and chances of him ever recovering her was extremely remote, he would die of grief; and Laxman would follow suit because he was too devoted to his loving brother to survive the agony of separation from him. The added bonus of this scheme was that Ravana would have a lady (Sita) who was peerless in beauty and charm. This strategy suited Ravana very well, so he decided to abduct Sita instead of fighting with the two brothers. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 31, verse nos. 21-33.}

We have read earlier in our present narrative that Supernakha had told Ravana about the fate of Khar and Dushan etc., as well as about the exceptional valour of

Lord Ram and Laxman, and about the beauty of Sita. When Ravana heard what happened to Khar, Dushan etc. he became hesitant because he knew that it was not an easy thing to kill them. He therefore could not gather enough courage to confront someone who had killed Khar-Dushan etc. And upon hearing of the beauty of Sita his old habit of being lustful and promiscuous resurfaced once again, motivating him to surreptitiously bring Sita to his palace. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23.}]

तेहिं पुनि कहा सुनहु दससीसा । ते नररूप चराचर ईसा ॥ ३ ॥  
तासों तात बयरु नहिं कीजै । मारें मरिअ जिआएँ जीजै ॥ ४ ॥

tēhiṁ puni kahā sunahu dasasīsā. tē nararūpa carācara īsā. 3.  
tāsōm tāta bayaru nahim kījai. mārēm mari'a ji'ā'ēm' jījai. 4.

Then Marich spoke once again, 'Listen oh ten-headed Ravana! He (Lord Ram) is actually the Lord of the whole world that consists of animate beings as well as inanimate entities, who has revealed himself in a human form<sup>1</sup>. (3)

Oh my dear (tāta). You must not create enmity with someone who is so powerful that death and life occur by his mere wish. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This is exactly what Ravana had himself deduced; and now Marich has endorsed it. So Ravana became all the more convinced of the Lord's divinity, and hence all the more determined to get himself killed by the Lord so that he can attain deliverance and emancipation for his soul. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 23 herein above.]

मुनि मख राखन गयउ कुमारा । बिनु फर सर रघुपति मोहि मारा ॥ ५ ॥  
सत जोजन आयउ छन माहीं । तिन्ह सन बयरु किऐँ भल नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

muni makha rākhana gaya'u kumārā. binu phara sara raghupati mōhi mārā. 5.  
sata jōjana āya'um' chana māhīm. tinha sana bayaru ki'ēm' bhala nāhīm. 6.

These two young princes had gone to protect the fire sacrifice of the sage (Vishwamitra). When I went to defile it, Lord Ram had shot a headless arrow at me<sup>1</sup>. (5)

I was immediately flung for a hundred Yojans<sup>2</sup> by its force and landed on this remote island. I tell you in good faith that it is not a good idea at all to become an enemy of such a person. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 210.

<sup>2</sup>1 Yojan = approx. 8 miles. This figure is a median one because according to some scales 1 Yojan is either 4 miles or 16 miles. 4 multiplied by 2 = 8; and 16 divided by 2 = 8.]

भइ मम कीट भृंग की नाई । जहँ तहँ मैं देखउँ दोउ भाई ॥ ७ ॥  
जौं नर तात तदपि अति सूरा । तिन्हहि बिरोधि न आइहि पूरा ॥ ८ ॥

bha'i mama kīṭa bhr̥ṅga kī nā'ī. jaham̃'taham̃'maiṁ dēkha'um̃ dō'u bhā'ī. 7.  
jauṁ nara tāta tadapi ati sūrā. tinhahi birōdhi na ā'ihī pūrā. 8.

I was so stunned and struck with fear that ever since that time I see the two brothers all around me wherever I look. It is like the case of an insect that is captured by a wasp and held captive by it<sup>1</sup>. (7)

Even in the rare chance of them being human beings, it is sure and certain that they are invincible, being extremely valiant, strong and powerful. In all sooth and without gainsay therefore, it is not sensible and practical to create enmity with them as it is impossible to conquer them. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The wasp catches hold of an insect and keeps it in its nest. Then the wasp hovers over the prey and hums around it constantly so much so that in due course of time the insect too turns into a wasp at the mental level and begins to hum in way that synchronizes with the humming of the wasp.

Likewise, Marich was so terrified of Lord Ram and Laxman that he feared them every moment of his life. This means that he remembered them every second so much so that every now and then he would think that either Lord Ram or Laxman have arrived to kill him. Even a slight movement of the leaf of a tree, or a bird flying overhead, or the rustling of the wind would send shivers down his spine. To wit, Marich's life was overwhelmed by the thoughts of Lord Ram and Laxman. This situation granted an unexpected advantage to Marich—for it transformed fear into a sort of constant remembrance of the Lord, which, to wit, was like his doing meditation constantly.

So, Marich unwittingly got transmewed into a devotee of Lord Ram from being a vile demon that he had earlier been, just like the insect that becomes one in the likeness of the wasp in due course of time because the latter keeps buzzing around the former.]

दो०. जेहिं ताड़का सुबाहु हति खंडेउ हर कोदंड ।  
खर दूषन तिसिरा बधेउ मनुज कि अस बरिबंड ॥ २५ ॥

dōhā.

jēhiṁ tāṛakā subāhu hati khaṇḍē'u hara kōdaṇḍa.  
khara dūṣana tisirā badhē'u manuja ki asa baribaṇḍa. 25.

There is no gainsay in the fact that the he who had slayed the ferocious demoness Tadka and the equally ferocious demons Subhau etc.<sup>1</sup>, and had broken the sturdy bow

of Lord Shiva, which no one amongst the strong warrior of the world, who had always prided themselves about the might of their arms, could as much as even shift an inch, forget about lifting and breaking it<sup>2</sup>, and had then proved his valour and strength beyond a trace of doubt by slaying the mighty demons Khar-Dushan<sup>3</sup>, can never be an ordinary human being, for no human has ever had the guts or the wherewithal to even confront these worthy demons let alone kill them single-handed. (2)

[To wit, a gentleman who has accomplished such remarkable feat is surely endowed with supernatural; whatever be the case he is certainly not an ordinary prince as you may be inclined to think.] (Doha no. 25).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Tadka was the mother of Marich; she had attacked Lord Ram and Laxman when they had accompanied sage Vishwamitra to his hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice. Lord Ram had accomplished the stunning feat of killing her with a single arrow. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209.

<sup>2</sup>This event is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.

<sup>3</sup>A little later, when Subahu and Marich etc. had attacked the Lord, he had shot a ‘fire-arrow’ that burnt Subahu, and then he shot Marich with a headless arrow that flung him to the center of the ocean where Ravana visited him presently. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 210.]

चौ०. जाहु भवन कुल कुसल बिचारी । सुनत जरा दीन्हिसि बहु गारी ॥ १ ॥

गुरु जिमि मूढ़ करसि मम बोधा । कहु जग मोहि समान को जोधा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāhu bhavana kula kusala bicārī. sunata jarā dīnhisi bahu gārī. 1.

guru jimī mūr̥ha karasi mama bōdhā. kahu jaga mōhi samāna kō jōdhā. 2.

So it would be wise for you to go back home if you are concerned about the welfare of your race.’

Upon hearing these words (of Marich), he (Ravana) was scorched by the fire of anger and hate, and he strongly rebuked the advisor by abusing him for showing the impertinence that he had just dared to exhibit.

[To wit, this good and prudent advice by Marich, vouchsafed with all sincerity and integrity, was however taken as a personal insult by Ravana who treated it as a direct affront to his authority, strength and powers by one of his own race, whom he had trusted all along as being one of his loyal soldiers. Now this fellow Marich appears to be an advocate of the enemy; he was deriding his own king, Ravana, and praising his enemy, Lord Ram. Obviously this was an intolerable a proposition, and it poured oil in the already fire of revenge burning inside the demon king. He anger was further stoked and he sternly warned Marich by using abusive language.] (1)

‘Oh you stupid devil of a fellow; you preach me as if you are my Guru (teacher). Tell me, if you dare, who in this world is as strong and valiant a warrior as me?

[To wit, you are not a novice, nor an ordinary demon. You are well acquainted with my matchless powers which have made even the gods bow and surrender before me. How dare you then say such things to me to scare me off my projected plans? I am not accustomed to hear lectures, nor am I habituated to imagine fear when none exists. Mind you; you will pay a heavy price if you refuse to heed to my commands, which I had been polite enough, in deference to your age and seniority, to wrap in words that sounded like I was making a request, for I could have ordered you straight away without giving you a chance to give a long lecture to me, something I have always detested.] (2)

तब मारीच हृदयँ अनुमाना । नवहि बिरोधें नहिं कल्याणा ॥ ३ ॥

सज़ी मर्मी प्रभु सठ धनी । बैद बंदि कबि भानस गुनी ॥ ४ ॥

taba mārīca hr̥dayam̐ anumānā. navahi birōdhēm nahim̐ kalyānā. 3.  
sastri marmī prabhu saṭha dhanī. baida bandi kabi bhānasa gunī. 4.

Then Marich thought to himself about an axiom that says that it is to no one's welfare to create enmity with the following nine persons [3]: --- an armed opponent who is skilled in the use of the weapon (*sastri*), he who knows one's closely held secret (*marmī*), an able and powerful lord or master (*prabhu*), a utterly foolish person who lacks even basic scruples and has no knowledge of the affairs (*saṭha*), a rich person of influence (*dhanī*), a medicine man (*baida*), a slave, who is also a flatterer, who would willingly betray one before his lord if it suits him (*bandi*), a expert poet and singer (*kabi* --- *gunī*), and a cook who is an expert in his art (*bhānasa gunī*) [4]. (3-4)

[Note—These nine persons are not to be relied upon; one should not confide too much in them for if due to some reason, howsoever inconsequential it may be, they become hostile, or they decide that they have something to gain by betraying even their best of friends, then they will have no regret in back-stabbing anyone, though on the face they would continue to maintain a fictitious show of friendship and warmth as previously.

For instance, if a person picks up an argument with a man who is armed and whom he had known for a long time, and this argument becomes nasty due to some reason so much to make his armed acquaintance lose his control, there are fare chances that he would draw his weapon to settle scores, though he would later repent for it throughout his life.

A rich person of influence and a powerful lord too are very dangerous, for no one knows when they would decide to get someone out of the way.

It is wisely said that “an intelligent man, or a man of scruples, is a better enemy than a hundred fools as friends”; because it is possible to reason with the former but impossible to do so with the latter who would cause more problems than solving any.

A poet or a singer, if he is offended by someone, may spring a surprise by reciting a taunting couplet or singing some lines of a song that are loaded with sarcasm at a gathering that would be directly aimed at the person who has offended them; it may cause a laugh and jeering in the audience which would be extremely humiliating for the person concerned; rather it would bury him in shame, and if he is a man of any worth it would be like actually injuring him with a mortal wound.

A person who knows someone else's secret would blackmail him if it serves his vested interests at some point of time, without regret that such behaviour is an outright violation of the strict vows of confidentiality that were vouchsafed earlier.

Similarly, if one angers a personal cook or a personal physician, and by some misadventure they decide to take revenge, they would poison that person so secretly that no one would know what had actually happened that led to this catastrophe, as that person would be already dead by the time investigation starts, if any at all, for an expert cook or a doctor would know the method of administering a poison that takes effect slowly, bringing about the person's death a long time from the moment the poison was actually used on him.]

उभय भँति देखा निज मरना । तब ताकिसि रघुनायक सरना ॥ ५ ॥

उतरु देत मोहि बधब अभागें । कस न मरौ रघुपति सर लागें ॥ ६ ॥

ubhaya bhāṁti dēkhā nija maranā. taba tākisi raghunāyaka saranā. 5.  
utaru dēta mōhi badhaba abhāgēm. kasa na maraun raghupati sara lāgēm.  
6.

When Marich saw that either way his death was certain, he decided to seek refuge in the holy feet of Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram). (5)

He thought to himself, 'If I answer him (Ravana) back, he is sure to kill me. Then if my death has finally arrived, why should I not die at the hands of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) by being shot with his arrows?' (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>To wit, Marich became certain that if he refused to cooperate with Ravana, he is sure to kill him; and if he followed his orders and became a deer then Lord Ram would go after him and shoot him down. In this scenario it would be wiser for him to die at the hands of Lord Ram as this death would ensure that his soul finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and he would attain eternal beatitude and peace; for it is evident from what Marich has advised Ravana that he was sure that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being but the promised manifestation of the Supreme Being that would bring an end to the evil demon race.

How was Marich so certain of Lord Ram's reality? Well, when his mother Tadka was killed by the Lord by a single arrow, sage Vishwamitra had offered his worship to him and taught him some esoteric knowledge that only the sage was acquainted with. Vishwamitra was no ordinary sage; he was a 'great sage' who had a transcendental reach and could know the developments taking place in all the three dimensions of time, the past, the present and the future. He had known that the Supreme Being has manifested in the form of Lord Ram from the very beginning, and the killing of Tadka confirmed his beliefs. After death, Tadka was granted liberation and deliverance by Lord Ram. Marich had observed all these developments first hand as he was also one of the demons who had been living in the same forest as Tadka and was constantly defiling the fire sacrifice of the sage; he had also seen his mother's fate, and the sage worshipping the Lord. So nothing was hidden from him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 206; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 209.}

So what Ravana only guessed about Lord Ram (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23 earlier), Marich was convinced of it.]



अस जियँ जानि दसानन संगी । चला राम पद प्रेम अभंगा ॥ ७ ॥  
मन अति हरष जनाव न तेही । आजु देखिहउँ परम सनेही ॥ ८ ॥

asa jiyam̐ jāni dasānana saṅgā. calā rāma pada prēma abhaṅgā. 7.  
mana ati haraṣa janāva na tēhī. āju dēkhiha'um̐ parama sanēhī. 8.

Realising this truth in his heart, he accompanied the ten-headed Ravana to where Lord Ram was; he had developed a steady affection for the holy feet of the Lord deep inside himself. (7)

He was exceedingly joyous and exhilarated in his mind and heart (Mana) but he managed not to reveal his excitement; he was lost in a reverie, thinking thus: 'Today I am going to see him whom I love so much indeed'<sup>1</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When finally Marich decided that that opportunity has come which would give him a chance to go where his mother had gone and be united with her, and in the process also ensure his own salvation and emancipation, his steps were quick and resolute; his legs seems to have developed wings. He was happy that he has been selected by providence to play a crucial role in the fulfillment of the Supreme Being's mandate; it was an honour and not a curse. After all, all living beings have to die one day; then why not die for the Lord, serving him and his noble cause?

So therefore, Marich was very cheerful and willing; he was not like someone going to the guillotine, but like someone going to accept a prize.

But he knew that Ravana's intention was different; so he played wisely by keeping his joy to himself.]

छं०. निज परम प्रीतम देखि लोचन सुफल करि सुख पाइहौं । १ ।  
श्री सहित अनुज समेत कृपानिकेत पद मन लाइहौं ॥ २ ॥  
निर्बान दायक क्रोध जा कर भगति अबसहि बसकरी । ३ ।  
निज पानि सर संधानि सो मोहि बधिहि सुखसागर हरी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nija parama prītama dēkhi lōcana suphala kari sukha pā'ihaur̥m. 1.  
śrī sahita anuja samēta kṛpānikēta pada mana lā'ihaur̥m. 2.  
nirbāna dāyaka krōdha jā kara bhagati abasahi basakarī. 3.  
nija pāni sara sandhāni sō mōhi badhihi sukhasāgara harī. 4.

[Marich had, by this time, realized that his salvation lay only in surrendering before Lord Ram, who was a human manifestation of the Supreme Being himself. He developed affection for Lord Ram and began treating the Lord as his dearest friend. These verses show that a natural and inalienable bond of affection and endearment exist between a creature's individual soul and the universal Soul of this creation; it's a natural bond that ties the creature, the off-spring, to the Supreme Being who is the Father of all who have come into being in this family called 'creation' that He heads.

So therefore, when he agreed to accompany Ravana to where Lord Ram was, he was overwhelmed with the loving idea of meeting Lord Ram, the beloved of his soul; and like a beloved lost in the thoughts of the lover while on the way to meet the latter, Marich too was lost in a reverie of ecstasy and sweetness of imagination of what was to come soon. It ought to be noted here that the element of fear and the prospect of getting injured by an arrow was not at all in the mental radar of Marich; on the contrary it was a moment of celebration for him; it was a final journey leading to his deliverance and emancipation from this mortal life of a demon for which he had been waiting all through his life. Hence there was nothing to regret or fear; rather it was a momentous journey that ought to be celebrated and cherished.]

Marich was lost in a reverie of ecstasy, thinking sweetly of the moments when— ‘I shall make myself fortunate and feel exceedingly exhilarated by seeing my beloved (Lord Ram) till my eyes are filled with this pleasant sight. (Chanda line no. 1)

Indeed, I shall fix my attention on the holy feet of the Lord who is an abode of mercy and compassion, the Lord who is accompanied by Sita and his younger brother (Laxman)<sup>1</sup>. (Chanda line no. 2)

Oh my good fortune; I am so lucky even to think that I shall go and seek refuge with the Lord who is so merciful and kind that even his apparent anger provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature, and whose Bhakti (devotion) is so exceptionally graceful that it even goes to the extend of making the Lord willfully submit himself to the command of his devotees<sup>2</sup>! (Chanda line no. 3)

It is this same Lord who is an ocean of bliss and beatitude, who will aim an arrow at me and shoot me with his own hands (to ensure that I don't miss the chance of discarding this vile body of mine as a demon, and find liberation from it; the Lord would make sure that my soul gets instant deliverance; that I am provided emancipation and salvation at the first opportunity). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Marich's soul desired to pay its homage to the Supreme Lord in all the forms in which the Lord has manifested; he wanted his worship to be complete in all respects. So therefore, instead of fixing his mind only on Lord Ram, he remembered even Laxman and Sita who are fractional parts of the Supreme Being, for Sita represented the Lord's 'Shakti', or the Lord's dynamic cosmic energy, and Laxman represented 'Seshnath', the Lord's that form that supports the world from below. In the story of the Ramayan, Laxman had played a pivotal role as Lord Ram's closest aide and comrade-in-arm; so without him the Lord was half. Marich was indeed very wise as he left nothing to chance.

<sup>2</sup>When the Lord becomes angry he will shoot an arrow to kill; but in this apparent show of anger there is hidden mercy for the creature as this killing frees the soul from the cage of the gross body which had become so sinful and evil. The merciful Lord's anger is also a blessing in disguise; it is not like the anger of ordinary masters or lords who punish their servants or subordinates only physically, without bothering about their long-term good.

Bhakti or devotion is an excellent medium by which the Lord can be attained by a devotee. It is a tool that is very dear to the Lord himself. The spiritual value of Bhakti has been sung at many places in Ram Charit Manas. A glimpse of its

importance and glory can be had in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.]

दो०. मम पाछें धर धावत धरें सरासन बान ।

फिरि फिरि प्रभुहि बिलोकिहउँ धन्य न मो सम आन ॥ २६ ॥

dōhā.

mama pāchēm dhara dhāvata dharēm sarāsana bāna.

phiri phiri prabhuhi bilōkiha'um' dhan'ya na mō sama āna. 26.

Indeed without gainsay, there is no one as lucky as myself—because I shall turn back repeatedly and see the Lord pursuing me with an arrow in his hands to shoot me (but he would hesitate to do so even as he keeps playing hide and seek with me so as to allow me the beautiful chance of enjoying that wonderful sight for a long time).<sup>1</sup> (Doha no. 26)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In his ecstatic state of the mind, Marich imagines how he will run ahead of the Lord who will follow him from behind with an arrow in hand. The Lord would not shoot him down instantly, for he would have done so if he had so wished. But why would the Lord take his time in shooting down Marich? It would be in deference to Marich's own wish—that he would like to enjoy the divine sight of the Lord pursuing him, a sight that would fill him with immense joy and beatitude. So therefore, the Lord allowed time for Marich to have his heart-full viewing of the Lord's divine form pursuing him with a bow and an arrow in hand, and of course with a smile on his face and compassion in his eyes, for that is what Marich had longed for, and the merciful Lord wished to fulfill the last wishes of Marich as it is the natural wont of the Lord to fulfill all desires of his devotees.]

चौ०. तेहि बन निकट दसानन गयऊ । तब मारीच कपटमृग भयऊ ॥ १ ॥

अति बिचित्र कछु बरनि न जाई । कनक देह मनि रचित बनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhi bana nikaṭa dasānana gaya'ū. taba mārīca kapaṭamṛga bhaya'ū. 1.

ati bicitra kachu barani na jāī. kanaka dēha mani racita banāī. 2.

When the ten-headed Ravana went near that forest (where Lord Ram dwelt at Panchavati, and where Supernakha was deformed), Marich immediately assumed the false form of a deer (mārīca kapaṭamṛga bhaya'ū)<sup>1</sup>. (1)

That deer had a strange but marvelously wonderful form that defies description. It had a golden hide that was dotted with sparkling spots as if it was studded with priceless gems<sup>2</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Marich created a delusion that gave the impression that he was a deer. Demons had that power by which they could assume any form they wished. Supernakha had, as we have already seen, employed this magical power to become a beautiful lady in order to deceive Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181 which reiterate this fact about the demons.

<sup>2</sup>It is observed even today that in the geographical area where Lord Ram had his hermitage at that time, a place known as Panchavati that falls in the present-day state of Maharashtra in western India, a special type of deer is found; it has a yellow skin that is richly dotted with silvery white spots; its face differs from other deer, and its underbelly is coloured light blue. Locally it is called a 'Chital'. This animal is exclusive to this region. So perhaps it was one of such rare species of deer that Marich transformed himself into.

It is also possible that Lord Ram, being so merciful and considerate, had granted this boon to the dying Marich that the form which he had assumed will be immortalized in a new species of deer that would now onwards become common to that particular region.]

सीता परम रुचिर मृग देखा । अंग अंग सुमनोहर बेष्टा ॥ ३ ॥

सुनहु देव रघुबीर कृपाला । एहि मृग कर अति सुंदर छाला ॥ ४ ॥

सत्यसंध प्रभु बधि करि एही । आनहु चर्म कहति बैदेही ॥ ५ ॥

sītā parama rucira mṛga dēkhā. aṅga aṅga sumanōhara bēṣā. 3.  
sunahu dēva raghubīra kṛpālā. ēhi mṛga kara ati sundara chālā. 4.  
satyasandha prabhu badhi kari ēhī. ānahu carma kahati baidēhī. 5.

Sita saw this most fascinating deer whose body was extremely beautiful to look at; this sight charmed her a lot and it caught her fancy. (3)

She called out to Lord Ram and said, 'Oh Lord (dēva); oh the merciful and kind Lord of the Raghus (raghubīra kṛpālā); listen! This deer has a very beautiful hide. (4)

Oh Lord, you are true to your words (satyasandha prabhu)<sup>1</sup>; so kill this deer and bring its hide for me. (5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Sita's observation is quite significant here. Earlier, in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 24 we read that Lord Ram had shared with Sita the secret plan by which he wished to eliminate the sinful demons, and now the time appears to have come to give effect to that master-plan. Sita wished to indicate to Lord Ram that she is willing to cooperate with the Lord, and though the events that would now unfold will force her to be separated from her beloved Lord and get kidnapped by the demon Ravana, but she wishes to cheerfully undergo this test as it would help Lord Ram to successfully accomplish his divine mandate.

She thought that perhaps the Lord would hesitate to go after the deer as he knew the consequences of this action, but since the suffering and difficulties that

would follow need to be endured for larger good of the world it was necessary for the Lord to shed his reluctance and go ahead with the plan.

So in order to pre-empt chances of Lord Ram's hesitating in taking proactive action on this crucial matter, Sita reminded him that "he must live up to his reputation of being true to his words". And what was that word? It was the word that the Lord Vishnu had given to the Gods and Mother Earth that he would come down to this mortal world to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

The Lord had reiterated his resolve to eliminate the demons once again before the many forest dwelling sages and hermits who had accompanied him during his passage through the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

The next verse no. 6 explicitly says so, and Sita's request to the Lord removed all hesitation that he may have had.]

तब रघुपति जानत सब कारन । उठे हरषि सुर काजु सँवारन ॥ ६ ॥  
 मृग बिलोकि कटि परिकर बाँधा । करतल चाप रुचिर सर साँधा ॥ ७ ॥  
 प्रभु लछिमनहि कहा समुझाई । फिरत बिपिन निसिचर बहु भाई ॥ ८ ॥  
 सीता केरि करेहु रखवारी । बुधि बिबेक बल समय बिचारी ॥ ९ ॥

taba raghupati jānata saba kārana. uṭhē haraṣi sura kāju samvārana. 6.  
 mrga bilōki kaṭi parikara bām̐dhā. karatala cāpa rucira sara sām̐dhā. 7.  
 prabhu lachimanahi kahā samujhāī. phirata bipina nisicara bahu bhāī. 8.  
 sītā kēri karēhu rakhavārī. budhi bibēka bala samaya bicārī. 9.

Then Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram), who was aware of all the reasons behind this development<sup>1</sup>, cheerfully got up to fulfill the objective of the gods that. [And this objective was to eliminate the problem created by the cruel and sinful demon race. The time has come to act upon the word that Lord Vishnu had given to the gods earlier, and so Lord Ram gladly got up to fulfill his mission on earth.] (6)

Looking at the deer, the Lord tied his garments tightly around his hips to prepare for the job at hand, and lifting his beautiful bow in his hands he stringed it and mounted the arrow on it<sup>2</sup>. (7)

Then the Lord summoned Laxman and explained to him: 'Oh brother. A lot of demons roam around in the forest unchecked (and so you ought to be careful and on the full alert to avoid any misadventure). (8)

Take care of Sita's safety in accordance with your wisdom and circumstance; employ your strength and discretion while doing so.<sup>3</sup> (9)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23 where the same mystical virtue of the Lord has been affirmed.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Ram could have easily aimed and shot the arrow from where he stood instead of going behind Marich for quite some distance from his hermitage. So why was it

done this way? It was necessary to go far away from the hermitage so that ample time and opportunity was given to Ravana to abduct Sita. After all, it was a part of the grand plan of Lord Ram. This is the reason why Lord Ram went on pursuing Marich for a long distance till it was safe for Ravana to take Sita away. And this is also the reason why the Lord maneuvered things in such a way that Laxman, who was deputed to protect Sita, would also be summoned away from the hermitage as we shall read below.

<sup>3</sup>Lord Ram advised Laxman to use his strength, discretion, wisdom and intelligence to protect Sita according to the circumstance that may arise. Since it was impossible to predict as to what may happen, the Lord left it to Laxman to decide the course of action in accordance to the demands of the situation.

These instructions of the Lord are very important, for it gives Laxman a lot of discretion powers. As the events would unfold and a situation would arise soon when Sita forced him to leave her alone and go to where Lord Ram was near Marich, Laxman's wisdom told him to follow Sita's orders so that no unsavory development can take place that would cast aspersions on his integrity and loyalty to the Lord. Had Lord Ram been specific in his instructions to Laxman—that he must not leave Sita alone under any circumstance whatsoever, Laxman would have had a solid excuse to refuse Sita's orders and continue to remain in the hermitage.

But had this happened, had Laxman not left Sita alone, the long-term planning of the Lord would have gone hay-wire; for then Ravana would not have been able to kidnap her, and so the whole lot of things that followed this singular event that will ultimately result in the elimination of the demons would not have taken place. This would have undermined the Lord's mission. Hence, the wise Lord left a lot of open space to help things fall into their own right position.]

प्रभुहि बिलोकि चला मृग भाजी । धाए रामु सरासन साजी ॥ १० ॥  
 निगम नेति सिव ध्यान न पावा । मायामृग पाछें सो धावा ॥ ११ ॥  
 कबहुँ निकट पुनि दूर पराई । कबहुँक प्रगटइ कबहुँ छपाई ॥ १२ ॥  
 प्रगटत दुरत करत छल भूरी । एहि बिधि प्रभुहि गयउ लै दूरी ॥ १३ ॥

prabhuhi bilōki calā mrga bhājī. dhā'ē rāmu sarāsana sājī. 10.  
 nigama nēti siva dhyāna na pāvā. māyāmrga pāchēm sō dhāvā. 11.  
 kabahum' nikaṭa puni dūri parā'ī. kabahum'ka pragaṭa'i kabahum' chapā'ī. 12.  
 pragaṭata durata karata chala bhūrī. ēhi bidhi prabhuhi gaya'u lai dūrī. 13.

No sooner did the deer saw Lord Ram than he ran away from the place even as the Lord followed it in hot pursuit with his bow and arrow at the ready. (10)

It is such a wonder that the Lord—who is inaccessible even for the Vedas (i.e. even the scriptures are unable to know him in full) that assert that none of what they know defines the Lord in entirety, and who also remains beyond the reach of Lord Shiva inspite of the latter constantly remaining submerged in meditating upon him<sup>1</sup>—would pursue a false deer and run behind it (like an ordinary man). (11)

At one instant the deer appeared to be near, and in the other moment it fled to a distant point; at one moment it was visible and at the next moment it disappeared from sight<sup>2</sup>. (12)

In this way, employing tricks that made it play hide and seek with the Lord, revealing and concealing itself in quick succession, the deer took Lord Ram far away (from the hermitage). (13)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i); Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 341.

The Lord who is all-knowing would run behind a false deer without knowing who it actually was is something that is very astounding and beyond comprehension; but it is the mysterious way of the Lord by which he does many things that no one can understand.

<sup>2</sup>When we read the story of how king Pratapbhanu was misled by the wild boar during the hunt, a similar situation is seen. It has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 157. So it is easy to conclude that these demons were skilled in employing tricks that made them appear and disappear from sight as they pleased; this was in addition to their ability to change forms quickly. These tricks helped them to trap their victims as well as to avoid being captured. ]

तब तकि राम कठिन सर मारा । धरनि परेउ करि घोर पुकारा ॥ १४ ॥  
 लछिमन कर प्रथमहिं लै नामा । पाछें सुमिरेसि मन महुँ रामा ॥ १५ ॥  
 प्रान तजत प्रगटेसि निज देहा । सुमिरेसि रामु समेत सनेहा ॥ १६ ॥  
 अंतर प्रेम तासु पहिचाना । मुनि दुर्लभ गति दीन्हि सुजाना ॥ १७ ॥

taba taki rāma kaṭhina sara mārā. dharani parē'u kari ghōra pukārā. 14.  
 lachimana kara prathamahim lai nāmā. pāchēm sumirēsi mana mahum' rāmā.  
 15.  
 prāna tajata pragaṭēsi nija dēhā. sumirēsi rāmu samēta sanēhā. 16.  
 antara prēma tāsu pahicānā. muni durlabha gati dīnhi sujānā. 17.

Finally, when they had gone far away, Lord Ram aimed an arrow and shot the deer. It fell down on the earth with a thunderous roar and yelling aloud in a terrifying manner. (14)

While falling down on the ground, the deer first called out loudly the name of Laxman, and then silently remembered the name of Lord Ram in his Mana (heart and mind)<sup>1</sup>. (15)

At the instant of his death, Marich resumed his original form of a demon, and remembered Lord Ram with a lot of affection and love. (16)

The omniscient Lord, who knows the inner thoughts of all, saw that Marich had immense love for him in his heart, so the good Lord rewarded him in his death by granting him that spiritual stature that is rare even for great sages to attain.

[To wit, Lord Ram granted deliverance to the soul of Marich; he gave Marich emancipation and salvation, and abiding bliss, felicity and beatitude that great sages and hermits long for. The next Doha explicitly tells us what special grace Lord Ram had bestowed upon Marich; it tells us that the Lord granted him a transcendental state that was equivalent to the Lord himself in divinity and holiness.]<sup>2</sup> (17)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This sound indicated to Laxman the direction where Lord Ram was present. Marich could have died quietly but even during his last moments he wished to be loyal to his master, Ravana. It made it necessary for him to call out for Laxman so that he leaves the hermitage to enable Ravana to take away Sita.

Marich remembered Lord Ram's holy name 'silently' because it is the way the Lord is remembered during meditation; no hue and cry is made. Marich mentally bowed before Lord Ram, invoked his holy name quietly and discretely, and sought the Lord's intervention in order to attain salvation and emancipation of his soul.

<sup>2</sup>It is a stated position of Lord Ram that no matter how sinful a creature is, if he comes to take shelter with him then the Lord would not only forgives him but even grant his soul liberation and deliverance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 44.]

दो०. बिपुल सुमन सुर बरषहिं गावहिं प्रभु गुन गाथ ।

निज पद दीन्ह असुर कहूँ दीनबंधु रघुनाथ ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

bipula sumana sura baraṣahim gāvahim prabhu guna gātha.  
nija pada dīnha asura kahūṁ dīnabandhu raghunātha. 27.

The Gods showered an abundance of flowers upon Lord Ram to celebrate this marvelous occasion; they sang laurels of the Lord and cheered at his wonderful nature of providing a glorious destiny to even a demon that made the latter equivalent in divinity to the Lord himself<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 27)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In Chaupai line no. 17 that immediately precedes this Doha we have read that the Lord “granted to Marich a stature that was even difficult for great sages and seers to attain”. This Doha answers what that stature was. To wit, Marich, who was condemned to become a demon at the time of birth, found an exalted state for his soul at the time of death, a transcendental state that was divine, sublime, holy and pious in nature, a stature quite the opposite of what he was till this point in his life. This was made possible due to the grace of Lord Ram and the chance of having a contact with him, no matter how and for what reason this chance meeting had happened.]

चौ०. खल बधि तुरत फिरे रघुबीरा । सोह चाप कर कटि तूनीरा ॥ १ ॥

आरत गिरा सुनी जब सीता । कह लछिमन सन परम सभीता ॥ २ ॥



जाहु बेगि संकट अति भ्राता । लछिमन बिहसि कहा सुनु माता ॥ ३ ॥  
 भृकुटि बिलास सृष्टि लय होई । सपनेहुँ संकट परइ कि सोई ॥ ४ ॥  
 मरम बचन जब सीता बोला । हरि प्रेरित लछिमन मन डोला ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

khala badhi turata phirē raghubīrā. sōha cāpa kara kaṭi tūnīrā. 1.  
 ārata girā sunī jaba sītā. kaha lachimana sana parama sabhītā. 2.  
 jāhu bēgi saṅkaṭa ati bhrātā. lachimana bihasi kahā sunu mātā. 3.  
 bhr̥kuṭi bilāsa sṛṣṭi laya hōī. sapanēhum̐ saṅkaṭa para'i ki sōī. 4.  
 marama bacana jaba sītā bōlā. hari prērita lachimana mana ḍōlā. 5.

No sooner had Lord Ram slayed the wicked fellow (Marich) than he turned back to go to his hermitage. The bow in his hand and the quiver tied to his waist give the Lord a magnificent form (that was captivating for the beholder)<sup>1</sup>. (1)

Meanwhile, Sita had heard the loud and distressful cry of Marich calling out the name of Laxman<sup>2</sup>. This sound filled her with a lot of apprehension, and she felt sore affright (about the safety of her husband, Lord Ram). (2)

She urgently instructed Laxman, ‘Go immediately, for it looks some danger had befallen upon your brother.’

Laxman laughed at this unfounded fear of Sita, and tried to reassure her by saying, ‘Mother, listen. (3)

He whose turn of an eye and raising of the eyebrow can lead to the destruction of the entire creation—say, can such an almighty Lord ever have the fear of any danger upon him; can such a mighty and all-powerful Lord ever come to any harm under any situation?<sup>3</sup>’ (4)

However, Sita began wailing and grieving gravely; her heart-touching words of pity and lamentation moved Laxman as his mind wavered. Though initially he had a lot of self-confidence and would have ordinarily stood firm on his ground, but it was the wish of Lord Hari that it ought to be otherwise (*hari prērita*); for soon Laxman’s mind became indecisive and he yielded to doubts (*lachimana mana ḍōlā*), his resolve faltered and he felt inclined to obey Sita’s commands and go out to help Lord Ram<sup>4</sup>. (5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This episode of the demon Marich assuming the form of a deer with a golden hide so that Sita could be abducted by Ravana, and his death at the hands of Lord Ram that proved to be a boon for him as it granted Marich liberation from the body of a demon and provided deliverance to his soul has also been narrated by Tulsidas in his book ‘Geetawali Ramayan’, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 3-6.

<sup>2</sup>When Marich died, he had yelled aloud the name of Laxman before silently invoking the holy name of his beloved Lord Ram. Refer: Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 27 herein above. From a distance, where Sita was, it appeared that Lord Ram is calling out for Laxman to help; it appeared that the Lord was in some sort of danger and needed Laxman’s help.

<sup>3</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 66, and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35 where the same fact is stated.

<sup>4</sup>Sita lost her patience and began lamenting; she forced Laxman to go after the sound, in the direction from where it came and see what the matter was. So though Laxman was unwilling to leave her alone in the dangerous forest as he was expressly commanded by the Lord himself not to do so, yet he had no choice, because Sita threw such a tantrum that he thought it wise and prudent to do as she wished lest she would complain to the Lord, when he comes back, of Laxman's stubborn and irreverent behaviour, which would, in this unfortunate background of her feeling worried about her husband's safety and asking his brother to go and help him, would create unnecessary misunderstanding between the two brothers who otherwise had perfect bond of love and loyalty between them.]

बन दिसि देव सौँपि सब काहू । चले जहाँ रावन ससि राहू ॥ ६ ॥  
 सून बीच दसकंधर देखा । आवा निकट जती कें बेषा ॥ ७ ॥  
 जाकें डर सुर असुर डेराहीं । निसि न नीद दिन अन्न न खाहीं ॥ ८ ॥  
 सो दससीस स्वान की नाई । इत उत चितइ चला भड़िहाई ॥ ९ ॥  
 इमि कुपंथ पग देत खगेसा । रह न तेज तन बुधि बल लेसा ॥ १० ॥

bana disi dēva saumpi saba kāhū. calē jahām' rāvana sasi rāhū. 6.  
 sūna bīca dasakandhara dēkhā. āvā nikaṭa jatī kēm bēṣā. 7.  
 jākēm ḍara sura asura ḍērāhīm. nisi na nīda dina anna na khāhīm. 8.  
 sō dasasisa svāna kī nā'īm. ita uta cita'i calā bhaḍihā'īm. 9.  
 imi kupantha paga dēta khagēsā. raha na tēja tana budhi bala lēsā. 10.

Laxman entrusted Sita's safety to all the patron deities of the different directions as well as the presiding deities of the forest, and then he headed towards the direction where Lord Ram, who was like Rahu for the symbolic Moon represented by Ravana, was<sup>1+2</sup>. (6)

When Ravana found that Sita was alone (and the hermitage was left unprotected after Laxman went away), he approached disguised as a mendicant. (7)

It is a wondrous thing that he whose fear caused the gods and the demons alike to be so sore affright and tremble that they weren't able to sleep in the night and eat food during the daytime, --- (8)

---That same ten-headed Ravana should be so scared out of his wits that he would approach the hermitage with unsure steps out of fear, surreptitiously like a terrified dog, glancing to the right and to the left, as he neared the place. (9)

Oh the lord of birds (khagēsā)<sup>3</sup>! It is like the case of one stepping on a wrong and immoral path, because no sooner one does so when one loses self-confidence, for one's body fails in its natural vigour, one's intellect fails him, and one's inherent

strength too leaves him (even as he staggers and struts and stumbles to move forward in an awkward way).

[To wit, as soon as one tries to do anything unrighteous and inauspicious, his inner-self will revolt instantly; his inner-voice of conscience tells him that he is about to do something that is wrong. It is another matter that more often than not a man tends to overlook this natural warning of his inner-consciousness, and goes ahead with his evil designs, only to land himself in a grave peril.] (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Rahu was a demon whose head was severed from his trunk by Lord Vishnu during an ancient event that occurred at the time when the celestial ocean was being churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of immortality. Since Rahu was betrayed by the Moon and the Sun Gods, and since he had already drunk some Amrit which prevented his death, he was given a boon by the creator Brahma that he would periodically devour Moon and Sun to satisfy his hunger as well as to take revenge upon these two Gods for betraying him.

So, Rahu devours the disc of the full moon and the sun from time to time, and this, according to mythology, is the cause of the lunar and the solar eclipses respectively. But since his neck was cut off, the moon and the sun gradually emerge from this severed end of the head; this ends the eclipse.

In this metaphor, Ravana is the moon, and Lord Ram is the Rahu who would soon overcome Ravana's might and virtually eclipse him. But even as the glory of the Moon and the Sun are restored soon after the eclipse, Lord Ram would restore the glory of Ravana by granting him an exalted state of bliss and beatitude by liberating his soul from the sinful body of a demon and gracing it with deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

In this story of Rahu and the Moon, it was the Moon who had caused offense to Rahu by betraying him; Rahu was simply squaring up the account. So also in this case, it is Ravana who will cause offense to Lord Ram by stealing his wife Sita, and Lord Ram will simply teach him a lesson.

Another similarity is this: Rahu devours a full Moon; so Lord Ram will now slay Ravana when the vessel of his sins and cruelty has become full to the brim.

<sup>2</sup>Though it is not mentioned here but at the time of leaving Sita, Laxman had drawn a circle around the hermitage and invoked some powerful Mantras to make the area within this circle absolutely safe. When Ravana, who was disguised as a mendicant, could not enter this firewall of security around the hermitage, he had prevailed upon Sita to step out of it in order to give him alms; since Sita could not break tradition by refusing a mendicant alms, she stepped out of this circle, and scarcely had she done so then Ravana grabbed her.

We learn about Laxman drawing this circle of firewall of security when Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, talks about it when she sternly admonishes her husband for not having the guts to cross even a circle marked on the ground by Laxman while he bragged of bringing Sita and now is daring to take the two brothers head-on in a fight to the finish. Why did he not dare to cross Laxman's circle if he had all the might and powers he boasts of so much? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36; and Geetawali, Lanka Kand, stanza no. 6 of verse no. 1.

<sup>3</sup>It ought to be noted here that the story of Ram Charit Manas has a number of narrators. One such narrator was the crow-saint Kaagbhusund who was approached by

the “lord of the birds”, i.e. Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, for he wanted to hear the divine story of Lord Ram.

This narration forms the major part of the second half of the seventh Canto called Uttar Kand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125. This story has been published by this author in English as an independent book titled “Kaagbhusund Ramayan or the Aadi Ramayan”.]

नाना बिधि करि कथा सुहाई । राजनीति भय प्रीति देखाई ॥ ११ ॥

कह सीता सुनु जती गोसाई । बोलेहु बचन दुष्ट की नाई ॥ १२ ॥

तब रावन निज रूप देखावा । भई सभय जब नाम सुनावा ॥ १३ ॥

nānā bidhi kari kathā suhāī. rājanīti bhaya prīti dēkhāī. 11.

kaha sītā sunu jatī gōsāī. bōlēhu bacana duṣṭa kī nāī. 12.

taba rāvana nija rūpa dēkhāvā. bhaī sabhaya jaba nāma sunāvā. 13.

The fake mendicant (i.e. Ravana in disguise) told her (Sita) many fascinating tales which he weaved on the spur of the moment; he tried to influence her by invoking a variety of means using the principles of politics, fear and affection. (11)

Sita became alarmed at the indiscretion of the mendicant<sup>1</sup>; she chided him, saying, ‘Listen oh mendicant! You talk like a wicked fellow.’ (12)

At that instant, Ravana showed his true form. When he told her his real name, she became sore frightened<sup>2</sup>. (13)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Ravana went on talking and talking endlessly without invitation. His behaviour was quite unbecoming of a true mendicant who would talk not more than what is absolutely essential. Besides this, no mendicant would approach a lonely lady and indulge in unwanted story telling; it does not behoove of a mendicant to talk sweetly to a lady while she is alone, showing undue interest in her and trying to arouse her interest in himself. This highly odd behaviour aroused Sita’s suspicion. But she should have used more discretion; she should not have rebuked him so openly but should have waited quietly to give time to Lord Ram and Laxman to come back.

But it was not to be so; it was destined that she would be stolen by Ravana as it would become the cause for the elimination of the demons. This was the reason why Sita lost her patience and failed to exercise self-restraint.

<sup>2</sup>Sita had not seen Ravana earlier, but she had heard of his name. So when Ravana revealed his true form of a demon, Sita had little fear of him as she had seen demons earlier during her journey through the forest and was acquainted with such terrible forms. She had no fear of ordinary demons as she had seen many being killed by Lord Ram single-handedly. But of course the name ‘Ravana’ was something different, for he was no ordinary demon. She had heard of his immense strength, ferocity and pervert nature; so as soon as he uttered his name it sent a chill down the spine of Sita.]

कह सीता धरि धीरजु गाढ़ा । आइ गयउ प्रभु रहु खल ठाढ़ा ॥ १४ ॥  
 जिमि हरिबधुहि छुद्र सस चाहा । भएसि कालबस निसिचर नाहा ॥ १५ ॥  
 सुनत बचन दससीस रिसाना । मन महुँ चरन बंदि सुख माना ॥ १६ ॥

kaha sītā dhari dhīraju gāṛhā. ā'i gaya'u prabhu rahu khala ṭhāṛhā. 14.  
 jimi haribadhuhi chudra sasa cāhā. bha'ēsi kālabasa nisicara nāhā. 15.  
 sunata bacana dasasīsa risānā. mana mahum' carana bandi sukha mānā. 16.

Sita mustered a lot of courage and boldly told Ravana, 'Wait a little you wicked fellow, for the Lord is just about to come back. (14)

Oh the king of demons; just like a vile rabbit covets the lioness which surely invites its death, so are you impaled by your own death. [To wit, by eying me with ill intentions, you are surely inviting your own death just like the wretched rabbit who is sure to die if it tries dirty tricks with a lioness. Wait till my Lord Ram comes back to teach you a good lesson.]' (15)

Hearing these words of stern rebuke, the ten-headed Ravana became very angry. But internally he bowed at the feet of Sita and felt very glad (that finally the opportunity has arrived for which he had been waiting for so long—which is to get himself killed by Lord Ram and free his soul from the cage of his evil demon body, enabling it to find deliverance, emancipation and salvation)<sup>1</sup>. (16)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>It ought to be noted here that Ravana had bowed to Sita mentally, but externally he maintained the show of anger and vengeance. Even Marich had adopted this attitude. And we will read later on that like Marich, Lord Ram had granted the soul of Ravana the ultimate destination by accepting it as a part of his own Self; this happened when the soul of Ravana emerged in the form of a brilliant shaft of light at the time of his death to enter the body of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

Not only Ravana, all the demon warriors who were killed in the war too found salvation—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.

The question arises: Why did Ravana maintain the external façade of hostility with Lord Ram? Well, he had to pay attention to his domestic constituency consisting of the demon race, which was very irrational and haughty in its behaviour, and had never learnt to have mercy and reasoning in its dealing with other creatures. If he was to remain in charge of the demons and force them to owe their allegiance to him, which he had managed more by fear than having actual loyalty, it was imperative that he himself act fiercely and without compromise.

Say, what huge gossip would do the rounds if he does not take revenge for his sister's deformation; what face would he show the demons if he shies from punishing a human being for the audacity of challenging his might? Any overt sign of surrender or fear of impending death by him will send a wrong signal to the rest of the demons, and as these fellows feared Ravana only because he was merciless and unforgiving and will do them to death if they refuse to toe his line, once they learn that he has been frightened by someone then all the demons warriors will lose the fear of him, and consequently it would be impossible for him to maintain his grip upon the demon race.]

दो०. क्रोधवन्त तब रावन लीन्हिसि रथ बैठाइ ।

चला गगनपथ आतुर भयँ रथ हाँकि न जाइ ॥ २८ ॥

dōhā.

krōdhavanta taba rāvana līnhisi ratha baithā'i.

calā gaganapatha ātura bhayam' ratha hāmki na jā'i. 28.

Then, seething with anger and profoundly vexed, Ravana hastily seated Sita on his chariot. Then he took to the path of the sky as he scrambled to muster strength to go away from that place as fast as he could because he was so scared stiff with fear that he was scarcely able to control his chariot during its flight<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 28)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>It is not clear here as to how Ravana had Sita board the chariot. It is not mentioned that “he grabbed her by the hand”. So how did he manage to put Sita on the chariot? The answer is found in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas—where it is said that “Ravana used his long nails to scoop up the earth from below Sita’s feet and then placed her on the chariot like one transfers a plant from one place to another”. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 51-52.

And why was he angry? It is because Sita had called him a “wretched rabbit eying a lioness”, and “to wait till Lord Ram comes back to teach him a lesson in propriety”. This was an affront on his ego and self-respect, something that would be too much for any man worth his salt to tolerate.

Why was he so utterly vexed and confounded that he could not even drive his chariot properly? It is because he was unsure of his fate; he did not know if his actions were right or wrong, and what the consequences of his deeds would be. This doubt lingered in his mind and perplexed him from the beginning when Supernakha had asked him to revenge her humiliation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

Ravana was in such a hurry to get out from the place that his chariot swung madly to the right and the left as he kept pressing forward at full tilt. He had come quietly, but now he was roaring and yelling as he fled in terror, as fast as the unhindered path of the sky would allow him to move ahead.]

चौ०. हा जग एक बीर रघुराया । केहिं अपराध बिसारेहु दाया ॥ १ ॥

आरति हरन सरन सुखदायक । हा रघुकुल सरोज दिननायक ॥ २ ॥

हा लछिमन तुम्हार नहिं दोसा । सो फलु पायउँ कीन्हेउँ रोसा ॥ ३ ॥

बिबिध बिलाप करति बैदेही । भूरि कृपा प्रभु दूरि सनेही ॥ ४ ॥

बिपति मोरि को प्रभुहि सुनावा । पुरोडास चह रासभ खावा ॥ ५ ॥

सीता कै बिलाप सुनि भारी । भए चराचर जीव दुखारी ॥ ६ ॥

caupāī.

hā jaga ēka bīra raghurāyā. kēhim aparādha bisārēhu dāyā. 1.

ārati harana sarana sukhadāyaka. hā raghukula sarōja dinanāyaka. 2.

hā lachimana tumhāra nahim dōsā. sō phalu pāya'um' kīnhē'um' rōsā. 3.  
 bibidha bilāpa karati baidēhī. bhūri kṛpā prabhu dūri sanēhī. 4.  
 bipati mōri kō prabhuhi sunāvā. purōḍāsa caha rāsabha khāvā. 5.  
 sītā kai bilāpa suni bhārī. bha'ē carācara jīva dukhārī. 6.

Sita wailed and grieved woefully as Ravana was taking her away forcibly on his chariot. She lamented thus: 'Oh the brave Lord of the Raghu family (bīra raghurāyā) who has no match anywhere in this world (jaga ēka). What is my mistake for which you have overlooked your merciful nature by abandoning me? Why have you become so stone-hearted? (1)

You are renowned as the one who eliminates the troubles of those who are tormented; you remove the cause of distress of all who take shelter in your holy feet, making them happy and contented.

Oh Lord who is like the sun for the lotus flower symbolizing the race of king Raghu<sup>1</sup>!

[<sup>1</sup>To wit, just as the sun makes the lotus open its petals and bloom, Lord Ram lends glory and fame to the entire family descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya. Lord Ram is like the sun with respect to the family of king Raghu as his mere presence makes the whole family happy and proud at having such an excellent Lord as one of its illustrious members.] (2)

Alas Laxman; it is not your fault at all, for I have got the bitter fruit of becoming angry at you for no rhyme or reason<sup>2</sup>.

[<sup>2</sup>Laxman; please forgive me that I spoke to you in a harsh tone when you were reluctant to leave me alone in the forest, especially when Lord Ram had himself given specific instructions to this effect. Now I am being punished for my indiscretion; why and how could you be blamed for my misfortunes when you had but little choice against my impertinence? So forgive me.] (3)

In this way, Vaidehi\* (the daughter of Vaideha, the king of Janakpur; i.e. Sita) lamented and grieved gravely at her misfortunes. She talked to herself, 'The dear Lord (prabhu -- sanēhī), who is full of mercy (bhūri kṛpā), has gone far away (chasing the decoy deer)<sup>3</sup>.

[<sup>3</sup>Once again, how can I blame the Lord also, for it was on my insistence that he had gone behind the deer to bring it to me. Alack; Alack! It is me who am to be squarely blamed for whatever ill has befallen me, for it was I who had sent Lord Ram away from the hermitage, and once again it was I who had forced Laxman also to leave me alone at the hermitage.

\*It is important to note why the word "Vaidehi" has been used for Sita; its remarkable. This word literally means 'one who has no body; or one who is not aware of the existence of his or her physical body'. So this word implies that Sita was so overcome with grief that she virtually lost consciousness of her own body as well as her surroundings. It also implies that the Sita we are talking about is only a 'shadowy figure', that she does not actually have any physical presence, as the original lady had already been entrusted to the care of the Fire God by Lord Ram earlier. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 24 herein above.] (4)

Will, by any good chance, anyone tell the Lord about my condition; has anyone done so yet<sup>4</sup>?

Look how an ass is trying to surreptitiously eat (*caha rāsabha khāvā*) the offerings meant for the sacred fire sacrifice (*purōḍāsa*)<sup>5</sup>.

[<sup>4</sup>Sita was so upset that the little time that elapsed seemed like too long for her, for she wondered if some good soul who had witnessed her being taken away by Ravana would have met Lord Ram and Laxman and told them about the misfortune that had suddenly befallen her. Or that soon someone will do so if yet not done already. This will help the Lord to come to her aid forthwith, and perchance he may reach her in time it is possible that he would kill her tormentor and liberate her from his clutches. But who knows what has happened?

Laxman had entrusted Sita's safety in the hands of the various patron deities of the forest and the directions at the time of leaving her. Refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 28 herein above. So Sita hopes that someone amongst them would tell Lord Ram and Laxman what had happened to her.

She was wailing loudly; so it was her intention that in case no one near the hermitage tells Lord Ram about her abduction perhaps out of their fear of Ravana, then at least some amongst them would now take pity on her when they hear her wailings, and gather enough courage to at least quietly tell the Lord what had happened in his absence.

<sup>5</sup>We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 8 that Sita uses another deprecating metaphor to snub Ravana; it is as follows: "Alas; a barbarian is trying to eat the offerings meant for the sacred fire of the sacrifice, thereby attempting to defile it."

Here, Ravana is the 'ass' or the 'barbarian', and Sita is like the 'offering made for the sacred cause' of the gods, which was to ensure elimination of the demons and provide security to mother earth and its inhabitants.

A similar idea is also expressed in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 55.] (5)

Hearing the loud wailing and woeful cries of Sita, all the creatures, both animate as well as inanimate (*carācara jīva*)<sup>6</sup>, felt saddened and distressed, for they all empathized with her sorrows.

[<sup>6</sup>'Animate' creatures hear and talk, but who were the 'inanimate' ones being referred to here? The 'animate' beings were the many living beings living in the vicinity of the hermitage, such as forest-dwelling sages and hermits as well as the birds, animals and other creatures. The 'inanimate' beings were the invisible deities of the forest and the realm in whose custody Laxman had left Sita, as well as trees and creepers who are all deemed to have life in them. Here, all entities in the Lord's creation are being addressed. Some were living beings in traditional sense, and others were personified forms of non-living beings such as trees and water bodies, as well as the invisible deities.] (6)

गीधराज सुनि आरत बानी । रघुकुलतिलक नारि पहिचानी ॥ ७ ॥  
 अधम निसाचर लीन्हें जाई । जिमि मलेछ बस कपिला गाई ॥ ८ ॥  
 सीते पुत्रि करसि जनि त्रासा । करिहउँ जातुधान कर नासा ॥ ९ ॥  
 धावा क्रोधवंत खग कैसें । छूटइ पबि परबत कहूँ जैसें ॥ १० ॥  
 रे रे दुष्ट ठाढ़ किन होही । निर्भय चलेसि न जानेहि मोही ॥ ११ ॥



gīdharāja suni ārata bānī. raghukulatilaka nāri pahicānī. 7.  
 adhama nisācara līnhēm jā'ī. jimi malēcha basa kapilā gā'ī. 8.  
 sītē putri karasi jani trāsā. kariha'um' jātudhāna kara nāsā. 9.  
 dhāvā krōdhavanta khaga kaisēm. chūṭa'i pabi parabata kahum' jaisēm. 10.  
 rē rē duṣṭa ṭhārha kina hōhī. nirbhaya calēsi na jānēhi mōhī. 11.

{Now it so happened that Ravana went by the path in the sky that crossed a place where lived an old vulture named Jatau. He had been befriended by Lord Ram earlier when the Lord was entering into the deep recesses of the forest of Dandak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13.

When Jatau heard and saw Ravana scrambling away fast with a wailing Sita aboard his chariot, the old vulture could immediately understand that there was something seriously amiss. So he decided to intervene and set Sita free.}

The lord of the vultures (gīdharāja; Jatau) heard the wailings of Sita, and as he looked out to investigate he could perceive immediately that she was indeed the honourable wife of the Lord who was the glory of king Raghu's line (raghukulatilaka nāri; "the wife of Lord Ram"). (7)

He realized that the contemptible demon was taking her forcibly away like a cow known as Kapila that has fallen into the hands of a cruel barbarian (malēcha) who is forcibly taking her away (to be sacrificed)<sup>1</sup>.

[<sup>1</sup>The 'Kapila' cow is regarded as a holy animal; she has dark skin of grayish-brown hue, and is considered as auspicious. The cruel barbarian takes her away to kill her. Here, Sita is like this 'cow', and Ravana is the 'barbarian'.] (8)

Jatau leapt to defend Sita; he called out aloud to her: 'Listen daughter Sita; don't worry and do not be afraid. I shall kill this demon straightaway.' (9)

The mighty bird lunged forward angrily and with the greatest of agility as if the thunderbolt is shot at a huge mountain to break it down. (10)

He yelled and challenged Ravana, 'Oh you rascal; oh you wicked fellow (rē rē duṣṭa). Why don't you stop? You are going away without any fear whatsoever; don't you know me and who I am, and that it is my area of influence that you seem to violate with impunity; how dare you do so?'<sup>2</sup>

[<sup>2</sup>Say, how dare you cross my path so boldly without regard to my presence; how dare you take Sita, whom I regard as my deemed daughter, away so fearlessly, with impunity? Hold it; I have decided to teach you a lesson in propriety and good manners!

Don't you know that my name is Jatau, that I am an upholder of Dharma (propriety and probity), that I am very strong and able, and that I am a son of the legendary sage Kashyap? And that in the absence of the two brothers Ram and Laxman, I am the guardian of Sita? Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Aranya Kand, (i) Canto 50, verse nos. 3-4; and (ii) Canto 14, verse no. 34 respectively.

I shall immediately fell you from your chariot and slay you like your brother Khar had been. Though I am old but don't be misled by it—for I am able enough to trounce you in a fraction of a moment in a duel; don't have delusions about it. Refer:

Valmiki's Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse nos. 23 and 28; and Canto 51, verse no. 30.] (11)

आवत देखि कृतांत समाना । फिरि दसकंधर कर अनुमाना ॥ १२ ॥  
की मैनाक कि खगपति होई । मम बल जान सहित पति सोई ॥ १३ ॥  
जाना जरठ जटायू एहा । मम कर तीरथ छाँड़िहि देहा ॥ १४ ॥

āvata dēkhi kṛtānta samānā. phiri dasakandhara kara anumānā. 12.  
kī maināka ki khagapati hō'ī. mama bala jāna sahita pati sō'ī. 13.  
jānā jaraṭha jaṭāyū ēhā. mama kara tīratha chāṁḍīhi dēhā. 14.

When the ten-shouldered Ravana (*dasakandhara*) observed the mighty bird dashing towards him like the death-god himself personified, he faltered in his flight, wondering as to who he might be. He turned back to see who his attacker was, and began to make guesses. (12)

‘Who is this? Is he Mt. Mainak in a personified form<sup>1</sup>; or is he the Lord of the Birds (known as ‘Garud’, the mount of Lord Vishnu)? Now, perchance he is the latter, then he must be aware of my stupendous strength as much as his own Lord (Vishnu) knows about it<sup>2</sup>.

[<sup>1</sup>Mount Mainak is a huge mountain. When Indra, the king of gods, ran to hide from Ravana, he had taken shelter in this mountain. Besides this, Mainak was once attacked by Indra who shot his Vajra (thunderbolt) at it; at that time Mainak had hidden under the surface of the ocean to escape the strike of the thunderbolt and get reduced to rubble. So by invoking Mainak, Ravana implies that this legendary Mountain is well aware of his might; so there is no chance of Mainak (i.e. personified form of Mt. Mainak or its patron deity) risking his own safety by showing the audacity to confront Ravana of whom even Indra is scared stiff.

<sup>2</sup>To wit, Ravana thought to himself thus: “If my detractor is Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, then he also surely knows how strong and invincible I am, for his own master, Lord Vishnu, knows everything about me. He is therefore expected to avoid me as he knows that I have subdued all the gods, and none amongst them ever dare to confront me. In this case this fellow is inviting calamity upon himself by confronting me; he and his lord Vishnu would together regret for this misconceived sense of dare-devilry that by some misadventure Garud seems eager to show.”] (13)

When Ravana discovered upon close observation that his attacker was the old vulture Jatau<sup>3</sup>, he sneered sarcastically and joked, ‘This poor fellow seems to be in the throes of death for he has decided to die at my hands like a person willingly submits to die in a pilgrim place.’

[<sup>3</sup>The age of Jatau was approximately sixty-thousand years at that time. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse no. 20.] (14)

सुनत गीध क्रोधातुर धावा । कह सुनु रावन मोर सिखावा ॥ १५ ॥  
तजि जानकिहि कुसल गृह जाहू । नाहिं त अस होइहि बहुबाहू ॥ १६ ॥

राम रोष पावक अति घोरा । होइहि सकल सलभ कुल तोरा ॥ १७ ॥

sunata gīdha krōdhātura dhāvā. kaha sunu rāvana mōra sikhāvā. 15.

taji jānakihi kusala gr̥ha jāhū. nāhim ta asa hō'ihī bahubāhū. 16.

rāma rōṣa pāvaka ati ghōrā. hō'ihī sakala salabha kula tōrā. 17.

When the vulture heard the insinuating words of Ravana (Chaupai line no. 14 herein above) that were insulting to the extreme, his fury knew no bounds; he dashed forward with full ferocity ignited by anger, exclaiming with vehement indignation, 'Oh Ravana, pay attention to my sane advice. (15)

Leave Janak's daughter (Sita; "jānaki") alone and go back home safely. [It is for your own good.] For otherwise, oh the one with multiple arms ("bahubāhū"; so-called as Ravana had twenty arms, ten on each side of the body)<sup>1</sup>, it would happen that --- (16)

--- In the fierce fire ignited by Lord Ram's anger symbolized by the powerful arrows shot by him, your entire family and the race over which you rule would burn to ashes like insects that get roasted in the scorching flame of a lighted lamp; so beware!<sup>2</sup> (17)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Ravana was very proud of his twenty arms, and on different occasions he had boasted of their might and invincibility. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 28; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 25; Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41.

So this is why Jatau chose to tease him by citing his multiple arms, in effect telling him that the part of his body of which he has been so proud of would afford him no protection against Lord Ram's wrath.

<sup>2</sup>Insects get attracted to the flame of a lighted oil lamp or a candle. They dance around the flame only to get burnt to death. Here, Jatau warns Ravana that instead of the him (Jatau) courting death by interfering with Ravana and trying to stop him from whisking Sita away, it is he (Ravana) who willfully lights the flame that would burn not only him alone but his entire clan to death. He would be well advised to pay heed and leave Sita alone here and now; for otherwise he is embracing sure and certain death even as insects that gather around a flame of a lighted lamp soon burn to death. In this metaphor, Lord Ram's anger represented by the arrows shot by him during the war to free Sita would be like the 'flame of the lighted lamp', and Ravana and the rest of the demons would be like the 'horde of insects that get pulled towards this flame only to get scorched to death'.

Similar allusion to the demons dying in hordes like insects burning to death around a flame has been cited elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, in Sundar Kand, Doha no. 15, Hanuman cites the same metaphor to assure Sita that soon the demons would burn to death by the fire symbolized by the arrows shot angrily by Lord Ram like so many insects who jump to their death by dancing near the flame.

In Valmiki's Ramayan, an identical assertion is made by Jatau: refer—Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse no. 16.]

उतरु न देत दसानन जोधा । तबहिं गीध धावा करि क्रोधा ॥ १८ ॥

धरि कच बिरथ कीन्ह महि गिरा । सीतहि राखि गीध पुनि फिरा ॥ १९ ॥  
 चोचन्ह मारि बिदारेसि देही । दंड एक भइ मुरुछा तेही ॥ २० ॥  
 तब सक्रोध निसिचर खिसिआना । काढ़ेसि परम कराल कृपाना ॥ २१ ॥  
 काटेसि पंख परा खग धरनी । सुमिरि राम करि अदभुत करनी ॥ २२ ॥

utaru na dēta dasānana jōdhā. tabahiṁ gīdha dhāvā kari krōdhā. 18.  
 dhari kaca biratha kīnha mahi girā. sītahi rākhi gīdha puni phirā. 19.  
 cōcanha māri bidārēsi dēhī. daṇḍa ēka bha'i muruchā tēhī. 20.  
 taba sakrōdha nisicara khisi'ānā. kārhēsi parama karāla kṛpānā. 21.  
 kāṭēsi paṅkha parā khaga dharanī. sumiri rāma kari adabhuta karanī. 22.

When the ten-headed warrior (Ravana; “dasānana jōdhā”) did not reply or pay any heed to the vulture (“gīdha”; Jatau), the latter angrily rushed towards him. (18)

He (Jatau) caught hold of Ravana by his hair, and pulled him off the chariot; Ravana fell on the ground. Then the vulture Jatau took Sita away to keep her safely (at his own place), and returned swiftly to face Ravana. (19)

He (Jatau) began tearing at Ravana’s body fiercely and rapidly with his sharp pointed beaks, resulting in the demon getting so seriously wounded that for about an hour (daṇḍa ēka) he lost his consciousness and fainted on the ground<sup>1</sup>. (20)

When by-and-by the demon Ravana regained his consciousness, he was seething in anger; he vehemently drew out his terrible sword. (21)

And with that horrifying sword he cut-off the poor vulture’s wings so that the latter fell down on the ground. The Bird invoked Lord Ram and his mysterious and strange ways (that had prevented Jatau from saving Sita)<sup>2</sup>. (22)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We note that Jatau had not attacked Ravana directly on the first occasion itself, for first he tried to stop him, then he tried to reason with him, explaining the grave danger Ravana is inviting upon his entire race by kidnapping Sita and attempting to persuade him to leave her alone, and finally Jatau attacked only when Ravana neglected him completely, paying no heed to him, and instead sneered at him saying that the bird wished to die at his hands.

Jatau could have hit Ravana in his eyes to make him blind, but the demon had ten heads and therefore twenty eyes; so it was impossible to blind him completely. The easiest way to make him fall from the chariot was to hover over his head and catch hold of his hairs and pull him off the vehicle like a folk-lift truck picks up a car, and then dash him on the ground.

<sup>2</sup>Jatau was crest-fallen and dismayed at the turn of events. He wondered at the mysterious ways of the Supreme Lord and marveled at the way Providence determines a creature’s destiny; for though he had almost been successful in rescuing Sita yet destiny wanted something different as it prevailed by forcing him to become helpless by cutting his wings so that Ravana would manage to take Sita away. Jatau realized that perhaps, and in all likeliness, this was the wish of the Supreme Lord as it may have something to do with his divine play and the fulfillment of the Lord’s

divine mission of which he wasn't aware of. Now nothing more could be done; with his wings cut, the poor Jatau was completely helpless to help Sita.

Jatau also marveled at the fact that Ravana had not cut-off his head to kill him on the spot, but only left him immobile by chopping-off his wings. Surely this was also due for some great cause that is yet to be fulfilled. Slowly and steadily Jatau pondered over the whole affair and came to the conclusion that since nothing happens in this world without the Lord's wishes, it surely means that he was left wounded to live till Lord Ram comes his way searching for Sita. At that time it will be his honour and privilege to tell the Lord about Sita's abductor and of the direction she has been taken away. Besides it, Jatau thought that it would grant him a last chance of meeting and paying his respects to the Supreme Lord before his death, and surely this would not have been possible had Ravana killed him by cutting his head. So his wounds were indeed a blessing in disguise; the sufferings he would have to endure till the Lord comes there would be like a Tapa (penance) for him; it would entitle him to attain final emancipation and salvation that generally Tapa rewards its practitioner with.

When Jatau understood the significance of his not instantly being killed but getting only wounded, he began, without wasting time, meditating upon the holy name of Lord Ram, which he knew was a great spiritual formula that helps the soul of a creature to find deliverance and emancipation. This is clearly hinted in the wording of this stanza as it says: “sumiri rāma”; i.e. ‘remembering Lord Ram’. So in these final moments, Jatau stopped regretting his failure in stopping Ravana from taking Sita away as it was the wish of the Lord himself, but instead he concentrated his mind to remember the divine form and holy name of Lord Ram to ensure for himself spiritual welfare and a glorious destiny.]

सीतहि जान चढ़ाइ बहोरी । चला उताइल त्रास न थोरी ॥ २३ ॥  
 करति बिलाप जाति नभ सीता । व्याध बिबस जनु मृगी सभीता ॥ २४ ॥  
 गिरि पर बैठे कपिन्ह निहारी । कहि हरि नाम दीन्ह पट डारी ॥ २५ ॥  
 एहि बिधि सीतहि सो लै गयऊ । बन असोक महँ राखत भयऊ ॥ २६ ॥

sītahi jāna caṛḥā'i bahōrī. calā utā'ila trāsa na thōrī. 23.

karati bilāpa jāti nabha sītā. byādhā bibasa janu mṛgī sabhītā. 24.

giri para baiṭhē kapinha nihārī. kahi hari nāma dīnha paṭa ḍārī. 25

ēhi bidhi sītahi sō lai gaya'ū. bana asōka maham' rākhata bhaya'ū. 26.

Ravana lifted Sita once again on the chariot and ran away from there as fast as he could, as he was very agitated and terrified with fear<sup>1</sup>.

[<sup>1</sup>Ravana feared for the worst; he feared that by some signal Jatau may call his peers and friends to come immediately to his aid and attack the demon; he also feared that if he wasted more time then it may be possible that even Lord Ram and Laxman would come there hurrying after him in hot pursuit as soon as they would discover that Sita has been abducted.] (23)

Sita lamented and grieved very sorely as she was being taken through the path of the sky; her condition was as pitiful and helpless as a terrified deer that is being taken away by a lion. (24)

On the way she saw some monkeys sitting on the top of a mountain, whereupon she uttered loud the name of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram) and dropped some pieces of her garment<sup>2</sup>.

[<sup>2</sup>These monkeys were Sugriv and his companions such as Hanuman, Jamvant etc. They lived atop a mountain on the outskirts of Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom. Later on, when Lord Ram was wandering in the forest searching for Sita, he would come to this place. Then the Lord would befriend Sugriv and others; at that time these monkey warriors would tell the Lord of what they had seen about Sita being taken away through the sky by a miscreant. The Lord would be shown these pieces of clothes as identification tokens, and he would be convinced of the authenticity of the story narrated by the monkeys and also of Sita's identity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 5.] (25)

In this way, he (Ravana) took Sita away and held her captive in his royal garden called 'Ashok Van' (bana asōka maham' rākhata bhaya'ū)<sup>3</sup>.

[<sup>3</sup>This garden was so called for two reasons. One is that it was so pleasant that it removed the sorrows of all those who came to visit it. And the second reason is that it had large Ashoka trees that gave ample shade; it was under one such leafy tree where Sita was seated.

Ravana was so much agitated that he did not pay attention to the tell-tale signs that Sita left on the way. He couldn't realize that these tokens that she is felling would lead Lord Ram hot on his trail.] (26)

दो०. हारि परा खल बहु बिधि भय अरु प्रीति देखाइ ।  
तब असोक पादप तर राखिसि जतन कराइ ॥ २९ ( क ) ॥  
जेहि बिधि कपट कुरंग सँग धाइ चले श्रीराम ।  
सो छबि सीता राखि उर रटति रहति हरिनाम ॥ २९ ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

hāri parā khala bahu bidhi bhaya aru prīti dēkhā'i.  
taba asōka pādapa tara rākhisi jatana karā'i. 29 (a).  
jēhi bidhi kapaṭa kuraṅga saṁga dhā'i calē śrīrāma.  
sō chabi sītā rākhī ura raṭati rahati harināma. 29 (b).

That wicked fellow (Ravana) tried all his best tricks employing fear and affection in an attempt to make Sita yield to him, but he failed miserably. So ultimately he left her to be seated under the shade of a great Ashoka tree, and made adequate arrangement for her security<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 29-a)

Meanwhile, Sita remembered the last vision she saw of Lord Ram—the fascinating view of the Lord going behind the decoy deer—and enshrined it inside her heart, meditating on it and repeating the name of Lord Ram (as a means of survival). (Doha no. 29-b)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Ravana made proper arrangement for Sita and her security. He appointed an old demoness named Trijata to look after her. In due course of time, Trijata became

Sita's confidante and close companion. When other demoness tried to tease Sita, Trijata would warn them to leave her alone. She was also the medium by which Sita would come to learn of the developments once the war to free her broke out. These facts have been narrated in Lanka Kand.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.]

[PAUSE 6 FOR A NINE-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. रघुपति अनुजहि आवत देखी । बाहिज चिंता कीन्हि बिसेषी ॥ १ ॥  
जनकसुता परिहरिहु अकेली । आयहु तात बचन मम पेली ॥ २ ॥  
निसिचर निकर फिरहिं बन माहीं । मम मन सीता आश्रम नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

raghupati anujahi āvata dēkhī. bāhija cintā kīnhi bisēṣī. 1.  
janakasutā pariharihu akēlī. āyahu tāta bacana mama pēlī. 2.  
niscara nikara phirahim bana māhīm. mama mana sitā āśrama nāhīm. 3.

When Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) saw his younger brother Laxman coming to him (inspite of his instructions not to leave Sita alone in the wild forest infested with demons), he appeared to be flabbergasted and very worried, but this was only an external show of consternation and annoyance (bāhija cintā kīnhi bisēṣī). (1)

Expressing his concern to Laxman, Lord Ram said to him, 'My dear; you left Sita alone. You had disobeyed my orders and come here. (2)

Hordes of demons roam around freely in the wild forest<sup>1</sup>; I have an intuitive feeling that Sita is not in the hermitage. (3)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Externally Lord Ram appeared to be annoyed that Laxman had disobeyed him by leaving Sita alone, and this may be dangerous for her as the forest was full of evil creatures who would be lurking in the dark and waiting for the first chance to cause harm. The Lord however was well aware of what must have happened as all the developments were pre-planned by him in advance, and though he pretended to be annoyed that Laxman left Sita alone but actually he felt happy that things were going according to the master plan, for otherwise it would have been quite difficult for him to find an excuse to get rid of the cruel and sinful demons.

In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6, 8-9 that precedes Doha no. 27 which expressly endorse these observations.]

गहि पद कमल अनुज कर जोरी । कहेउ नाथ कछु मोहि न खोरी ॥ ४ ॥

अनुज समेत गए प्रभु तहवाँ । गोदावरि तट आश्रम जहवाँ ॥ ५ ॥  
आश्रम देखि जानकी हीना । भए बिकल जस प्राकृत दीना ॥ ६ ॥

gahi pada kamala anuja kara jōrī. kahē'u nātha kachu mōhi na khōrī. 4.  
anuja samēta ga'e prabhu tahavām̃. gōdāvari taṭa āśrama jahavām̃. 5.  
āśrama dēkhi jānakī hīnā. bha'e bikala jasa prākṛta dīnā. 6.

The Lord's younger brother (Laxman) fell at the feet of the Lord and pleaded that there was no fault on his part (as he was compelled by Sita to leave her and come to where Lord Ram was). Laxman said, 'Oh Lord, I have not erred willingly at all (for I was compelled to come here by Sita herself who raised a tantrum to force me to leave her against my wishes)<sup>1</sup>.' (4)

Lord Ram went with his brother to the banks of river Godavari where he had his hermitage. (5)

Finding the hermitage empty and Sita missing from there, the Lord felt extremely distressed and dismayed like an ordinary man would be in this situation. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 28.]

हा गुन खानि जानकी सीता । रूप सील ब्रत नेम पुनीता ॥ ७ ॥  
लछिमन समुझाए बहु भाँती । पूछत चले लता तरु पाँती ॥ ८ ॥

hā guna khāni jānakī sītā. rūpa sīla brata nēma punītā. 7.  
lachimana samujhā'e bahu bhām̃tī. pūchata calē latā taru pām̃tī. 8.

Lord Ram wailed and lamented like an ordinary man who is extremely perturbed and afflicted; he grieved thus: 'Oh Janki (Sita; the daughter of king Janak) who is an abode of all good virtues. Oh Sita who is perfect and excellent in beauty and manners, is steady in upholding the vows of righteousness and probity, and steadfast in observing all the rules of good conduct and goodness in general. ["What has happened to you; where have you gone; why did you leave me?"] (7)

Laxman consoled the Lord in various ways and did his best to uplift his sagging spirits and repair the Lord's broken heart in the best way possible in the prevailing situation (like a faithful and true friend and companion should in times of distress and misfortune that befalls a person).

The Lord recovered himself soon, and began his search for Sita. He moved along the forest path, asking creepers, trees and leaves about the whereabouts of Sita<sup>1</sup>. (8)

[Note—Lord Ram was so sad, so distressed and so overwhelmed by grief that he asked anything that came his way about Sita. At that time it appeared that he has lost all common sense and mental bearing in his desperation to find where Sita had gone



by asking even inanimate trees, creepers and leaves about her though it is obvious that these things can't hear or speak.

Why did the Lord do it? It is because he had to play to perfection his role of a person whose dear wife has been lost. Further, Laxman was kept in the dark about the Lord's plan to get Sita abducted by Ravana as a prelude to eliminating the demons. So he did not wish to let anyone doubt that Sita's abduction was known to him, and he was unaffected by it. That would not fit into his role of a human being; and since the Lord is perfect in whatever he chooses to do, he must act perfectly in his role of a human being too.

Besides this, any dispassionate behaviour on his part which would indicate that losing Sita has had no great impact on him, would have sent a wrong signal to his adversaries: for then tongues would start wagging that Sri Ram was not too pleased with Sita and so her loss did not affect him as it should have. This was not acceptable at all.

Refer also to: Chaupai line nos. 16-17 herein below that endorse these view points.]

हे खग मृग हे मधुकर श्रेणी । तुम्ह देखी सीता मृगनैनी ॥ ९ ॥  
 खंजन सुक कपोत मृग मीना । मधुप निकर कोकिला प्रबीना ॥ १० ॥  
 कुंद कली दाड़िम दामिनी । कमल सरद ससि अहिभामिनी ॥ ११ ॥  
 बरुन पास मनोज धनु हंसा । गज केहरि निज सुनत प्रसंसा ॥ १२ ॥  
 श्रीफल कनक कदलि हरषाहीं । नेकु न संक सकुच मन माहीं ॥ १३ ॥

hē khaga mṛga hē madhukara śrēnī. tumha dēkhī sītā mṛganainī. 9.  
 khañjana suka kapōta mṛga mīnā. madhupa nikara kōkilā prabīnā. 10.  
 kunda kalī dāḍima dāminī. kamala sarada sasi ahibhāminī. 11.  
 baruna pāsa manōja dhanu hansā. gaja kēhari nija sunata prasansā. 12.  
 śrīphala kanaka kadali haraṣāhīm. nēku na sañka sakuca mana māhīm. 13.

‘Oh birds; oh animals; oh swarm of bees! Have any one of you seen the doe-eyed Sita? (9)

Alas! The wagtail, the parrot, the pigeon, the deer, the fish, the swarm of bees, the expert cuckoo [10], the buds of jasmine flower, the pomegranate, the streak of lightening, the lotus flower, the moon of the autumn night, the she-serpent who moves smoothly as she slides on a surface [11], the noose of Varun (the Water God), the bow of Kaamdeo (cupid), the majestic swan, the mighty elephant and the grand lion—all of them now hear themselves being praised and honoured (by poets for their respective qualities, virtues and characters that are unique to them, who earlier were shunned by the same poets who desisted from praising them and comparing them to Sita as they were no match for her singular beauty and virtues represented by each of these entities) [12]<sup>1</sup>. (10-12)

Similarly, the fruits of the wood-apple tree and the golden coloured banana tree also feel happy; they do not at all feel bashful and have no misgivings about anything. [With Sita gone, these entities too are happy that poets would now use them as metaphors when they wish to compare other things with the unique qualities that these

entities have. Earlier the poets shunned them as Sita was much superior in all respects as far as the virtues represented by the wood-apple and banana trees was concerned. But now that she has gone, the poets have no choice but to cite these two entities for comparison purposes.] (13)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Indian poets and bards usually use these entities when they need examples of certain unique and excellent qualities that they stand for. But all these qualities faded in excellence when compared with similar qualities of Sita; so the poets refrained from citing them as metaphors as that would undermine their reputation as skillful and knowledgeable poets and bards. Now that Sita is no more, these entities feel happy that once again they will have the honour being cited as examples of certain stellar virtues or qualities by poets and bards.

That said, now let us what special features these entities possess that make them so favourite of poets and bards when they use them as standards to describe the beauty of a lady in her prime.

The eyes of a bewitching beauty are compared to the eyes of a fish, the wagtail and the fawn; the nose to the parrot's beak; the neck to that of a pigeon; the curl of hairs to a swarm of black-bees; the voice to the singing of the cuckoo; the teeth to the buds of the jasmine flower and the seeds of the pomegranate; the brilliance and glisten of complexion to the radiance and splendour of lightening; the limbs, i.e. the hand and the leg, as well as the face and the eyes to the lotus flower; the face to the full moon of autumn; the long braid of hair hanging and swaying at the back or front of the lady to the smooth sliding motion of a serpent; the enticing smile that captivates all beholders to the snare of Varun; the curve of the eyebrow to the bow of Kaamdeo (cupid); the swagger in the gait and its swaying movement to the majestic way a swan swims or an elephant walks; the waist to that of an adult lion; the breasts to the fruits of the wood-apple tree; and the thighs to the smooth skin of the banana tree.

The subtle idea here is that though these selected entities are models of beauty themselves in their respective fields, yet they were no comparisons to Sita; and hence poets and bards shied away from citing any of them. But now that Sita is gone, and if the poets and bards need a metaphor in her absence, they have no other options but to cite one of these entities to suit their purpose. This makes these entities happy that at last they are once again in demand and sought after.]

सुनु जानकी तोहि बिनु आजू । हरषे सकल पाइ जनु राजू ॥ १४ ॥

किमि सहि जात अनख तोहि पाहीं । प्रिया बेगि प्रगटसि कस नाहीं ॥ १५ ॥

एहि बिधि खोजत बिलपत स्वामी । मनहुँ महा बिरही अति कामी ॥ १६ ॥

पूरनकाम राम सुख रासी । मनुज चरित कर अज अबिनासी ॥ १७ ॥

sunu jānakī tōhi binu ājū. haraṣē sakala pā'i janu rājū. 14.

kimi sahi jāta anakha tōhi pāhīm. priyā bēgi pragaṭasi kasa nāhīm. 15.

ēhi bidhi khōjata bilapata svāmī. manahum' mahā birahī ati kāmī. 16.

pūranakāma rāma sukha rāsī. manuja carita kara aja abināsī. 17.

Oh Janki (Sita), listen. All these entities are so happy at your absence as if they have acquired the kingdom of some place. [To wit, all of a sudden they feel very fortunate

that once again they are sought after by poets for citing them as metaphors of beauty.] (14)

Say, how can you bear such rivalry? [These entities are rejoicing at your misfortune; they are least concerned that your absence has caused so much misery to me.

My dear, tell me is it ever possible that you would tolerate their impertinence and ill-manners? If not, then why are you hiding? If you come out and reveal yourself, they would be put to ignominious shame and would go to hide themselves.]’ (15)

In this way, overcome with grief and distress, the Lord moved around in a miserable condition, lamenting and wailing for Sita woefully like a very passionate man who has been smitten by deathly pangs of separation from his beloved, leaving him utterly inconsolable. (16)

Lord Ram is eternally contented and fulfilled; he is an eternal abode of bliss, happiness and beatitude. But now he is acting like a mortal man even though he is immortal and one who neither dies nor takes a birth. [This is because he is the Supreme Being. And this being the case, it also means that he is perfect in whatever he does, even playing his role as a human being to perfection. He shows here how a husband whose dear wife has been lost feels and behaves.] (17)

{Wandering in the forest looking for Sita as described herein above, Lord Ram came to the place where Jatayu, the vulture, lay wounded on the ground after his wings were cut by Ravana as the latter fled with Sita towards Lanka.

The Lord met Jatayu most affectionately, caressed him and cleaned his wounds personally, feeling very sorry for him as he tried to soothe the bird and give peace to him as best as he could. Jatayu told the Lord about Ravana and the general direction in which he had gone on the chariot with a wailing Sita in his captivity. Then Jatayu prayed to Lord Ram and died. The Lord performed his last rites as he would have done for his own father. Jatayu found deliverance, and went to the abode of the Lord in heaven.

This part of the story is narrated herein below, from Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 33.}

**आगें परा गीधपति देखा । सुमिरत राम चरन जिन्ह रेखा ॥ १८ ॥**

āgēm parā gīdhapati dēkhā. sumirata rāma carana jinha rēkhā. 18.

When Lord Ram moved ahead he came to the place where he saw the king of vultures, Jatayu, lying on the ground (because his wings had been cut-off by Ravana). Jatayu was remembering Lord Ram and his mind was concentrated on the holy feet of the Lord with their auspicious marks<sup>1</sup>. (18)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world. According to scriptures, the sole of Lord Vishnu’s feet have 48 marks which are considered unique to him and very auspicious. They are the following:

(a) Marks or holy signs under the sole of the left foot—(i) a vertical line (Urdhva-rekha), (ii) a swastika, (iii) an octagon made by a pair of squares intersecting

each other to form eight-cornered star (Ashtakona), (iv) a golden coloured coil consisting of two-and-a-half concentric circles (symbolizing goddess Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity), (v) a plough (Hal), (vi) a pestle (Moosal), (vii) a figure of the serpent (the celestial serpent known as Sesh-nath), (viii) an arrow, (ix) a zero (symbolising the sky element that is infinite and nothingness; Shunya), (x) a lotus flower (Kamal), (xi) a chariot, (xii) a thunderbolt (Vajra), (xiii) a grain of barley (symbolising crop and cereals that give nourishment), (xiv) the tree (Kalpa-taru; the all wish fulfilling tree found in heaven), (xv) a goad (Ankush; symbolising control of the world and subduing sinful creatures), (xvi) a flag (Pataka or Dhvaj; insignia of supreme and universal authority), (xvii) a crown (Mukut; the lordship of this creation), (xviii) a discus (serrated circular weapon; the Sudarshan Chakra), (xix) a throne (standing for supremacy authority and emperorship of this creation), (xx) the danda (staff of Yama, the god of death; symbolising the Lord's power over death), (xxi) a flapper or whisker (used to whisk away flies; swayed before kings and emperors; it is known as Chamar); (xxii) a parasol or umbrella (put on the head of a sovereign; symbol of universal power and authority over this creation), (xxiii) a male human figure (of Viraat Purush; the cosmic form of the Supreme Being; the supreme Father), and (xxiii) a garland (of victory). Total = 24 signs.

(b) Marks or holy signs under the sole of the right foot—(i) flowing water (symbolising the holy river Saryu), (ii) a cow's hoof, (iii) the earth, (iv) a pitcher, (v) a flag (Pataka), (vi) a black plum (Jambu Phal), (vii) a crescent moon (Chandra), (viii) a conch shell (Shankha) (ix) a hexagon (a figure made by intersecting of two equilateral triangles), (x) a triangle (Trikone), (xi) a mace (Gada), (xii) a living being (symbolized by a point standing for the soul which is atomic in size), (xiii) a Vindu (the decimal; a dot; symbolising the source of cosmic energy), (xiv) the Shakti (cosmic dynamic powers and energy represented by a semi-circle at the lower end or the base of the dot, the Vindu), (xv) a lake or reservoir of nectar (Sudha-kunda), (xvi) three horizontal lines (symbolising the three phases of creation, time and space; or the three segments of the world: the heaven, the earth and the nether world), (xvii) a fish, (xviii) a full moon (Chandrama), (xix) an Indian lute (Vina), (xx) a flute, (xxi) a bow; (xxii) a quiver, (xxiii) a swan (Hansa), and (xxiii) a tiara (known as Chandrika; a crescent-shaped ornament worn on the top of a turban or crown of kings; an ornament of a lady's head). Total = 24 signs.

Grand total = 24 on left foot + 24 of right foot = 48.]

दो०. कर सरोज सिर परसेउ कृपासिंधु रघुबीर ।

निरखि राम छबि धाम मुख बिगत भई सब पीर ॥ ३० ॥

dōhā.

kara sarōja sira parasē'u kṛpāsindhu raghubīra.

nirakhi rāma chabi dhāma mukha bigata bhaī saba pīra. 30.

Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram), who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace, felt very sorry and sad for Jatau; the Lord caressed him very affectionately by moving his loving hands over the wounded bird's head.

When Jatau observed the charming face of Lord Ram up close, all his agonies and grief disappeared (for he felt extremely comforted, happy and fulfilled

notwithstanding his sufferings and pain caused by the mortal wound that bled severely, inflicted on his body by Ravana). (Doha no. 30)

[Note—Lord Ram was well acquainted with Jatau; they had met earlier when the Lord had entered the Dandakaranya forest, and an affectionate bond of friendship was established between the two. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13.

It was this friendship that led to Jatau intervening on the Lord's behalf when he saw Ravana taking away Sita.

Jatau was a friend of king Dasrath, Lord Ram's father and king of Ayodhya. So when Lord Ram and Jatau met, the latter assured him that while the Lord, Sita and Laxman live in Panchavati, from where Sita was later on abducted by Ravana, he would keep a watch over them, and protect them like a father would as he was a friend of Lord Ram's father. In case both the brothers go out in the forest on some errand, such as to hunt or collect firewood or eatables, then he would guard Sita. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-7. So Jatau kept his promise very well, even sacrificing his life for keeping his word.

And Lord Ram too lived up to the affectionate relationship that Jatau had established with him, a relationship that was no less than that which exists between a son and a father—for the Lord showed him the same respect he would have shown to his own father by performing the last rites of Jatau with his own hands at the time of his death as a son would have done for his father. Glory to Jatau for he had this rare privilege that no one else except Sabari, of whom we will soon read, had.

The emotion of love and affection exhibited by Lord Ram and Jatau was mutual, natural and spontaneous. Lord Ram was greatly moved by Jatau's miserable, pitiable condition; the Lord took the wounded bird in his arms lovingly, he caressed him affectionately, he unfolded his long lock of hairs and cleaned Jatau's wounds with them, he grieved and lamented at Jatau's ill fortune as if he was directly affected by it, he spoke sweet words of reassurance and encouragement to shore up Jatau's sagging and dejected spirits even as he held the bird close to his bosom to comfort him.

Jatau, meanwhile, knew that he won't live, for his wounds were grave and fatal. He was anxiously waiting to see Lord Ram for one final moment of his life like a father in the throes of death awaits his only son so that he can see him for the last time and die in his presence. Jatau wasn't sure, but he hoped. He clung to life for another reason also: his sacrifice would be meaningful if he could tell the Lord about Sita being abducted by Ravana; it will also make the Lord aware that Jatau has lived up to his promise that he would take care of them as best as he could while they lived in the area of the forest where Jatau lived. Death would have come one day or the other, for Jatau was old and nearing the end of his life. But how nice would it be if there was someone to perform his last rites, and his body does not decay and rot to emit a foul smell, or fall prey to wild carnivorous animals who might tear him apart and feast on his carcass, he gloomily thought with a sad and mournful mind. So now since he has lived up to his own part of the bargain, he wondered if Lord Ram would live up to his own part by performing his last rites as he knows that Jatau was his father's friend, and when a father's friend dies in an alien land where there is no one to take care of him, it becomes obligatory for a person to step in to fill the gap and assume the role of next-of-kin, as now the situation was between Jatau and Lord Ram. Jatau wished to have a dignified death; he had sacrificed his life for a noble cause and so hoped that the Supreme Lord who rewards a creature in accordance with his deeds would now apply the same principles to him as well during his last moments. So when

Jatau saw Lord Ram caressing him with love and empathy he felt completely contented; he felt that his life had certainly been fruitful inspite of his being born a flesh-eating vulture, a birth not worthy of any praise, for even in his death he had been able to serve the Lord in the best way he could.

And truly indeed, the all-knowing Lord Ram read the inner thoughts of Jatau, that he treated the Lord as his son. So it was a natural emotion of grief and sadness and empathy when the Lord saw Jatau lying wailing and mortally wounded on the ground; and similarly when Jatau realized that his 'son' has finally arrived, he felt very happy and contented in his last moments.]

चौ०. तब कह गीध बचन धरि धीरा । सुनुहु राम भंजन भव भीरा ॥ १ ॥  
 नाथ दसानन यह गति कीन्ही । तेहिं खल जनकसुता हरि लीन्ही ॥ २ ॥  
 लै दच्छिन दिसि गयउ गोसाईं । बिलपति अति कुररी की नाई ॥ ३ ॥  
 दरस लागि प्रभु राखेउँ प्राना । चलन चहत अब कृपानिधाना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

taba kaha gīdha bacana dhari dhīrā. sunahu rāma bhanjāna bhava bhīrā. 1.  
 nātha dasānana yaha gati kīnhī. tēhim khala janakasutā hari līnhī. 2.  
 lai dacchina disi gaya'u gōsā'īm. bilapati ati kurarī kī nā'īm. 3.  
 darasa lāgi prabhu rākhē'um' prānā. calana cahata aba kṛpānidhānā. 4.

Then the vulture (Jatau) recovered himself and patiently said to Lord Ram, 'Listen Ram who destroys (eliminates; removes; helps the creature to get rid of) the terrible fear of birth and death and their associated miseries and pains in this mortal world of transmigration (bhanjāna bhava bhīrā)<sup>1</sup>.

[<sup>1</sup>Jatau was seriously injured; he was barely able to breathe. So when he felt Lord Ram's caressing hands on his body and opened his eyes to see the Lord, he gave a sigh of contentment and joy. His wishes were honoured by the Lord; now he would not only die in peace but would have also the opportunity to find final deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. That is why he recalls this special virtue of the Lord that he grants freedom from the fear of birth and death. There was nothing more to worry and be fearful of now. So Jatau was very patient; he slowly opened his tired eyes that were already half closed as he was on the verge of death, and calmly conversed with Lord Ram. His calm demeanours and contented look showed he had no regrets for what he had done or what fate he is destined to have, for he was absolutely certain that things were indeed done rightly, and there was nothing better that he could have done. As for his fate he was assured of a fine one: with Lord Ram holding him in an affectionate embrace, clasping him to his bosom and cleaning his wounds himself, was there any trace of doubt left about it by any stretch of imagination?] (1)

Oh Lord, this wretched condition of mine has been caused by the ten-headed Ravana; it is he who has stolen Sita. (2)

He has taken her in the southern direction even as she kept wailing and screaming loudly like a caged and frightened osprey (bilapati ati kurarī kī nā'īm). (3)

I have somehow managed to keep myself alive so that I can see your holy self, oh my Lord. Now my 'Pran' (my vital life forces) want to leave this gross body and exit from it<sup>2</sup>.

[<sup>2</sup>I wish to die now; the wounds are hurting me sorely; I somehow managed to cling to life just to see you and convey my blessing as well as the information about Sita being taken away by the rascal Ravana. But now that purpose has been served; so I wish to die peacefully.]' (4)

राम कहा तनु राखहु ताता । मुख मुसुकाइ कही तेहिं बाता ॥ ५ ॥

जा कर नाम मरत मुख आवा । अधमउ मुकुत होइ श्रुति गावा ॥ ६ ॥

सो मम लोचन गोचर आगें । राखौं देह नाथ केहि खाँगें ॥ ७ ॥

rāma kahā tanu rākhahu tātā. mukha musukā'i kahī tēhim bātā. 5.

jā kara nāma marata mukha āvā. adhama'u mukuta hō'i śruti gāvā. 6.

sō mama lōcana gōcara āgēm. rākhaurṁ dēha nātha kēhi khāmḡēm. 7.

[Lord Ram was immensely moved and emotionally overwhelmed by the pitiful condition of Jatau. He thought 'Jatau is my father's friend; he has valiantly fought Sita's abductor on my behalf inspite of being unarmed and his old age; he has suffered so gravely for me, yet he is so contented and peaceful. How great and holy is his soul; how grand is his mind and heart inspite of his body of a vulture. Surely I must honour his wishes; it is my honourable duty and moral obligation. Since I have the power over death and life of creatures in this creation, as it is my prerogative as the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world, I must now do for this noble bird what he wants me to do for him, even if it goes beyond the Laws of Nature. So the Lord thought that since Jatau has suffered and is about to die for his cause, he must now grant him life to the bird if he so wishes.]

Lord Ram told Jatau with a smile on his face, 'My dear, keep your body (if you so wish).<sup>1</sup>' (5)

Jatau replied, 'The Lord whose name is so holy, divine and spiritually purifying that if it comes to the mouth of a dying creature, if the dying creature utters the Lord's name even once at the time of his death, then no matter how lowly and fallen he might be he is sure to find Mukti for himself (i.e. such a creature finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death with its accompanying horrors; his soul gets eternal peace, bliss and beatitude; the creature is blessed with emancipation and salvation at that instant itself). This is what the scriptures say and affirm about the glory and spiritual powers of the Lord's divine, holy name (and hence it is the Truth). (6)

That same Lord is standing right in my front, and is being watched affectionately by my eager eyes. Say oh Lord, why then, for what reason, should I wish to keep this mortal body?<sup>2</sup>' (7)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>To wit, you need not die; if you wish to live I will ensure that your wounds are quickly healed magically, and you be restored to the condition in which you were prior to this misadventure.

Why did Lord Ram smile when he spoke to Jatau? Well, Lord Ram indicated to Jatau that it is no problem for him to restore the latter's healthy body if he so wished. But, at the same time, the Lord also wished to test how truly Jatau was holy and wise internally, for now Jatau had two options before him: either to live in this mortal world for some more days and die like an ordinary vulture, or to get the rarest of rare destiny that eludes even the greatest of sages, seers, hermits and ascetics, the destiny that grants eternal peace, bliss and beatitude to the creature, and emancipation and salvation to his soul, by dying now even as the Supreme Being is there to take care of him and his soul?

So the Lord smiled to see what Jatau's response was: whether he is an ordinary creature who loves his gross body that every living being is aware is perishable yet wishes to cling to it, or he is an enlightened soul who grabs the first opportunity to discard this mortal body and seek eternity, who yearns for deliverance for his soul, who strives for attainment of emancipation and salvation.

<sup>2</sup>It is not always that such an opportunity presents itself to a dying creature that the Supreme Being himself stands before him to grant his wishes. What good fortune befalls me today that the Lord stands right before me, and I see him up so close, soothing my wounds and comforting me so lovingly. Am I not going to die one day; has anyone who is born remains forever in this world that is characterized by mortality and transmigration? If it is the case that all those who have taken a birth must die, then where would I get this rarest of rare chance that I have at this instant? Where again will I have the Lord standing before my eyes at the time of my death? Where again will I be assured of the best destiny that the soul can ever expect to have as I have today, as the Supreme Lord is himself present to take care of my soul?

No, no, dear Ram; I am not so stupid to let go of this golden chance. I don't want to keep this mortal and gross body of a vulture; I wish to discard it and find eternal deliverance while you are here before me. Nothing doing; this is my wish, if you ask me!]

जल भरि नयन कहहिं रघुराई । तात कर्म निज तें गति पाई ॥ ८ ॥

परहित बस जिन्ह के मन माहीं । तिन्ह कहूँ जग दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं ॥ ९ ॥

तनु तजि तात जाहु मम धामा । देउँ काह तुम्ह पूरनकामा ॥ १० ॥

jala bhari nayana kahahim raghurā'ī. tāta karma nija tēm gati pā'ī. 8.

parahita basa jinha kē mana māhīm. tinha kahum'jaga durlabha kachu nāhīm.

9.

tanu taji tāta jāhu mama dhāmā. dē'um'kāha tumha pūranakāmā. 10.

Tears welled-up in the eyes of Lord of the Raghus ("raghurā'ī"; Lord Ram) as he said to Jatau, 'My dear. You shall get the destiny that you deserve in accordance to the deeds you have done; your fate is decided by your own actions and deeds. [And what is it? The Lord explains below.] (8)

He who is selfless in his actions and keeps the good and welfare of others in his heart, for such a person there is nothing inaccessible or impossible to attain in this world. (9)



My dear (tāta)! You discard this gross mortal body of yours and go to my own abode in the heaven<sup>1</sup>. What more can I grant you; you are fulfilled and contented in every respect. (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Jatau had selflessly served Lord Ram by sacrificing his own body in order to protect Sita. For such a noble deed there is only one destiny—it is an abode in heaven. This certainty of destiny obtained by serving others selflessly and dying for the cause of their good oversteps other considerations of life such as the nature of one's birth, one's stature in life, whether or not he has done any other religious deeds during his lifetime, or has worshipped the Lord God, or has adopted a mean for his livelihood that may or may not be regarded as being totally noble and righteous, and so on.

This singular act of selflessness and having the thought of good of others in one's heart determines one's auspicious fate at the time of death.

So since Jatau had died while trying to protect Sita from the clutches of Ravana, his auspicious destiny in heaven is secured for him. Hence Lord Ram says that he is not doing anything special for Jatau by granting him an abode in the heaven as this was his rightful claim.

Lord Ram told Jatau: “My dear. You are suffering because you tried to help Sita by attempting to protect her from her tormentor, the demon king Ravana. You could as well have turned your eyes away and pretend to be deaf and dumb when you saw Ravana taking Sita away forcefully in his chariot, and she was wailing and lamenting pitifully. But no, you decided to intervene and help her. The result was that you are severely wounded. Well, those who try to help others in distress also suffer in the process themselves. But good souls never let this come in their way and they continue to help others. This is a righteous and noble deed which has its reward along with the suffering. What is that reward? Well, you now have the rarest of rare and the golden opportunity to have me, the Supreme Being, consoling and comforting you personally. You are resting on my laps, and I am personally tending your wounds. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30.

Remember dear: One day all living beings have to die, but what a noble death it is when one lays down one's life for the welfare of others, to help others selflessly. I am indebted to you; I have never had tears in my eyes in my life, but you can see that my tears are uncontrollable now. You are so lucky that you have the Supreme Lord of creation standing right in front of you, empathizing with you and grieving for you, a privilege that is denied even to the wisest and the most exalted of sages and seers who spend their entire lives in spiritual pursuit, doing severe penances and observing strictest of austerities.

‘Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance) is difficult for them, but it will be yours now. Physical sufferance is transient because the gross body is perishable and one day everything related to it would come to an end. More importance is that of suffering of the soul ensnared in the gross body. Cheer up now, for your salvation and deliverance is at hand; you have got the most sought after reward by the virtue of your noble deed which may have caused you temporary agony but which has paved the way for your eternal peace and happiness.

You know why I am praising you? Well, it is an established principle of Dharma that ‘those who are selfless and have the interest of others in their mind and heart, there is nothing that is not possible or inaccessible for them.’ In other words, salvation and emancipation, liberation and deliverance, is yours now without doubt. You have obtained two eclectic rewards: One is that I have come personally to visit you, and soon I will tend to your wounds myself. The second reward is that your soul

will have the rarest of rare opportunity to find liberation and deliverance in my presence, though this fate would have been difficult for it because your body is that of a vulture which is regarded with contempt as it eats flesh of corpses. I had not done the last rites of even my own father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya, but I shall perform it for you. Indeed how lucky and privileged are you.

What to grieve for; what to feel sorry for; what to lament for! Verily I would say that no living being, no matter how high in the hierarchy of creation he has been born, has ever had this privilege—that the Supreme Being, the Lord of this creation, would perform his last rites with his own hands. You will be blessed with my Bhakti (devotion) which will lead you to salvation and emancipation that is guaranteed now.” {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (ii) Doha no. 32.}

The message here is plain and simple—A person who has the interest of others in heart, who works selflessly for the good and welfare of other creatures, there is nothing that is difficult for them. The whole world becomes their friend. All people are ever eager to see that his needs are met, and he does not have to suffer in any way. Anything desired by him is fulfilled on a priority basis by those who have benefited from him, and since all have been his beneficiary in one way or the other, people regard as an honour to serve him as a gesture of their gratitude towards him.

Now let us have a brief background-story of this incident so that we can understand the Lord’s comments in the right perspective.

The Lord was searching for Sita, his divine consort, who was stolen by Ravana the demon king as part of the divine planning of the Supreme Being that would act as the precursor and an excuse for the elimination of the cruel demon race which had been tormenting the world no end, and creating immense horror for all the living beings that lived on earth. Jatayu was a vulture—a bird who lives by feeding on corpses. So normally a vulture has no chance of going to heaven or finding liberation and deliverance of the kind that is attained by great sages and hermits. But this is exactly the destiny which Jatayu managed to achieve. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.

Not only this, but he was so fortunate and privileged that Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, had performed his last rites with his own hands as if the vulture was the Lord’s father. Jatayu went to the heavenly abode of Lord Hari, one of the many names of the Supreme Being. What a unique, holy and divine end this vulture got indeed! Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32.

Why this came to be is explained by the Lord here. Jatayu had fought with Ravana to the best of his might in order to rescue Sita from the demon’s clutches, but the demon king had cut his wings. Jatayu became helpless; he was mortally wounded in an attempt to selflessly help Sita. He fell to the ground, repeating the Lord’s holy name and waiting for one last chance to have a divine glimpse of the Lord and tell him about the events before dying. He had no other wish. He fixed his attention in remembering the holy feet of the Lord and repeating the Lord’s holy name. It was in this wretched condition that the Lord found him. Lord Ram lovingly lifted him up on his arms, wiped his wounds by unlocking his long lock of hairs as the Lord had no other means to clean his wounds, and moved his divine hands over the vulture’s head caressingly. Jatayu told everything to the Lord, and when Lord Ram offered him eternal life he refused, saying: “Where again will I get this golden chance to leave this mortal body—which I will nevertheless have to leave one day or the other—with the Lord standing right in front of me? I am not so foolish to let go of this chance. Oh

Lord, I do not wish to live any longer. I want to die right now while looking at your beauteous form with my eager eyes.” {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 31.}}

दो०. सीता हरन तात जनि कहहु पिता सन जाइ।

जौं मैं राम त कुल सहित कहिहि दसानन आइ ॥ ३१ ॥

dōhā.

sītā harana tāta jani kahahu pitā sana jā'i.

jauṁ mairṁ rāma ta kula sahita kahihi dasānana ā'i. 31.

My dear; when you go to heaven please don't tell my father (Dasrath) about Sita's abduction. [Because this will cause intense pain in his heart, for it was he who had sent us to forest exile. He will be overcome with remorse, and I would not like to cause distress to him in heaven where he rests in peace.]

If I am truly worthy of my name 'Ram'<sup>1</sup> then one day soon Ravana will come there with his kin and companions and his entire family to tell this story himself to my father<sup>2</sup>. (Doha no. 31)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>What does the Lord mean by saying “if I am truly worthy of my name Ram”? Earlier we have read that Jatau made two significant observations concerning Lord Ram—viz. (i) The Lord was one who destroys or eliminates the fear of transmigration and its associated miseries in this mortal world, and (ii) The Lord is one whose name is so holy, divine and spiritually purifying that it provides deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the creature if it is said even once at the time of death, and the Srutis or the Vedas affirm it—refer to Chaupai line nos. 1 and 6 that precede Doha no. 31 respectively herein above.

Lord Ram's name, pronounced as “RAAM”, is called a 'Tarak Mantra', i.e. it is a spiritual formula that blesses the one who says it with the reward of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. This spiritual fact is specifically declared in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1 belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition. In general, the great spiritual importance and the supreme value of Lord Ram's Name as being the holiest of Mantras has been elaborately dealt with in Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Cantos 1-4, and Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad; these two Upanishads pertain to the Atharva Veda and are exclusively dedicated to expounding upon the divinity of Lord Ram and his Holy Name.

Lord Shiva is a great exponent of this spiritual philosophy for he uses this method to grant instant deliverance to the dying creature on the banks of the holy river Ganges in the pilgrim city of Kashi by uttering the holy name of Lord Ram into his ears—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19.

The greatness and glory of Lord Ram's holy name has been elaborately enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.

This said, suppose Lord Ram were to be a little more elaborate in his declaration, then what would he have told Jatau? He would have said something to the effect as follows—

“Listen dear Jatau. You have yourself acknowledged that I am the one who grants Mukti, or liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of a creature. And you have also accepted that my name is so holy, divine, purifying and mystical that even a fallen and sinful and lowly creature is blessed with Mukti and finds eternal peace and bliss if he utters my name. So therefore, now I am obliged to live up to this reputation; it has become sacrosanct for me especially because you have cited the Vedas to make this declaration. This being the case, I have to make sure that Ravana too gets Mukti, for I would be right in front when he dies. Since it has been my hoary reputation that I am forgiving, merciful, compassionate, gracious, magnanimous, beneficent and kind to one and all, that I, being the Supreme Being and the Lord of this creation, treat all creatures alike, and even in my punishment is hidden my grace and compassion for the creature for I don’t want any soul to perish and suffer in hell, so I declare to you that when I slay Ravana I will also make sure that he finds the same destiny that you have now been fortunate to attain. Although Ravana is sinful and evil, yet his soul yearns for deliverance, and he constantly remembers me even if it out of animosity or fear, so it is obligatory for me to send him to heaven. I don’t distinguish between two creatures as I know that their souls are one and the same, and this soul is eternally and inherently pure and holy; it is the gross physical body that is sinful and evil, and not the soul of the creature. So look here my dear—Ravana cannot go to hell any longer, and I declare now that I will send him to heaven where you are going, and where Dasrath too dwells.

I don’t see Dasrath as my father, nor Jatau as a vulture, or Ravana as a demon who has taken away my wife; I see their Atma which is holy and pure consciousness that is my own reflection, and it is one uniform entity.

To wit, for me all creatures are equally dear; I don’t pay attention to their physical bodies as this is acquired by the individual based on what he had done in his previous life. As far as I am concerned, being the Supreme Lord of this creation, I go deeper and examine what lies behind the curtain of delusions and the shell known as the creature’s body which hides his ‘true self’, which all self-realised and enlightened persons know is the nothing but ‘pure consciousness’ known as the individual’s Atma or the soul. Now this Atma, which is the creature’s ‘true self’, is as pure, divine and holy as my own cosmic Self, the Supreme Atma that is known as ‘Parmatma’. It’s just like the case of sky or space present inside a small box that would represent the individual’s Atma, and the endless space that extends to infinity which you see all around you and which stands for the Parmatma. Say, is there any fundamental difference between the two types of space? So likewise, there is no fundamental difference between the individual creature known as the Jiva and me who is known as the Supreme Being.

This being the irrefutable fact, say how can I not see my ‘true image’ in the creature? And since I am eternal, never-changing and constant, why will I not see the same consistency in all the individual creatures? That is why I say that Dasrath, Jatau and Ravana are equal for me. I practice equanimity and universality in my outlook, and I don’t have a narrow selfish mind to view this creation in a fractured way because it is but my own image, and I am uniform and one in all respects.

Well, let me add something more: If I, Ram, promise that notwithstanding how sinful and evil Ravana is he will go to heaven, for he remembers me and utters my holy name, the spiritual rewards of which surely accrues to him as they can’t go in vain, making it my moral duty to redeem his soul, then remember also all those who care to pay attention—that if I can promise spiritual peace and eternal freedom from the cycle of transmigration (Mukti) to Ravana whom the whole world despises as

being singularly sinful and evil, then all the creatures should rejoice that their destiny is also insured by me, that all can find Mukti, but the only condition is that they should remember me, they should remember my holy name, have faith in me, and be devoted to me so much so that when they breathe their last they die remembering me and my holy name instead of anything else, especially anything related to this gross world and its material things.”

<sup>2</sup>A very remarkable phrase is used here—it is “*kahihi dasānana ā'i*”, i.e. Ravana will come ‘here’ to tell this story to Dasrath. Ordinarily the term ‘there’ should have been used; Lord Ram should have said that “Ravana would go ‘there’, to heaven, to tell the story of Sita’s abduction to Dasrath and other residents of heaven when they ask him to acquaint them with the story of his life”.

This implies two things very clearly and obviously: one is that Lord Ram predicts that Ravana would also go to heaven at the time of his death inspite of his being a cruel demon who has not done any good deed in his life; and second, that he would go to that part of heaven which is the abode of the Lord himself and where the Lord himself would go after his mission is complete—this is why he says “he will come ‘here’”, instead of saying “he will go ‘there’”.

At the time of death, Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram, had gone to heaven because he had died remembering the Lord and muttering his holy name till his last breath. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 155—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156. Dasrath’s last moments were like those of Jatau.

A very interesting observation is to be made here. All hatred, animosity, ill-will, jealousy and malice, all factors that distinguish two creatures as being ‘me and you’, ‘my friend and my enemy’, are limited to the gross mortal body of a creature and the equally gross mortal world where he lives. Rising from this limited gross view of existence and attaining a higher and sublime level enlightens the creature of the futility of such lowly and selfish thoughts, as the true identity of all living beings is their soul, and this soul is a universally pure entity known as Consciousness that is holy and divine.

When a creature dies he discards his gross physical body, and assumes a subtle form that is ethereal in nature. It is in this form that he goes to heaven or hell as he is judged in accordance to the law of deeds done in life and their results that accumulate over time. Those who live in heaven have an ethereal form, and not a gross form like the creatures of this world. The glory of Lord Ram’s holy name is that it provides the creature a chance to get an exalted destiny for himself in case his deeds alone don’t ensure it for him.

In the present case, Dasrath, Jatau and Ravana attained heaven precisely for this reason—for all of them had been constantly remembering Lord Ram as long as they lived, and at the time of death too their minds were concentrated on the Lord and his holy name. Refer to Ram Charit Manas: (a) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it with respect to king Dasrath; (b) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30 with respect to Jatau; and (c) in Lanka Kand we read that Ravana’s mind was constantly occupied by the thoughts of Lord Ram, albeit it was due to animosity and fear combined, but nonetheless he remembered the Lord at all the moments of his existence which unwittingly became a sort of meditation for him, and even while dying he not only was fortunate to see the Lord standing in front but his last words had the name of Lord Ram—for he cried “where is Ram whom I want to defeat in the battle-field” (Lanka Kand, Chaupai line

no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103). This means that even while dying Ravana had a last divine glimpse of the holy form of Lord Ram and uttered his holy name. These factors played a crucial role to determine his destiny—for it was now sure he would not go to hell.]

चौ०. गीध देह तजि धरि हरि रूपा । भूषन बहु पट पीत अनूपा ॥ १ ॥  
 स्याम गात बिसाल भुज चारी । अस्तुति करत नयन भरि बारी ॥ २ ॥  
 caupāī.

gīdha dēha taji dhari hari rūpā. bhūṣana bahu paṭa pīta anūpā. 1.  
 syāma gāta bisāla bhuja cārī. astuti karata nayana bhari bārī. 2.

The vulture left his mortal coil (his gross body) and assumed a holy form that was in likeness of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu). He was attired in magnificent clothes of different kinds, and adorned in ornaments of equal magnificence that covered his body. (1)

He (Jatau) had a divine form with a dark hue, and he had four long arms (like those of Lord Vishnu).

Jatau was overwhelmed with gratitude towards Lord Ram, and he began praying to the Lord with tears filling his eyes. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>To wit, after discarding his physical body of a vulture, Jatau's soul regained its original form as the Holy One; it was a sublime form of ethereal nature. This verse means that a creature's soul is eternally holy and his true self is an image of the Supreme Being; it is the creature's gross physical body that is so ugly and has so many varied forms which are totally different from his true identity which is one and the same—that of an image of the Supreme Being. What a wonder of this creation and the magic delusion plays that rarely does one understand this universal truth.]

{The following verses recount Jatau's prayer in honour of Lord Ram.}

छं०. जय राम रूप अनूप निर्गुन सगुन गुन प्रेरक सही । १ ।  
 दससीस बाहु प्रचंड खंडन चंड सर मंडन मही ॥ २ ॥  
 पाथोद गात सरोज मुख राजीव आयत लोचन । ३ ।  
 नित नौमि रामु कृपाल बाहु बिसाल भव भय मोचन ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jaya rāma rūpa anūpa nirguna saguna guna prēraka sahī. 1.  
 dasasīsa bāhu pracaṇḍa khaṇḍana caṇḍa sara maṇḍana mahī. 2.  
 pāthōda gāta sarōja mukha rājīva āyata lōcanaṁ. 3.  
 nita naumi rāmu kṛpāla bāhu bisāla bhava bhaya mōcanaṁ. 4.

Jatau, the aged king of vultures, prayed to Lord Ram as follows: ‘Glory to Lord Ram! Oh Lord, your beauty and charm are matchless. You are both Nirguna and Saguna at the same time<sup>1</sup>. And verily it is said in all sooth and without any gainsay that you are the one who inspires all the good qualities known as ‘Sata Guna’ to come to the fore, play a dominant role and prevail in this creation (and overcome the resistance offered by the negative qualities known as the Tama Guna, and even supersede the mediocre ones known as Raja Guna)<sup>2</sup>. (1)

Oh Lord, you have picked up the fierce arrow in order to cut-off the terrible ten arms of Ravana (the cruel demon king who has been inflicting undescribable horrors on this earth as well in the heaven)<sup>3</sup>.

You are the one who is like the earth’s ornament. [The earth at that time was suffering horribly due to the demons, and none of its mighty kings or warriors who prided themselves for their valour and strength-of-arms dared to take on the cruel demons. At that time, it was Lord Ram who alone took up the responsibility to protect the earth. Hence, he is being honoured as the ‘ornament of earth’.] (2)

You have a dark complexion like that of a rain-bearing cloud; your pretty face is like a lotus flower, and your eyes are wide and reddish or pinkish like a lotus flower of this hue. (3)

Indeed I bow daily most reverentially before the merciful and gracious Lord Ram who has long, muscular and well-built arms, and who provides (grants) liberation and deliverance from this world of delusions and transmigration, called the ‘Bhava’. (4)

[<sup>1</sup>That is, one the one hand you have no specific attributes that would define you exclusively because you are all-encompassing, and all the qualities that characterise an individual in the creation are vested in you, making you neutral in all respects. This refers to your cosmic, invisible, all-pervading, sublime and subtle form that is nothing but pure Consciousness. This is your ‘Nirguna’ form.

On the other hand, you have assumed a physical form as a human being recognised by the name of “Ram”. Hence obviously, you have certain definite characters and qualities that distinguish you from others. This makes your form ‘Saguna’.

<sup>2</sup>The creation is a mix of good and bad qualities. Which of the two dominate marks the character and personality of an individual entity as well as of any particular age or time in history. At the beginning of creation, the excellent qualities, known as the ‘Sata Guna’ played a key role. As time passed, the worst of the qualities, known as the ‘Tama Guna’, reared their heads and suppressed the good ones. Somewhere in between there was some sort of balance because the transition was gradual. This transitory phase was qualified by the presence of the ‘Raja Guna’. Even at the worst of times, all the three sorts of Gunas are present in this creation; what matters is which one of them is prominent and dominant, and which is dormant and relegated to the back. The Lord is the supreme ruler and caretaker of this creation, and like any senior in a household he would naturally favour the noble qualities. So it is said here that Lord Ram motivates and helps the good qualities, known as ‘Sata Guna’ to remain steadfast and win the battle of wits!

<sup>3</sup>The horrors perpetrated by the demons have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 179—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 184.]

गोबिंद गोपर द्वंद्वहर बिग्यानघन धरनीधरं ॥ ६ ॥

जे राम मंत्र जपंत संत अनंत जन मन रंजनं । ७ ।

नित नौमि राम अकाम प्रिय कामादि खल दल गंजनं ॥ ८ ॥

balamapramēyamanādimaJamabyaktamēkamagōcaram. 5.

gōbinda gōpara dvandvahara bigyānaghana dharanīdharām. 6.

jē rāma mantra japanta santa ananta jana mana ranjanām. 7.

nita naumi rāma akāma priya kāmādi khala dala ganjanām. 8.

You have infinite and immeasurable strength and powers. You have no end or beginning, and therefore you do not have a birth. You have no form (this is definable, describable, specific, and physically visible).

You are one, indivisible and without a second. [Though this entire creation consists of countless units each different from the other, and each said to have their origin in you, you still remain one and the same. It is like the case of water from the vast ocean being kept in countless jars of varying shapes and sizes and made from different materials. Will the ocean change, or would the contents of these innumerable containers be anything but water of the ocean?]

You are unmanifest; you are not visible to and cannot be perceived by the physical organ that sees things in this world (i.e. the eye). [This is because your essential form is formless, attributeless, all-pervading, sublime and subtle; it is nothing but pure consciousness. In spite of this, those who are wise, are learned in the principles taught by the scriptures, are enlightened and self-realised, can easily experience your presence within their own self as their Atma, as their true 'self', albeit it is also true that you take a physical form to please and oblige your devotees when they do want it to be so.] (5)

You are known as 'Govind'—which means 'He who can be known through the words of the Vedas (scriptures)'. [That is, the best way to be acquainted with you and to understand who you are is by understanding the meaning of the scriptures.]

You are beyond the reach of any of the organs of perception and action of the creature's body. [These organs are: organs of perception such as the eye, nose, tongue, skin and ear, and the organs of action such as the hand, legs and mouth. These are the gross organs of the physical body. In other words, the Lord God cannot be accessed by employing expertise of any of the components of the gross body because these organs have their own limitations that are restricted to the gross physical world, and they cannot reach anything that is subtle and sublime.]

You dispel all fears arising out of the pairs of opposites in this world (such as joy and sorrow; pleasure and pain; success and failure; birth and death; etc.)

You are an embodiment of Vigyan (the knowledge that leads to the pure consciousness).

You are the sustainer, protector, supporter and well-wisher of the earth, and take care of it as well as of all its inhabitants. (6)

You provide joy, delight and happiness to the Mana (heart and mind) of all the countless saints and devotees who always adore and worship you, and who always repeat your sacred Mantras. (7)

I reverentially bow before Lord Ram who loves and is loved by those who are selfless in their attitude and desire nothing for themselves; and who vanquishes such vices and evil tendencies as Kaam (lust, passion) etc. (8)



जेहि श्रुति निरंजन ब्रह्म व्यापक बिरज अज कहि गावहीं । १ ।  
 करि ध्यान ग्यान बिराग जोग अनेक मुनि जेहि पावहीं ॥ १० ॥  
 सो प्रगट करुना कंद सोभा बृंद अग जग मोहई । ११ ।  
 मम हृदय पंकज भृंग अंग अनंग बहु छबि सोहई ॥ १२ ॥

jēhi śruti nirañjana brahma byāpaka biraja aja kahi gāvahīm. 9.  
 kari dhyāna gyāna birāga jōga anēka muni jēhi pāvahīm. 10.  
 sō pragaṭa karunā kanda sōbhā bṛnda aga jaga mōha'ī. 11.  
 mama hṛdaya pañkaja bhṛṅga aṅga anaṅga bahu chabi sōha'ī. 12.

He (the Lord) who is extolled by the Srutis (ancient scriptures that have come down through the ages by the oral tradition) as being pure and free from all taints (cause by delusions), who is known as 'Brahm' (the Supreme Being who personifies Consciousness), who is all pervading and omnipresent, who is passionless, faultless and without any other kind of shortcomings, and who is without a birth (because he is eternal and imperishable)--- (9),

---he who is attained by exalted saints, hermits and ascetics by employing a number of methods such as Dhyan (discretion, contemplation and deep thought), Gyan (enlightenment and self-realisation), Vairagya (renunciation and dispassion towards this world of sense objects; by overcoming all temptations), and Yoga (meditation)--- (10),

---verily and in all sooth he is the same Lord, the eternal fount of mercy and compassion, as well as a treasury of all beauty, who has manifested himself (as a human being recognised by the name of Lord Ram) to please, oblige and give pleasure to the whole world, both the inanimate and the animate. (11)

He (Lord Ram in his manifested form) is like a honey-bee as far as my lotus like heart is concerned because the latter gets immense pleasure and unbound joy when it sees the Lord whose body reflects the beauty of countless Kamdeos (cupids; the patron deity of beauty and charm). [Just like the lotus flower welcomes the sight of the bee hovering over it and expresses its joy with a gesture of opening its petals, I too thoroughly delight at the bewitching sight of Lord Ram standing before me, spreading his matchless charm all around. I welcome him with a wide open heart! I wish he stays here in my heart to give me the privilege of enjoying his company at all times.] (12)

जो अगम सुगम सुभाव निर्मल असम सम सीतल सदा । १३ ।  
 पस्यंति जं जोगी जतन करि करत मन गो बस सदा ॥ १४ ॥  
 सो राम रमा निवास संतत दास बस त्रिभुवन धनी । १५ ।  
 मम उर बसउ सो समन संसृति जासु कीरति पावनी ॥ १६ ॥

jō agama sugama subhāva nirmala asama sama sītala sadā. 13.  
 pasyanti jaṁ jōgī jatana kari karata mana gō basa sadā. 14.

sō rāma ramā nivāsa santata dāsa basa tribhuvana dhanī. 15.  
mama ura basa'u sō samana sansṛti jāsu kīrati pāvanī. 16.

He (Lord Ram) who is at once both inaccessible as well as easily attained, who has an innocent or a neutral temperament and a faultless disposition, who is both partial and impartial (i.e. who favours his devotees and those who seek his help, shelter and refuge while being an impartial, neutral and an impassionate judge for the creation in general), who is always calm, poised, unruffled and serene---(13),

---who is perceived by ascetics after having practiced exemplary self-restraint over their sense organs and the mind over a long period of time by employing a number of great efforts that enables them to do so---(14),

---that Lord who is the Supreme Lord of the whole world that consists of three divisions (such as the heaven, the earth and the nether world), and who is the Lord (divine consort) of Rama (goddess Laxmi)—verily, he remains always within the reach and beck-and-call of his devotees.

I pray: Let that Lord, whose divine praises and holy glories provide freedom from the cycle of birth and death (i.e. who grants liberation and deliverance from transmigration by his mere remembrance), reside eternally in my heart. (16)

दो०. अबिरल भगति मागि बर गीध गयउ हरिधाम ।  
तेहि की क्रिया जथोचित निज कर कीन्ही राम ॥ ३२ ॥

dōhā.

abirala bhagati māgi bara gīdha gaya'u haridhāma.  
tēhi kī kriyā jathōcita nija kara kīnhī rāma. 32.

Asking Lord Ram to grant him eternal and uninterrupted devotion for the Lord, the vulture (Jatau) went to the heavenly abode of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu; the Supreme Being).

After that, Lord Ram performed his last rites in the proper way with his own hands<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 32)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This rare honour was granted to Jatau alone by Lord Ram; for not even Dasrath, the worldly father of the Lord, had had the privilege that his last rites would be performed by his son, Lord Ram. So Jatau is deemed to be the most fortunate one in the whole story of the Ramayan.

It is to be noted however that there was one more person whose last rite was done by the Lord—and it was Sabari, the aged tribal woman whom the Lord would meet soon after moving ahead after cremating Jatau. But Sabari was a ‘woman’, while Jatau was a ‘male’.

The result is that Jatau was elevated to the grand stature of being Lord Ram’s father, and Sabari to being his mother!

It is such a remarkable thing and a wonderful one also that Lord Ram would elevate a lowly flesh-eating vulture and a lowly tribal woman who had been shunned by the rest of the society to the grand pedestal of being the Lord’s “father and mother” respectively.

This is why it is said that there is no Lord or God like Lord Ram in this world; for Lord Ram accepts devotion and love and faith for him as the only criterion for

accepting the creature; he overlooks all the faults and shortcomings of a creature and readily grants him liberation and deliverance if the creature surrenders before the Lord and had deep reverence for him. See verses below.

Meanwhile, this episode of Sita's abduction by Ravana, and the vulture Jatau's sacrificing his life in an attempt to free her from the demon king's clutches, a stellar deed of an exemplary nature that gave Jatau the reward of attaining liberation from the body of a vulture, and getting deliverance from this mortal world in the presence of Lord Ram who performed his last rites as he would have done for his own father has also been narrated by Tulsidas in very poetic and heart-touching terms in his book 'Geetawali Ramayan', Aranya Kand, verse nos. 7-8, 12-16.]

चौ०. कोमल चित अति दीनदयाला । कारन बिनु रघुनाथ कृपाला ॥ १ ॥  
गीध अधम खग आमिष भोगी । गति दीन्ही जो जाचत जोगी ॥ २ ॥  
सुनहु उमा ते लोग अभागी । हरि तजि होहिं बिषय अनुरागी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kōmala cita ati dīnadayālā. kārana binu raghunātha kṛpālā. 1.  
gīdha adhama khaga āmiṣa bhōgī. gati dīnhī jō jācata jōgī. 2.  
sunahu umā tē lōga abhāgī. hari taji hōhim biṣaya anurāgī. 3.

Lord Ram has a very soft heart and mind; he is of a very affable nature, most merciful, very compassionate, and full of grace. He readily shows his kindness in a selfless manner to even the most humble of creatures. (1)

A vulture is a most hateful and lowly carnivorous bird who eats flesh of dead creatures; yet the Lord granted him a destiny that is suitable for a great ascetic (because the Lord sent him to heaven where great and holy ones can only go). (2)

Lord Shiva (the primary narrator of the story of Ram Charit Manas) told his consort, 'Listen Uma! Those persons who abandon such a magnanimous and merciful Lord Hari and instead indulge in self and worldly gratification, and are attracted towards the sense objects of this material, mortal world—verily indeed, to say the truth, such persons are very stupid and most unfortunate.' (3)

[Note—The episode of Lord Ram granting deliverance to Jatau has also been narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 22-56.]

पुनि सीतहि खोजत द्वौ भाई । चले बिलोकत बन बहुताई ॥ ४ ॥  
संकुल लता बिटप घन कानन । बहु खग मृग तहँ गज पंचानन ॥ ५ ॥

puni sītahi khōjata dvau bhāī. calē bilōkata bana bahutāī. 4.  
saṅkula latā biṭapa ghana kānana. bahu khaga mṛga taham̐ gaja pañcānana. 5.

Once again, the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) resumed their search for Sita. They moved ahead in the forest observing it closely. (4)

The forest was dense with creepers and trees; it was inhabited by many varieties of birds and deer, and there dwelt in it many elephants and lions. (5)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman moved slowly and steadily thorough the thick forest, looking minutely at every nook and corner of it, at every shade and glade, behind every thicket and under each canopy formed by closely interlocked creepers and dense foliage of trees, in every direction, sideways to the left and to the right—not leaving any place unexamined or unexplored along the forest path.]

आवत पंथ कबंध निपाता । तेहिं सब कही साप कै बाता ॥ ६ ॥

दुरबासा मोहि दीन्ही सापा । प्रभु पद पेखि मिटा सो पापा ॥ ७ ॥

सुनु गंधर्ब कहउँ मैं तोही । मोहि न सोहाइ ब्रह्मकुल द्रोही ॥ ८ ॥

āvata pantha kabandha nipātā. tēhiṁ saba kahī sāpa kai bātā. 6.

durabāsā mōhi dīnhī sāpā. prabhu pada pēkhi miṭā sō pāpā. 7.

sunu gandharba kaha'um' mair' tōhī. mōhi na sōhā'i brahmakula drōhī. 8.

On his way, Lord Ram found that a demon named Kabandha<sup>1</sup> was coming his way. The Lord immediately slayed him, thereby granting his soul deliverance from the gross body of a demon. Upon being released from the evil body, Kabandha told Lord Ram about the curse that had forced him to become a demon. (6)

Kabandha said: ‘Oh Lord, sage Durvasa had cursed me<sup>2</sup>, but now that I have had the good fortune to see thine holy feet, I am liberated from that curse and have found my deliverance.’ (7)

Lord Ram replied: ‘Listen Gandharva, I do not tolerate anyone opposing the Brahmin race.’ (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Who was Kabandha? Well, he was a ‘Gandharva’ as is clear by Lord Ram’s remarks in verse no. 8.

The entire episode of Kabandha has been elaborately described in Veda Vyas’ “Adhyatma Ramayan”, Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 1-56—to Canto 10, verse nos. 1-3; and Valmiki’s Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto nos. 71-73.

<sup>2</sup>Why did sage Durbasa curse him? The story in brief is this: Being a ‘Gandharva’—a sort of demi-god who have charming bodies, are usually responsible for playing music in the heaven, and are accustomed to live a life of luxury in parts of heaven that are well decorated—he had a handsome personality. Once upon a time when he saw sage Durvasa, who was usually spotted with a very serious countenance, with a frown and scowl writ on his face, Kabandha could not restrain himself and smiled in amusement. Durvasa took it as an insult on him, and became so infuriated that he cursed Kabandha as a punishment.

According to another version, Kabandha was once playing music in the court of Indra, the king of gods, when Durvasa came in suddenly, unannounced. Seeing the sage’s haughty demeanours, as well as his sudden appearance in the court, Kabandha

was disturbed and he missed some of the rhythms in the music he was playing at the time. This angered the sage, and he cursed him.

A little variation in this latter version of the episode is that sage Durvasa could not appreciate Kabandha's music and its finer nuances, which made the sage bored. Kabandha's demeanours seemed to suggest that he was treating the sage as a naïve, which the sage found as being an insult to his dignity. So he lost his cool and cursed Kabandha to become a demon.

Kabandha's physical form has been described in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 2-6. In essence, he was an octopus-like ugly hobgoblin whose very form sent shivers down the spine of the beholder—a rounded ball-like body which had a large hole to act as his mouth; there were no ears or a nose, but long and powerful tentacles that extended from the side to take the place of limbs.

A point to remark here is this: Whereas our present book 'Ram Charit Manas' says that Kabandha was cursed by sage Durvasa, Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan" says that he was cursed by sage Ashtavakra—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 15-17. It also goes on to describe that when Kabandha prayed to sage Ashtavakra and had begged for forgiveness, the sage took mercy on him and told him that he would be freed from his curse when he meets Lord Ram, and the Lord cuts off his tentacle-like arms—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-20.

Why Kabandha had the particular hideous form that he did have has been narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 21-25.

According to Valmiki's Ramayana, the sage who cursed Kabandha was named Sthul-Shira. The story briefly is this: Kabandha had an attractive form that was as charming as a full moon. He had a muscular body and was very powerful. But he had the bad habit of scaring sages and hermits, who lived in the Dandak forest, by assuming a frightful form. Once, sage Sthul-Shira was picking fruits in the forest when Kabandha found amusement in teasing and scaring the sage by assuming a hideous form. The sage became very annoyed, and cursed him that the form which he had assumed to terrify the sage would become his permanent form. But when Kabandha prayed for redemption, the sage blessed him that he would be delivered from the curse when he meets Lord Ram, and the Lord cuts off his tentacle-like limbs. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto 71, verse nos. 1-17.}

It was Kabandha who would advise Lord Ram to go and meet Sabari, an old tribal woman who was one of Lord Ram's greatest devotees. This is clearly narrated in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 1-3; and Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto nos. 72-73.]

दो०. मन क्रम बचन कपट तजि जो कर भूसुर सेव ।

मोहि समेत बिरंचि सिव बस ताकें सब देव ॥ ३३ ॥

dōhā.

mana krama bacana kapaṭa taji jō kara bhūsura sēva.

mōhi samēta biran̄ci siva basa tākēm saba dēva. 33.

Lord Ram continued: 'A person who serves Brahmins, who are like living gods on earth, sincerely and selflessly, with his thoughts, his actions and his words, without

any crookedness in his mind<sup>1</sup>— then such a person is able to win my confidence in him.

Verily, it is not only me, but such a person is able to exercise his influence upon Lords Brahma and Shiva as well, and on all other deities of the holy pantheon<sup>2</sup>.’ (Doha no. 33)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16; (c) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 165; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 45.]

चौ०. सापत ताड़त परुष कहंता । बिप्र पूज्य अस गावहिं संता ॥ १ ॥  
पूजिअ बिप्र सील गुन हीना । सूद्र न गुन गन ग्यान प्रबीना ॥ २ ॥  
caupāī.

sāpata tāṛata paruṣa kahantā. bipra pūjya asa gāvahiṁ santā. 1.  
pūji'a bipra sīla guna hīnā. sūdra na guna gana gyāna prabīnā. 2.

[Lord Ram continued—] ‘Saintly people have said (gāvahiṁ santā) that a Brahmin (bipra) must be shown respect even if he curses, beats, and speaks harsh words to a person. (1)

A Brahmin must be shown respect even if his external behaviour seems rude and he appears to lack quality, because a Sudra (“sūdra”; the lowest rung of the hierarchical society) inherently lacks wisdom, gnosis, erudition and sagacity even if he appears to be courteous and well-bred on the outside, for he would not have an expert knowledge in any field (sūdra na guna gana gyāna prabīnā) as to be able to act as a guide, advisor and teacher for the people of the society like a Brahmin naturally is.<sup>1</sup> (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Lord Ram has focused his discourse to Kabandha on the necessity of giving respect to a Brahmin. The primary reason is that the Lord wanted to chastise him for his error in insulting sage Durvasa, who was prone to becoming angry and give curses, which indeed is not a good thing to do for a sage, for doubtlessly these are negative traits, for a learned and aged sage of his stature is supposed to remain calm and merciful, and not be so easily affected by trifles, such as someone smiling at them for their supposedly odd behaviour; a great sage should not pay attention to such things at all.

After all, a ‘Brahmin’ is a senior person in the society; his profession or vocation is to study all the scriptures, understand their principles, and then to act like professional guides to the people and show them the right path and advise them about the correct thing to do in a given situation. They are like a senior member of a large family who must be shown respect by the youngsters even if that person may be uneducated. Verily, elders deserve respect and honour by the virtue of their position in the society irrespective of their personal shortcomings, for one quality that they have which no one else can match is ‘experience’. And this virtue, ‘experience’, is a gem that is priceless, and a wise man must value it as it would stand him in good

stead. So what if a Brahmin becomes angry, or even raises his hands to beat someone, for does a school teacher not scold or pull the ears of a student who plays truant, creates mischief in the classroom, does not pay attention to what is being taught in class, and fails to complete the lesson assigned to him? The teacher becomes harsh on the pupil for his own good, and not because the teacher is a demon or an enemy who has some scores to settle with the pupil.

The reverse applies to the lowest class in the society—the Sudras. This section is supposed to serve all others in the society, and without their help others won't have the time and the energy left to pursue their own professions, as well as to look after and take care of the different needs of a large number of people that constitute the society. In this aspect the Sudras do deserve their share of respect, honour and a courteous treatment. But they cannot replace the function of a Brahmin, or for that matter of a Kshatriya (the warrior class assigned the task to provide protection to the society, and maintain law and order in it) or a Vaishya (the class responsible for trade and commerce so that the needs of the society can be met comfortably).

A person can do one thing at a time; if a Sudra spends his time in studying the scriptures, then where will he have the time to serve others in the society? It does not mean that he is not a human being; it does not mean that he should be ill-treated.

Similarly, if a Brahmin spends his time in doing manual work, then obviously he won't be left with the time or the energy to study voluminous books and become skilled in knowledge that the society dearly needs. Since every human being has his personal failings and shortcomings, but these should not come in the way of his fulfilling his duties in the world.

Therefore, if a Brahmin has some negative traits, but he fulfills his duties to provide selfless and right guidance and advice to the people, then his shortcomings must be overlooked for the wider benefits that one gets from him. Similarly, some sweet words or courteous behaviour by a Sudra means nothing if he does not fulfill his larger obligations to the society by serving it.

A particular thing or doctrine or statement must be viewed from different angles, taking into consideration the context in which the observation has been made, in order to have a holistic view of it. Hence, what Tulsidas writes here by way of quoting Lord Ram regarding 'Brahmins and Sudras' must be properly analysed and understood in the correct context to avoid unnecessary controversies and confusions.]

कहि निज धर्म ताहि समुझावा । निज पद प्रीति देखि मन भावा ॥ ३ ॥

रघुपति चरन कमल सिरु नाई । गयउ गगन आपनि गति पाई ॥ ४ ॥

kahi nija dharma tāhi samujhāvā. nija pada prīti dēkhi mana bhāvā. 3.  
raghupati carana kamala siru nā'ī. gaya'u gagana āpani gati pā'ī. 4.

In the aforesaid way, Lord Ram explained to Kabandha the principles of good conduct that pleases him. The Lord was also pleased by Kabandha's devotion for his holy feet.  
(3)

Thence, Kabandha bowed before the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram (to pay his obeisance to the Lord), and went to the heavens after regaining his original form of a Gandharva.

[To wit, Kabandha was liberated from his curse, and he found his deliverance when he got back his earlier form of a Gandharva and ascended to the heavens.]<sup>1</sup> (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>After offering his obeisance at the holy feet of Lord Ram, Kabandha regained his stature of an exalted soul and went back to heaven. It ought to be noted here that it is not said that he “became a Gandharva once again”; it is merely said that he “attained a destiny that he deserved”.

To wit, he attained emancipation and salvation for his soul. He no longer was an entertainer like Gandharvas who dance and sing and play music for the gods are; he was now a liberated soul which had found eternal freedom from the cycle of birth and death; his soul had found eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity. After all, no lesser reward could be had when a creature is delivered by Lord Ram himself. Becoming a Gandharva is not something highly praised just as court musicians and singers were not too highly looked upon as being in a noble profession by society even though they had access to a king and his courtiers.]

{After providing liberation to Kabandha from his demon body, Lord Ram and Laxman moved ahead. We shall now read what happened next from Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34 onwards as follows:-}

ताहि देइ गति राम उदारा । सबरी कें आश्रम पगु धारा ॥ ५ ॥  
 सबरी देखि राम गृहँ आए । मुनि के बचन समुझि जियँ भाए ॥ ६ ॥  
 सरसिज लोचन बाहु बिसाला । जटा मुकुट सिर उर बनमाला ॥ ७ ॥  
 स्याम गौर सुंदर दोउ भाई । सबरी परी चरन लपटाई ॥ ८ ॥

tāhi dē'i gati rāma udārā. sabarī kēm āśrama pagu dhārā. 5.  
 sabarī dēkhi rāma gṛham' ā'ē. muni kē bacana samujhi jiyam' bhā'ē. 6.  
 sarasija lōcana bāhu bisālā. jaṭā mukuṭa sira ura banamālā. 7.  
 syāma gaura sundara dō'u bhā'ī. sabarī parī carana lapaṭā'ī. 8.

After providing him (Kabandha) the destiny that he deserved, the magnanimous, benevolent and beneficent Lord Ram (rāma udārā) stepped into the hermitage of Sabari<sup>1</sup>. (5)

When Sabari saw that Lord Ram has come home to her in her hermitage, she recalled the words of the sage (Matang) and felt exceedingly fortunate, glad and happy in her heart.

[To wit, Sabari remembered what sage Matang had told her earlier, and when the sage's words bore fruit and Lord Ram came to her hermitage, her joy and happiness knew no bounds.] (6)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) had lotus-like eyes, long muscular arms, wore a crown of matted hairs on their heads and a garland of flowers that bloom in the forest on their chests [7], and their complexions were dark and fair respectively (i.e.



Lord Ram had a dark complexion, while Laxman was fair). When Sabari saw them, she fell on the ground and clasped their holy feet [8]. (7-8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We read in Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan', as well as in Valmiki's version of the Ramayana, that it was Kabandha who had advised Lord Ram to go towards Sabari's hermitage. {Refer: (a) Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 1-3; (b) Valmiki Ramayana, Aranya Kand, Canto nos. 72-73.

Sabari (also pronounced as 'Shabari') was a woman belonging to a forest tribe called 'Sabari'. This tribe was classified as Shudras or lower caste, and sustained themselves by collecting and selling honey and fruits from the forest trees. Being of a low caste, she is said have been ostracized by others. She served a sage named Matanga very devotedly. The sage was a realised soul, and so pleased was he with her devotion and service that he blessed her at the time of leaving his body that she would find her emancipation and salvation when Lord Ram visits her while searching for Sita. Like her Guru, Sabari too left her mortal body after having the privilege of meeting and worshipping the Lord in person by lighting the pyre herself with her mystical powers. According to Adhyatma Ramayana of sage Veda Vyas, it was Lord Ram who had performed her last rites himself, a rare privilege that was even denied to his own worldly father Dasrath.

Sabari used to live alone in the abandoned hermitage where earlier sage Matanga used to live. This hermitage was situated in the Dandak forest, and was quite near Mount Rishyamook where Sugriv, the exiled younger brother of the king of monkeys Vaali, lived with his close confidantes Hanuman, Jamvant, Naal and Neel etc. This place was about ten Yojans or eighty miles from Kishkindha, the capital of the forest kingdom of which Vali was the king.

There is a story about Lake Pampa on the banks of which she lived. The great sage Matang had his hermitage here. To be precise it was on Rishyamook mountain on the other end of Lake Pampa, but perhaps he maintained a small hermitage on the plains where Sabari lived to serve him.

A brief word about sage Matang would be helpful here to the reader. He is considered as being a 'Brahm-rishi', i.e. a great and exalted sage who was self-realised, exceptionally enlightened and well versed in true knowledge of Brahm, the Supreme Being and an embodiment of the cosmic form of pure Consciousness, that granted the sage a stature that was equivalent to Brahm.

He had his hermitage at a place near Lake Pampa, on a hill known as Rishyamook. This place is situated now in Hampi in the state of Karnataka in South India.

When the king of the monkey race, Bali (pronounced as 'Baali' or 'Vaali'), killed the demon Dundhubhi and flung his severed head, it fell near the hermitage of sage Matang, and as a result blood was sprinkled all over the place, defiling the sage's hermitage. The infuriated sage cursed Vaali that if he ever came that way his own head would be blown to pieces.

According to a legend, sage Matang's daughter was named Maatangi; she was an attendant of goddess Lalita, one of the many forms of Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva.

Sabari used to get up very early and clean the path around this lake before her Guru went there for his daily bath and other chores. It so happened that one day, the sages and seers who lived in that area saw her cleaning the path leading to the lake very early in the morning. Since she was of a low caste, they cursed and scolded her

because they regarded her appearance as defiling the place. This misplaced notion of superiority and high stature immensely displeased the Lord. So as soon as those haughty and proud sages went and took a dip in that lake, its water turned turbid, polluted and infested by warms and filth. When Sri Ram had gone there during his forest exile, the sages and seers requested him to purify that lake. Sri Ram, being all-knowing, knew the secret behind that pollution, and in order to teach those sages a lesson of their lives, he asked them to request Sabari to take a dip in it. As soon as she did it, the water regained its former pristine purity, and the lake its former exceptional scenic beauty. This made the haughty sages and seers feel ashamed at their ignorance and behaviour.

She, being a great devotee of Lord Ram, had waited patiently for the moment when Lord Ram would pass that way, as this was what the sage had advised her before going away. She eagerly kept a vigil on the forest path leading up to and going beyond her hermitage—waiting for the Lord's arrival. Finally her long wait ended and the Lord arrived. She worshipped and prayed to him, offered the two brothers plums which she had been plucking and collecting especially for this occasion, and then when Lord Ram asked her if she can tell him anything about Sita, she advised him to go Lake Pampa where he would meet Sugriv, the prince of the monkeys, who will help him not only in finding Sita but also in the endeavour to secure her freedom.

Lord Sri Ram had visited her hermitage and enjoyed the fruits offered by her just like he would have enjoyed them if they were given to him by his mother. In the 'Ram-Sarawali of Surdas', verse no. 11, it is said that 'Sabari was a long time ardent devotee and a humble follower of Raghupati (Sri Ram). He accepted and ate fruits offered by her, preached her on the concept of complete devotion, and then liberated her by giving her residence in his own abode.'

It was Sabari who had advised Sri Ram to go towards the Rishyamook mountain and make friends with Sugriv, the monkey king, who in turn would help the Lord in finding out Sita and freeing her from the clutches of her captors.

Lord Ram's meeting with Sabari has been wonderfully narrated in (a) Tulsidas' Geetwali Ramayan, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 17/1—to 17/8; and (b) Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 4-44.]

प्रेम मगन मुख बचन न आवा । पुनि पुनि पद सरोज सिर नावा ॥ ९ ॥

सादर जल लै चरन पखारे । पुनि सुंदर आसन बैठारे ॥ १० ॥

prēma magana mukha bacana na āvā. puni puni pada sarōja sira nāvā. 9.  
sādara jala lai carana pakhārē. puni sundara āsana baiṭhārē. 10.

She was so overwhelmed by surging emotions of affection and love for the Lord and his brother that she became dumb with joy so much so that she could not find words to speak. She repeatedly fell down and bowed her head before the lotus-like feet of the two brothers. [To wit, Sabari was so moved and emotionally stunned that she could not even say a word of welcome for Lord Ram and Laxman. She simply fell down before the two brothers and clasped their feet with both hands.] (9)

She then washed their feet reverentially with water, and then offered them excellent seats of honour to sit down upon. (10)

दो०. कंद मूल फल सुरस अति दिए राम कहूँ आनि ।  
 प्रेम सहित प्रभु खाए बारंबार बखानि ॥ ३४ ॥

dōhā.

kanda mūla phala surasa ati di'ē rāma kahum' āni.  
 prēma sahita prabhu khā'ē bārambāra bakhāni. 34.

Then she brought tasty edible roots, tubers, bulbs as well as succulent fruits and offered them to Lord Ram<sup>1</sup>.

The Lord ate them with relish, praising them much repeatedly. (Doha no. 34)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Sabari brought refreshments that were available in the forest; she had been collecting them and storing them for a long time in the hope that one day Lord Ram would visit her. She knew that sage Matang's words can't be wrong, so she waited patiently. As we have seen, she did not speak a word, but simply brought these delicious offerings and gave them to Lord Ram (di'ē rāma kahum' āni).

Does this mean that she neglected Laxman or did not offer refreshment to him? Not at all; Lord Ram was the elder brother and so he only is mentioned here. The fact is that the two brothers sat side-by-side, and they used to share their meals together ever since they started on their journey into the forest; they shared their joys and sorrows together as if they were one soul with two bodies. Hence, Sabari brought in the fruits etc. and placed them before the two brothers who sat close to each other, and who would partake of these refreshments together too.

We have read in the previous verse that Sabari caught hold of the feet of both the brothers simultaneously (Chaupai line no. 8 herein above). Obviously she could do this if they were standing very close to each other, so that Sabari could encircle and clasp their feet at the same time with her outstretched arms.

Sabari had been waiting for Lord Ram's coming her way for a long time. During this wait, she would collect plums and stored them away carefully so that she would be ready to offer some refreshment to the Lord when he did actually arrive at her hermitage. As the plums got stale, she would replace them with fresh ones. It was a routine part of her life while awaiting Lord Ram. It was her longing that when one day Lord Ram would come to visit her, she would then offer these plums to him most affectionately, and then, if the Lord would permit, feed him with her own hands. Lord Ram, who is ever so merciful and compassionate and obliging, finally fulfilled her much cherished dream of life—as one fine day he walked into her hermitage. Sabari was overwhelmed; she did not know what to say or do, so stunned she was at this good fortune which she had never imagined will actually fructify.

She worshipped the Lord, washed his holy feet, offered him a seat and something to eat and get refreshed, and then prayed. She said that she was the humblest and the lowliest creature alive who has not known what is Bhakti, and therefore she does not understand how she was blessed by the Lord's august presence. It's really a miracle, she said, which she cannot believe is true.

It is then that Lord Ram preached her about the nine forms of Bhakti that endears its practitioner to the Lord. It is called 'Navadha Bhakti' or the nine-forms of the devotion marked with the virtues of affection, love, surrender and dedication for the Supreme Lord that provides deliverance to a creature. The Lord told her that he believes in only one relationship, and that is of Bhakti.

Earlier, sage Valmiki had listed the auspicious characters and eclectic virtues of those people whose heart and mind are deemed to be a divine abode of Lord Ram, making them as holy as a formally consecrated shrine or temple of God. This narration appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128, to Doha no. 131.

Then again later on Lord Ram has preached Laxman about Bhakti and its subtle nine forms in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17.

It ought to be noted now in the context of the Lord's preaching of the nine forms of Bhakti to Sabari, as narrated in the verses that follow herein below, that they all have one common factor or denominator running through them—and it is to have unadulterated, faithful and honest devotion, dedication, surrender and affection for the Lord God, to have exemplary auspicious and righteous virtues, to be free from all worldly attachments and delusions, and to have complete faith and reliance upon Lord Ram for all of one's needs and spiritual welfare.

Since the various virtues and connotations of Bhakti have already been explained while describing Lord Ram's discourse in favour of Laxman, we shall be brief here, and limit ourselves to the narration of the verses that describe what the Lord said to Sabari.]

चौ०. पानि जोरि आगें भइ ठाढ़ी । प्रभुहि बिलोकि प्रीति अति बाढ़ी ॥ १ ॥  
 केहि बिधि अस्तुति करौं तुम्हारी । अधम जाति मैं जड़मति भारी ॥ २ ॥  
 अधम ते अधम अधम अति नारी । तिन्ह महँ मैं मतिमंद अघारी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

pāni jōri āgēm̐ bha'i ṭhārḥī. prabhuhi bilōki prīti ati bārḥī. 1.  
 kēhi bidhi astuti karaum̐ tumhārī. adhama jāti maim̐ jaramati bhārī. 2.  
 adhama tē adhama adhama ati nārī. tinha maham̐ maim̐ matimanda aghārī.  
 3.

Sabari joined the palms of her hands and stood reverentially before Lord Ram. As she watched the divine form of the Lord, devotion and affection for the Lord surged within her bosom. (1)

She prayed to Lord Ram with greatest of humility: 'Oh Lord, say in what way can I sing thine glories and praise thine virtues, for I am an illiterate woman, one who is the lowliest amongst those who are lowly, and one who is utterly dumb and devoid of any kind of skill needed to honour thee with words. (2)

Verily indeed, I am most downtrodden and disenfranchised even amongst those women folk who are regarded with contempt as being fallen and unfortunate.'<sup>1</sup> (3)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>It is to be remarked here that Sabari has not prayed to Lord Ram by using any flowery terms and well-composed verses that were perfect in language and grammar. She was an illiterate lady, but her heart brimmed with love and affection for Lord Ram, she had unbound devotion for and faith in Lord Ram—and verily indeed, this is what the Lord wants, and this is the language and grammar that he understands

perfectly well, and it is the silent prayer of the heart that pleases the Lord more than the use of a whole dictionary.

Hence, though Sabari could not say any prayer with the use of words, as she did not even know, by her own admission, what a ‘prayer’ is and how it is said, but the soulful song of her heart and the music that accompanied it, when the strings of her emotions were strung, were so captivating indeed that they enchanted Lord Ram so much that he stood and heard them, ‘the silent song and the inaudible music of Sabari’s heart’, mesmerized.]

कह रघुपति सुनु भामिनि बाता । मानउँ एक भगति कर नाता ॥ ४ ॥  
जाति पाँति कुल धर्म बड़ाई । धन बल परिजन गुन चतुराई ॥ ५ ॥  
भगति हीन नर सोहड़ कैसा । बिनु जल बारिद देखिअ जैसा ॥ ६ ॥

kaha raghupati sunu bhāmini bātā. māna'um'ēka bhagati kara nātā. 4.  
jāti pām̐ti kula dharma baṛā'ī. dhana bala parijana guna caturā'ī. 5.  
bhagati hīna nara sōha'i kaisā. binu jala bārīda dēkhi'a jaisā. 6.

Lord Raghupati (literally, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty of the kingdom of Ayodhya; i.e. Lord Ram) said to Sabari—‘Listen to what I have to say, oh good lady (sunu bhāmini bātā)! I recognize and respect only one form of relationship—and it is known as ‘Bhakti’<sup>1</sup>. (4)

High caste, family lineage, diligence following of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, propriety and noble conduct), good reputation and all sorts of respect, honour and acclaim that one has in this world, possession or acquisition of material wealth and prosperity, physical strength, force, authority and powers, having a large family and circle of friends and followers, possessing countless skills, qualities and virtues, as well as possession of wisdom and intelligence—none of them matters at all and has any value for a man if he has no Bhakti in him, for if he lacks Bhakti then he appears like a cloud that has no rain in it<sup>2</sup>. (5-6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word ‘Bhakti’ covers such auspicious and glorious virtues as having true and sincere devotion, dedication, affection, love, surrender, submission, faith and belief in Lord God. Lord Ram is an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and therefore the nine forms of Bhakti which he enumerates here serve as a guide for any spiritual aspirant who wishes to attain the Supreme Being.

The term ‘Bhakti’ has been extensively explained in different contexts as notes appended to different verses of Lord Ram’s discourse for Laxman that is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17.

Then again, in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79 of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas, it is said that “the miseries and torments from which the creatures suffer cannot be eliminated without having devotion for Lord Hari”.

Bhakti is the only thing that pleases the Lord, and if a person has this virtue in him then it does not matter if he lacks everything else in this world as far as the Lord being pleased and benevolent upon him is concerned. No amount of pretensions and pampering will please the Lord if the creature does not have the divine virtue of

Bhakti in him. It is the only virtue, quality and character that endear a seeker of liberation and deliverance to the Supreme Lord. It is the only thing that the Lord seeks in a person in order to accept the latter in the fold of his close associates.

<sup>2</sup>A cloud is of any worth only if it gives rain to the world, otherwise it is just a useless entity floating aimlessly in the sky. Rain-bearing clouds are welcomed by all the living beings, and though they are dark in colour, make threatening noises by rumbling and thundering, and often strike the world with the killing staff of lightening that instantly burns anything on earth where it lands, the people still honour the rain-bearing cloud, sing and dance in ecstasy when they first appear on the horizon after the scorching heat of summer, and celebrate their arrival. Even mother Nature smiles at the arrival of the rain-bearing clouds, with withered plants looking up in hope of survival, the dry and parched land preparing to look dressed up in verdant greenery like a newly decorated bride, the birds such as the peacock dancing to welcome the cloud with open plumes, and the Chatak bird (the cuckoo) feeling exhilarated and singing in merriment that at last it will be able to quench its thirst.

But dry rain-less cloud keep floating away in endless streams across the sky, and no body bothers about them.

Similarly, the world is full of countless living beings, having as many countless virtues, some small and others of a grand scale. They may all excel in their respective fields in the mundane world, to a lesser or a greater degree—and the Lord treats them all alike because all of them are his children.

But amongst these teeming millions and trillions of creatures there are those handful of them who have Bhakti for the Lord. Just as a father who treats his many sons who are all well established in life equally, but having a special soft corner for a son who is completely devoted to the father, loving him and diligently caring for his needs inspite of the fact that this particular son may not have done so well in terms of success in the world, Lord Ram too has a soft corner for a person who has the virtue of ‘Bhakti’ in him inspite of the fact that he may not been fortunate to take birth in a high family, have material prosperity, possess any skills and intelligence, or in any other way can be regarded as a successful man by worldly yardsticks. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 78 K says “a person who wishes to attain emancipation and salvation without having the virtue of Bhakti firmly engrained in him is as anomalous as an animal which has no tail or horns on its body inspite of such a person being otherwise highly learned, erudite, wise and skilled”.]

नवधा भगति कहउँ तोहि पाहीं । सावधान सुनु धरु मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

प्रथम भगति संतन्ह कर संगी । दूसरि रति मम कथा प्रसंगा ॥ ८ ॥

navadhā bhagati kaha'um' tōhi pāhīm. sāvadhāna sunu dharu mana māhīm. 7.  
prathama bhagati santanha kara saṅgā. dūsari rati mama kathā prasaṅgā. 8.

Now I (Lord Ram) shall narrate to you the nine forms of Bhakti. Listen carefully and establish them firmly (cherish them) in your mind and heart. (7)

The first form of Bhakti is having contact with saints, holy people and those who are pious, establishing a communion with them and obtaining their fellowship.

The second is to have a deep liking for and eagerness to hear divine stories and episodes related to my life and deeds. (8)

[Note—We have the same prescription here as had been given by sage Valmiki, as well as by Lord Ram to Laxman, his younger brother, earlier.

The first component of Bhakti is ‘having communion with saints and holy people’. This component is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—first by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129; and then by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 16.

The second component of ‘having a deep sense of affection and liking for hearing Lord Ram’s divine stories’ is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—first by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 128 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-5; and then by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8, 11 that precede Doha no. 16.]

दो०. गुर पद पंकज सेवा तीसरि भगति अमान ।

चौथि भगति मम गुन गन करइ कपट तजि गान ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

gura pada paṅkaja sēvā tīsari bhagati amāna.

cauthi bhagati mama guna gana kara'i kapaṭa taji gāna. 35.

The third form of Bhakti is to humbly serve the holy lotus-like feet of one’s Guru<sup>1</sup> (moral preceptor and spiritual teacher), and not having any sense of pride at having done so.

[To wit, one must not go about boasting that the Guru favours him and has allowed the person to serve him. This service should be selfless and done with dedication. One must not serve the Guru just to extract knowledge from him, treating this service as a means to please the Guru so that he will reveal the secrets to the disciple, but done as a matter of showing gratitude and respect to a person who has not only shown the ignorant aspirant the correct path to his desired goal but also stand by him to prevent him from falling in the countless pits that come in the way, guiding him along and coming to his aide when he needs help the most. Betrayal of trust of such a teacher, guide and help is the biggest inhuman act a person can ever imagine to perform, and a sin that would be unpardonable. But one must not be boastful of this service or do it with selfish aim only. It must be voluntary and not forced against one’s wish. This service to the Guru must therefore be genuine, selfless, diligent, sincere and arising from the heart. One must not feel that he is obliging the Guru with his service, but rather feel honoured that he is lucky to have got an opportunity to serve him. A worthy disciple is one who feels privileged that the Guru was gracious enough to let him serve the latter, and that this is the minimum he can do to repay the debt that he owes to the Guru, because it is he, the Guru, who has removed the darkness of ignorance from his life and illuminated his path with the light of knowledge.]

The fourth form is to sing and emotionally submerge one's self in the narration and thoughts of my divine glories and virtues without any trace of pretensions, deceit, conceit, wickedness or crookedness.

[For instance, one must not attend discourses and narration of the Lord's divine stories just to pass time or with the intention to tell the world that one is a religious and pious person so that the world begins to trust him. Then this pretentious and deceitful person exploits this trust to serve his vested interests and fulfill his worldly passions and desires. This sort of hearing of the Lord's story serves no good at all; rather it pulls the man down in the bog of deceit and falsehood which he is supposed to rise from in the first place when he went to attend the discourse about the Lord.] (Doha no. 35)

[Note—The third component of 'humbly serving the Guru' is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precedes Doha no. 129; and earlier by Tulsidas himself in Baal Kand, from stanza no. 5 of the first 'Sortha' (a sort of verse) with which the book Ram Charit Manas opens, and then from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1, till Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

The fourth component of Bhakti is 'to sing and narrate Lord Ram's divine stories and glories without any pretensions, cunning and deceit'. This component is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 16 while the Lord was preaching Laxman about Bhakti.

<sup>1</sup>Now let us read more about a *Guru*, what are his qualities that are so much eulogized in the scriptures, and why he is given so much importance. Even Tulsidas has praised a Guru in laudatory terms as mentioned above.

The importance of a Guru has been emphasized in a number of Upanishads, viz.—

(a) Shukla Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18; Shatyayani Upanishad, verse no. 39; Niralamba Upanishad, verse no. 30.

(b) Krishna Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 35; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 44; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 56-59, and Canto 6, verse no. 79; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 39; Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad, in its verse no. 21; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 52-53; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 3-4; and Canto 2, verse nos. 12-13; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 76; Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3 (Lord Rudra is the universal Guru).

(c) Atharva Veda's following Upanishad—Manduka Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse nos. 12-13; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 10-11, and Canto 8, paragraph no. 17, 1<sup>st</sup> stanza; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 1.

(d) A minor Upanishad named the 'Dwayo-panishad' is entirely dedicated to enumerating the chief characteristics of a Guru. It is not known to which Veda it precisely belongs.

(e) The *Anand Ramayan* (said to be written by sage Valmiki) narrates the virtues of the Guru in its Manohar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 3, verse nos. 7-17.

Who is a true Guru? This is a question which has baffled many a scholars. The word 'Guru' simply means a person who is one's teacher—be it in the field of knowledge



that pertains to the world or the field that relates to the spiritual. He is the person who makes a person acquire knowledge that he did not have earlier.

The Upanishads explain the term *Guru* in detail and list the virtues that a wise and enlightened *Guru* is supposed to possess. They also outline the characteristics that a good disciple must have, and how best one can choose a good *Guru*.

The word *Guru* has two parts—viz. ‘Gu’ meaning darkness, and ‘Ru’ meaning light. Hence the word ‘*Guru*’ means a person who can remove the darkness symbolising ignorance and illusions that has engulfed the disciple from all sides and act as a hindrance or an obstacle in his emancipation and salvation by showing him the truthful path, or lighting his path with the light of knowledge and holding out his hands to support him when he falters. Therefore he is an exalted, revered and much sought after person who can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge and guides him whenever he finds himself in a moral dilemma and quandary. He is the person who is both the moral preceptor as well as the spiritual guide of his disciple. He is supposed to act as a neutral advisor to his ward in all matters temporal and spiritual. The disciple is expected to confide in him his greatest of secrets without the fear of betrayal or blackmail. He is the one who is expected to have risen above all kinds of vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. Therefore it is deemed that only a person of high mental, intellectual, spiritual and ethical caliber can become a true *Guru*.

A true *Guru* is treated as being equivalent to the ‘Trinity Gods’—(1) *Brahma*, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) *Vishnu*, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) *Shiva*, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is ‘God like’ because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. The *Rudra Upanishad*, verse no. 3 explicitly asserts that Lord *Shiva* is the universal *Guru* of all, and that the *Guru* is *Shiva* personified in this form.

Therefore, a *Guru* is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies.

When the teacher (*Guru*) is especially pleased with a particular student, he would naturally be inclined to pay more attention to him as compared to others. This is natural for him because he sees in this student a spark of great future, a soul who would sincerely and honestly carry forward the teacher’s legacy forward and make his teachings as well as his name and fame immortal. As for other less brilliant and devoted students, or those who are just mediocre and run-of-the-mill sort, the teacher has no such grand expectations from them. So he prefers to impart the best of education to his special and most-favoured student. The teacher would even unravel top secrets to him because he is confident that this disciple would never misuse them and also understand these secrets correctly and properly. This relationship is just like a father of more than one son. The father would have a natural love for the son in

whom he sees a bright future and from whom he expects the family's good name and fortune to get a boost as compared to those sons who are like blights on the family.

The Guru is regarded as a personification of the great knowledge of the scriptures (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 10), as well as Lord Maha Vishnu himself (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 8, paragraph no. 17, 1<sup>st</sup> stanza). It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the eternal 'soul' and not the physical gross body is venerable.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its opening verse no. 1 emphasizes the importance of true Guru and says that he is the primary source of Shakti (strength, energy, vitality, vigour and authority) for the spiritual aspirant and his primary advisor and moral support. The aspirant relies on the authority of the Guru and his knowledge to faithfully move ahead in a field which is still unknown to him and un-chartered by him, without the fear of going on the wrong path or falling prey to uncertainties.

The wise, learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, guide and teacher) is a true advisor and guide for a spiritual aspirant. He is the one who acts as the primary source of strength and support that empowers the person to move ahead on his spiritual path and ultimately attain success in his endeavours. He is the virtual 'Shakti' or source of energy, motivation, strength, power and authority that provides the necessary support, impetus and dynamism to all the efforts made by the aspirant to reach his goal in life successfully. But for this to materialize, the Guru himself should be an expert in his field, and inclined to helpful and supporting; he should be a teacher, a preceptor, a motivator, an advisor, a friend and a guide all rolled into one.

This verse is a sort of salutation to the teacher, and showing of honour and respect to him. He is the one who deftly guides the student of spiritualism, or for that matter in any field of learning, on the correct path, warning him of the numerous pitfalls, and how to overcome them successfully. In this context, this verse can be read as follows also—A man who is wise, learned and enlightened is the one who is eligible to become a true teacher who guides and advises a spiritual aspirant. Such a teacher is the disciple's or a student's real friend and support; he provides his ward (the disciple or the student) the much-needed moral support, guidance, motivation and inspiration to move ahead even when the former appears to have lost hope and the drive to move ahead. It is the teacher or the Guru who removes all darkness symbolized by ignorance and delusions, and instead lights up the path to success for his ward. The Guru picks up the ward whenever he stumbles and falls, or is down in the docks; the Guru instills confidence and hope in him when he is dejected and hopeless. The Guru provides the necessary impetus to the disciple to move ahead and rise up against all odds and misfortunes. This is why the Guru is called the primary form of Shakti for the spiritual aspirant. Even as any endeavour needs 'Shakti' (dynamism, energy, vitality, strength, impetus, drive) to succeed, the Guru is the one who provides this much-needed Shakti to the spiritual aspirant.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Mundak 1, section 2, verse nos. 12-13 describes the importance of the Guru as follows—

"Verse no. 12 = Wise men (who have understood this reality and are eager for finding the truthful way that would give permanent spiritual rewards) approach some learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, teacher and guide) who is not only well-versed in the 'truth' of Brahm as enshrined in the Vedas but is also a firm believer in this 'truth' known as Brahm and is a practitioner of this 'truth'. It is only

he who can show the spiritual aspirant the correct path leading to Brahm and teach him about the supreme knowledge of Brahm (12).

“Verse no. 13 = This enlightened and Brahm-realised Guru is obliged to welcome the aspirant, who is calm in his demeanours and has obtained full control over his sense organs, as his disciple. The teacher should teach him the divine and eclectic knowledge of Brahm, a knowledge called ‘Brahm Vidya’, so that the eager disciple can have a comprehensive knowledge of the truthful and eternal Brahm (13).

The Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition elaborately describes the virtues that a true Guru should possess. These verses are being quoted here for ready reference—

“Verse no.14-15—A Guru should be well versed in the tenets of the Vedas or the knowledge contained in them, must possess the best of virtues and characters and be exemplary in his behaviours and temperament, should be an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and Lord of the world), should be free from the tainting effects of such negative traits as Matsar (i.e. jealousy, envy, anger, wrathfulness) etc.<sup>1</sup>, should be an expert in the art, craft and science of Yoga (meditation techniques and contemplative practices) and devoted towards them (i.e. must practice them himself, and be sincere and honest about his firm conviction about their efficacy), should be so involved in the philosophy of Yoga that it forms his way of life and soul (i.e. the philosophy of Yoga should be reflected in his personal life and his preaching should hold conviction), should be immaculate, pure and uncorrupt, should be devoted towards his own Guru, and should be diligent and committed towards attaining the supreme Lord at all costs.

According to the Varaha Upanishad, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six enemies which are metaphors for the various faults that are associated with a creature. They are the following—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)

“Verse no. 16—The word Guru has two letters—viz. ‘Gu’ and ‘Ru’. The word Gu means darkness, while the word Ru refers to that which can remove or dispel that darkness. Hence, he who is able to remove or dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions, who prevents these elements from spreading their tentacles of darkness, and in case the darkness already exists then he is able to remove it with his auspicious advice and guidance, and who is able to liberate his disciple from the clutches of this all engulfing darkness that threatens to drown him is called a Guru.

“Verse no. 17—A Guru is akin to the supreme Brahm personified; a Guru is the supreme abode or shelter that provides succour and solace to the tormented soul of the disciple and the last port of call for him, a Guru is like a treasury of transcendental and eclectic knowledge of divinity, and a Guru is the best person who should be consulted and followed by a disciple who sees him as a role model to be emulated.

“Verse no. 18—A Guru represents the best of values and the highest stature a person can ever hope to attain, and a Guru is the best asset that a person possesses (because he gives him good advice and props up his sagging morale during his bad days, he can

be faithfully relied upon with no fear of betrayal, he shows him the auspicious, noble and righteous path when he is in a dilemma, he acts as a beacon of hope for his disciple when the rest of the world has betrayed him, and he never has any vested interest in anything other than what is good and fortunate for his disciple and which would ensure his all round welfare and happiness). A person who gives the best advice according to given circumstances and time is said to be the best of all Gurus as far as the disciple is concerned.

We should note here that the Upanishads have a very broad and open minded approach to any subject; they are not dogmatic and rigid in their doctrines. A person may be expert in any one field but not in another, and this does not mean that the disciple should not benefit from this man for the knowledge that he possesses. Therefore, for a particular problem a disciple may have one Guru, but for another problem that confronts him he might as well have another. It is not binding upon him that once he has accepted a particular person as his Guru he cannot accept another person as his second Guru. The main function of the institution of a Guru is to help a disciple in all his endeavours, but in an auspicious and righteous manner. Even one's own father and mother and wife and son and friend, and for that matter even one's enemy can be a Guru if they can enlighten the person in a particular field.

There is a minor Upanishad called Dwayo-panishad which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras. This Upanishad is being cited here verse by verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:---

‘(a) Verse nos.1-2= A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerity devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

(b) Verse no.3= A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

(c) Verse no. 4= The letter ‘Gu’ means darkness, while the letter ‘Ru’ means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

(d) Verse no.5= A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahm; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

(e) Verse no.6= A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and

magnificence, who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

(f) Verse no.7= Pronouncing the word ‘Guru’ even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit’.

The Shatyayani Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 39 describes the virtues of a true Guru. This verse describes the importance and glory of a moral preceptor, spiritual guide, an all-rounder advisor and a practical teacher, called a Guru. It is deemed here that he is wise, erudite, sagacious, learned and enlightened, simply because only a person who knows something himself can teach it to others; the rest are only imposters. It says—“Guru is the supreme Dharma. That is, one should faithfully serve and follow the advice and instructions of one’s Guru just like one must sincerely, diligently and ardently follow one’s religiously sanctioned norms of behaviour and righteous codes of conduct, duties and responsibilities, which are collectively called a person’s Dharma as established by the scriptures. It also refers to a noble conduct that is conducive to happiness and liberation from the shackles that tie a creature to the deluding and entrapping world.

Likewise, the Guru is the last shelter and refuge for a person (because it is he who guides a person when he is confused, doubtful and perplexed; when he needs support and succour; when he needs a true friend by his side). It is he who guides a person on the correct path and removes all consternations from his mind; it is in him that a disciple can confide without any fear of betrayal, back-stabbing, blackmailing and revenge. It is he who sincerely and selflessly advises a person on all matters as it is in him a person blindly reposts all faith and confidence. In fact, a Guru is the best council.

A person who does not show due respect and honour to the Guru who has selflessly given him the bounty of truthful knowledge, who teaches him and makes him wiser, more knowledgeable, skilled and educated, then all the Gyan (i.e. all the knowledge, all skills, all wisdom, all erudition and all learning that the person has acquired or gained) as well as all the good effects of the Tapa (i.e. penances, austerities, sufferings and hardships that he has endured in his quest for an all round welfare and enhancement) gradually fade away or decline and lose their potentials, powers, prowess and effects, rendering that unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal disciple shorn of all glories, fame and moral strengths that should have otherwise accrued to him just like the case where water slowly seeps out of an earthen pot made from half-baked mud. [In other words, if a man does not show due respect to his teacher, he will be cursed and all the good virtues that would have normally given him good name and fame would abandon him. He would be deemed to be unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal, and would be just like a traitor who has betrayed his country. No good virtues would stay with him.] [39].”

The Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 21 describes the glory of a true Guru in these words—“One should mentally remember one’s Guru, show due respect and pay homage to him most reverentially in the following words—‘He (i.e. the wise, erudite, sagacious, most learned, enlightened,

and self-realised moral preceptor, spiritual guide and teacher) always sports a cheerful and pleasant disposition.

He is an embodiment of the best of blessings and virtues that bestow all round welfare and happiness to his followers (disciples), and whose mere presence is very comforting and reassuring for them.

He is a living personification of Gyan (which is pure and truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment).

He is beyond the reach of perplexities and vexations created by the sense of duality in this world, leading to contradictory thoughts, emotions and sentiments that create unnecessary doubts, dichotomy and confusions. That is, he is mentally stable and steadfast in his convictions and beliefs; he is not swayed by the buffeting effects of adversities, turmoil and suspense that are so characteristic of this delusory world.

He has the subtle and sublime characteristics that are so unique to the sky. That is, he remains aloof and detached from everything like the sky; he is not tainted or affected by anything or any circumstance in this world much like the sky in which uncountable varieties of things are embedded in Nature but which remains inherently untainted and uncorrupted by any of them. This is in spite of him (the Guru) being surrounded by all the material objects, impurities and delusions that are so characteristic of this world. The Guru is constantly being buffeted by so many numerous and divergent impulses originating from this material world which is like a trap in which even the most learned persons fall, but in spite of these distractions and constant gnawing he remains flawless and faultless like the sky. He is a repository of knowledge and has a depth of enlightenment that is as vast, endless and fathomless as the sky; he remains calm and serene like the distant recesses of the vast and endless sky. In short, a true Guru is comparable to the grand virtues as possessed by the sky element.

He keeps his attention fixed on one essential 'truth', the element which is supreme, transcendental, non-dual and most truthful, instead of allowing his mind and intellect to wander here and there in myriad theories, doctrines and philosophies, leading to immense confusions, uncertainties and consternations as well as distress and vexations for the spirit much like a ship that is being tossed around in a choppy ocean.

He is 'one and perpetual'. That is, he is steady and stable as a rock in his beliefs, convictions, words, emotions, sentiments and thoughts; he is not of a fickle mind and character; he is not swayed by and swept off his moorings by myriad distractions and divergent influences which are characteristic attributes of this material world of delusions; he is unchanging and unwavering; he believes in one non-dual supreme Truth which is eternal and infinite.

He is most pure, uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemish of any kind.

He remains unruffled and unmoved, maintaining his equanimity and calmness even under adversities and unfavourable circumstances, such as during periods of extreme emotional turmoil and stress because he is full of the eclectic virtues of being dispassionate, calm, neutral and detached from everything. Instead, he remains ever submerged in a perpetual state of equanimity and bliss.

He is like an all-knowing, wise, expert and sagacious, but a neutral and detached witness to what the mortal world and its inhabitants do, being a dispassionate and un-involved observer to the happenings around him in this world.

He is full of equanimity, fortitude and evenness of mind and heart, remaining untouched and unaffected by the rocking effects of various emotions and sentiments

that continuously pummel his heart, mind and intellect, and perpetually disturb him by intruding into his stoic calmness and peaceful demeanors.

He is free from being tainted or affected by the apparent good or bad effects of the three legendary Gunas or qualities inherent in all the living creatures, and which create distortions in the basically clean fiber symbolising the inherently pure and immaculate character of any individual's true self (i.e. his Atma; his consciousness). [These three Gunas are Sata or the noble quality which creates propensity for righteousness and noble behaviour, Raja is the second quality which creates worldly desires and aspirations, leading to the predominance of such characters that make a creature worldly wise, and Tama which is the meanest and lowest quality, creating the tendency for sinful conduct. All these three qualities are present in a person, but his individuality is decided by the ratio in which these three are present. The 'inherent purity' refers to the immaculacy of the Atma which is the 'true self' of all living beings. These Gunas cast their shadow on the shine of the self-illuminated and immaculate Atma, making the individual appear to exhibit certain artificial taints and characteristics that are extraneous to his true self. This is like the case of the shadow of the moon falling upon the earth when it comes between the sun and the earth, giving rise to the solar eclipse. The sun has not lost its shine and neither is there a night during the day, but the optical impression created by this intervention of the moon makes it appear to be so. Similarly, the immaculate Atma appears to be tainted and darkened when these Gunas cast their shadow upon it. The resultant effect is that the individual does not appear to be as holy and divine as he actually is. In the case of a wise Guru, it is deemed that he has gained sufficient control over his self that none of these three Gunas are able to display their characteristic behaviour, thereby making the Guru absolutely neutral and pristine pure like a piece of crystal.]

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to such a Guru who possesses these virtues as narrated in this verse. [It is to be noted here that the eclectic and sublime virtues enumerated here are the virtues of the Supreme Being or Brahm. In other words, that Guru who is possessed of these attributes is no less revered than Brahm; he is equivalent to Brahm; he is Divinity personified.] (21).”

Let us see briefly how Tulsidas praises the Guru in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, stanza no. 5 of first Sortha with which this epic opens, followed by verses from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1, to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

“I pay my obeisance at the holy lotus-like feet of a Guru who is like an ocean of mercy and grace, who is like a personified form of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Lord), and whose words of wisdom are equivalent to the brilliant rays of the sun so far as removing the darkness of ignorance is concerned. (Stanza no. 5 of the first Sortha of Baal Kand)

I pay my obeisance to the nectar ('Paraag') that is symbolically present in this lotus like holy feet of a Guru. This nectar is extremely delicious, fragrant and succulent. [That is, it provides happiness and bliss to the worshipper in the same way as the nectar does to the bee.] (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The auspicious dust of the feet of the Guru is like an herbal powder made from the Sanjivani herb (that injects life into a lifeless creature). [That is, by worshipping the holy feet of the Guru the worshipper receives his blessings, and this in turn rejuvenates his inner-self by cleansing it of all taints and delusions associated with the world, as well as illuminating it with the light of knowledge.] (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This auspicious dust is equivalent to the holy ash smeared on the divine body of Lord Shiva. It is a producer and bestower of all welfare and happiness (upon the worshipper). (Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This dust removes the (spiritual) dirt clinging to the mirror represented by the devotee's heart and mind. [That is, just like the case when one can see an object clearly when the mirror is scrubbed clean, the worshipper is able to remove all delusions from his mind and free his heart of all worldly attachments so much so that now he can experience the bliss of self-realisation that comes with experiencing the presence of the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Conscious Being, in his own bosom. Once all veils of ignorance are removed, once the thick layers after layers of numerous faults and impurities are scrubbed off, the spiritual aspirant is able to witness the inherent blissful and peaceful nature of the 'truthful self' known as the Atma. This is the aim of all spiritual practices—to realise the Truth and Reality by overcoming all delusions and ignorance.] (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The nails of the feet of the Guru have the sublime shine resembling that of gems so much so that their light illuminates the subtle heart of the worshipper as soon as he remembers them. [This is symbolism only. It simply means that when one worships the Guru's holy feet his mind and heart should be focused on its subtle and ethereal aspect, its sublime and spiritual value, and not on its grosser physical appearance such as the colour of the skin of the feet, whether they are wrinkled and chafed due to old age and hardships of life, if the nails are healthy or rough and brittle, etc. Just as a pearl for instance has a subtle silken glow and smoothness that is inherent to it inspite of the fact that its origin is in an oyster and the ocean, the nails of the feet of the Guru also enables the worshipper to illuminate his inner self with the light of 'consciousness' that comes from within. The 'supreme consciousness' lives in the subtle space of the heart of the spiritual aspirant in the form of an ethereal entity known as the 'Atma'. This Atma is self-illuminated, and its realisation makes the inner-self of the worshipper glow with the light of self-realisation like the inherent shine of a priceless piece of gem.] (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This light of knowledge and self-realisation that springs forth spontaneously in the subtle heart of the spiritual aspirant is able to dispel and eliminate completely all traces of darkness of ignorance and delusions that had earlier shrouded his inner-self. He is very lucky and fortunate in whose heart this light burns. (Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1)

As soon as this light illuminates one's heart, the subtle eyes of wisdom and enlightenment open spontaneously. This in turn removes all the fears and horrors arising from the darkness of night symbolized by this world and its delusions. [A man sees many imaginary ghosts and phantoms in the darkness of the night, but as soon as daylight dawns, they vanish, and all fears and terrors arising from these phantoms go away automatically. Similarly, as soon as wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment sprouts in the inner-self of the spiritual aspirant, all his fears having their genesis in the darkness of ignorance run away.] (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The grand spiritual benefit of this self-illuminating light of wisdom and enlightenment that begins to shine in one's inner-being upon self-realisation, accompanied by the ability to see things that have a subtle, sublime and ethereal existence (as opposed to those that have gross and mundane existence in this physical gross material world), enables the seeker to see and understand the esoteric secrets of the divine story of Lord Ram, and be privileged enough to be able to peer behind the exterior to have a divine glimpse the glittering gems, large and small, of profound



spiritual value that lie embedded in this holy story but are normally hidden from view. (Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1).

It is like the case of some especially empowered and sanctified magical ointment that experts who possess occult powers (such as the Siddhas) apply on their eyes to be able to see hidden treasures, such as mines of gems and precious stones etc., inside mountains, forests and earth. (Doha no. 1)

The holy dust of the Guru's august feet is like this especially empowered magical ointment that is soothing and soft for the eyes, and it removes all diseases of the eyes. [This line must be properly interpreted. The eye referred to here in this verse is the subtle inner-eye of the mind and intellect, and not the physical eye of the gross body. It is not the physical organ of the gross body that is known as the eye with which one sees the grosser aspects of the equally gross world of material sense objects, and therefore it also does not refer to some physical disease of the eye.

The 'disease' here is the spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance that prevents the creature to see the Truth and Reality. Worshipping the holy feet of the Guru and focusing the mind on the dust of his holy feet acts like a medicine for this subtle disease. It enables a person to develop wisdom and ability to see what is wrong, unethical and unrighteous, and segregate it from what is wise, righteous, ethical and correct. It opens the eyes of wisdom, erudition and discrimination that allow the man to see and examine the surrounding world intelligently and analytically. It is like removing cataract from one's eyes when suddenly he begins to see the whole world clearly, brightly. The auspicious reward of worshipping the holy feet of the Guru is that this empowers the spiritual aspirant to have the ability to have deep insight into the reality of the world and its existence with eyes of wisdom that can see behind the shroud of delusions that surround the entire world like a thick veil of smoke, preventing clarity of sight.] (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2)

Using this dust like an eye-ointment, I (Tulsidas) clean my eyes of wisdom and erudition so that I may be able to narrate the esoteric, sublime, holy and divine story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit Manas. (2) (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2). ”]

चौ०. मंत्र जाप मम दृढ़ बिस्वासा । पंचम भजन सो बेद प्रकासा ॥ १ ॥

छठ दम सील बिरति बहु करमा । निरत निरंतर सज्जन धरमा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mantra jāpa mama dr̥ḥa bisvāsā. pañcama bhajana sō bēda prakāsā. 1.  
chaṭha dama sīla birati bahu karamā. nirata nirantara sajjana dharamā. 2.

Doing 'Japa' using my (holy) name (i.e. repeating the holy name of Lord Ram as a spiritual formula), and having firm faith and belief in me—verily, this is the fifth form of Bhakti and is highlighted even in the Vedas (the primary scriptures)<sup>1</sup>.

[The fifth form of devotion is to constantly and persistently repeat and remain engrossed and submerged in my holy and divine name, and have unflinching and steady faith and conviction in its glory and divinity as revealed in the Vedas.]

{The first half of this line can be interpreted as follows also—"Doing Japa with my name ('Ram'), and having a firm faith in it—i.e. in the power of the holy

name as well as the efficacy of the process of repeating it as done during Japa) as a means of attaining bliss and eternity as well as liberation and deliverance-----”} (1)

The sixth form of Bhakti incorporates such grand virtues as ‘Dam’ (self restraint of the sense organs of perception and action the body), ‘Sheel’ (to be courteous, civilized, pleasant and polite; to have mildness of demeanours; to have good and virtues character), and ‘Virati’ from all involvements in doing so many things in this world (i.e. a sincere and profound sense of renunciation, detachment and dispassion from all material things of this mundane gross world, remaining free from their temptations, overcoming desires and passions pertaining to the world and the urge of the sense organs of the body for gratification etc., not allowing oneself to be unnecessarily involved in countless deeds related to this world because they sap one’s energy, bind him to the material world in which the deed is done with the hope of enjoying its rewards, stoking the fire of passions, creating numerous emotional distractions by way of contradictions such as attachments or repulsions, elation or dejection, sorrows or happiness, and so on)<sup>2</sup>.

Besides the above, one should always endeavour to live a life according to the doctrines laid down for an auspicious way of life as lived by saintly, pious and holy people.

[To wit, a devotee must strive to emulate the example of saints and other holy people whose company he is expected to keep. This will help him in practice to overcome his bad habits that might have become firmly rooted in him and take time to be thrown out. It cannot be done overnight, but require diligent practice. The community of saints in which he is accepted to take a fellowship as prescribed in the first form of Bhakti will serve him in good stead, and their example can be used by a sincere aspirant as a practical guide in his day-to-day handling of the affairs of the world and problems of life.] (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The fifth mean of doing Bhakti is ‘constant repetition of Lord Ram’s holy name ‘RAM’’. This is also reiterated earlier in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129 by sage Valmiki when he lists the various virtues that one must possess in order to enable Lord Ram to make his august presence in the devotee’s inner-self. The same idea is repeated by Lord Ram when he preaches Laxman about Bhakti in Aranya Kand, Doha no. 16 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 9.

Sage Valmiki has honoured Lord Ram’s holy name as a ‘Mantra-raaj’ or the king of all Mantras. A Mantra is a divine esoteric formula consisting of letters, syllables, words, phrases or even full hymns that are said to possess special spiritual magical powers that help the aspirant achieve some great goal that is otherwise not possible by other means. The Mantra acts as a catalyst and a dynamic force propelling the aspirant towards his desired goal. Each deity has its own Mantra which is like a cosmic key that enables the worshipper to tap that deity’s powers.

The Mantra of Lord Ram has many variations—the most potent one is its basic form known as the Beej Mantra or the seed from which the rest of the Mantras derive their empowerment. It consists of the Sanskrit syllable that when pronounced is heard as the word ‘Raam’. In the purest form of this Mantra, the letter ‘m’ is silent, and there is a dot on the top which renders the pronunciation something like ‘ng’ as in the word *rung* or *wrung* in English. Therefore, the actual pronunciation is ‘Raa(ng)’.

Incidentally, this Beej Mantra of Lord Ram is also the Mantra of the Fire God. This has great metaphoric value and importance. The ‘fire’ represents the most

powerful and dynamic force in creation. It is never corrupted. It burns all impurities and leaves alone the pure metal—a virtue used for purifying gold. It glows with its own light, illuminating the area around it and chasing away darkness. It provides heat and energy so much essential for life in this world. Under its influence the air becomes active—as is witnessed when wind begins to blow and howl near a raging fire. It is the warmth of the fire that helps earth foster life, to help crops grow, to help cook food and to digest this food in the body to provide nourishment to the creature.

The symbolism and parallel is obvious. The holy name of Lord Ram is the dynamic force that subtly and imperceptibly sustains life in this creation; it is at the core of the ‘consciousness’ that keeps the world alive. The repetition of this holy name fans the wind of enlightenment that drives the impurities away; it burns all the impurities.

This holy name of the Lord, i.e. the Mantra ‘Raam’ is known as the ‘Tarak Mantra’ as it takes a creature across the vast ocean represented by this world, its myriad horrors and miseries, and its whirlpool of birth and death which keeps the creature trapped in its vortex.

The general meaning and understanding of the word *Japa* is ‘constant repetition of any holy name of the God or any divine word or Mantra’. This verse tells us that if that is not possible for a man, or if he is not interested in it, then the next best option for him is to read good books. This will have similar good effects on his mind as doing ‘Japa’. Because if the mind is not kept busy, it will gravitate towards corrupt and pervert thinking; it cannot sit idle. If it is not possible to leash it by means of chanting or repetition of ‘Mantras’, then at least it should be reined in by reading good books instead of allowing it to wander aimlessly here and there like a vagrant indulging in useless roaming about. Remember, an idle mind is the workshop of devil. See also Trishikhi Brahmno-panishad, verse nos. 2/28-34 of Shukla Yajur Veda in this context.

The Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 2 says that Japa is one of the ten Niyams or spiritual observances that any spiritual aspirant should practice. It then defines Japa and its types as follows—“Japa is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one’s Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering and it’s multiple times more beneficial.”

The *importance and benefits of doing Japa* has been emphasized in the Atharva Veda’s Gopal Purva Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 16 as follows—“Those devotees who do Japa (repetition) with the holy Mantra of the Lord having five steps and eighteen letters by prefixing them with the ethereal salutary word ‘OM’ standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, are the ones to whom the Lord voluntarily reveals his true divine and holy form in the form of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma. That is, such persons become self-realised and enlightened. This is also tantamount to Brahm-realisation.

Hence, those who are desirous of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this delusory, mortal and entrapping world are advised to do Japa with this holy Mantra.’ (16).

The word *Japa* is derived from the root word ‘jap’ meaning to utter. Hence, doing Japa means to utter or repeat the different Mantra which are spiritual formulas in the form of sounds, syllables, letters, words, phrases or sentences such as complete hymns that have a high level of cosmic spiritual energy inherent in them.

The Bhagvat Gita, 10/25 considers Japa as a manifestation of the Lord God (or the worshipped deity) himself.

Japa has three forms—(i) When the Mantras are said aloud it is called ‘Vaikhari Japa’ or ‘Vaachika Japa’. (ii) When the Mantras are inaudible and merely uttered or whispered, the Japa is called ‘Upaamshu’. And (iii) when it is done mentally without opening the mouth, the Japa is called ‘Maansika’.

Further, there are different classes of Japa depending upon their usage as follows—

- (i) Nitya Japa—that Japa which is done daily and regularly.
- (ii) Naimmittik Japa—that Japa which is done on special occasions—such as on the days of eclipses or special worship days.
- (iii) Kaamya Japa—that Japa which is done for the fulfillment of certain desires—such as acquisition of wealth or success in any endeavour.
- (iv) Praayaschita Japa—that Japa which is done as a penance, for repentance or for expiation of sins.
- (v) Ajapaa-Japa—that which is done along with the passage of breath through the body as inhalation and exhalation. Usually the Hans Mantra is used for this by acclaimed ascetics.
- (vi) Vilom Japa—that Japa in which the Mantra is repeated in the reverse order. This sort of Japa is usually done to counter the negative effects of black magic rites.
- (vii) Likhit Japa—that Japa in which the Mantras are written down on paper.

Since each Mantra has a Rishi (one who first witnessed the revelation of the particular Mantra and experienced its profound effects), a Chanda (poetical style), and a Devta (the deity to whom the Mantra is dedicated), the devotee is required to pay his homage to all of them before starting to repeat the Mantra or do Japa.

Usually a prayer rosary is used to do Japa, but when one has become spiritually uplifted or has practices doing Japa over a long period of time the need for the rosary is not felt. Then the Japa becomes automatic and natural to him.

A *Mantra* is a Holy name of the Lord; a group of divine syllables or word symbols which have divine mystical powers. Mantras are mystical formulas having divine powers. They consist of letters, words or phrases and used to invoke the blessings of the chosen deity. Each deity has a specific Mantra just like each element in Nature has been assigned specific symbol in modern science. For example, hydrogen is recognised by the letter H, oxygen by O, nitrogen by N, carbon by C etc.

The ancient religious text honouring different Gods were composed in a poetical style called the Chanda. This system of composing the religious text of the scriptures is in vogue since earlier times and such verses are called hymns as they are dedicated to the offering of prayers and honouring the chosen deity for which the particular hymns is meant. These hymns are also called ‘Mantras’ because they are

like mystical formula specific to that deity; they help the worshipper to activate the dynamic forces of Nature and creation as represented by this deity who is actually a personified form of these forces. Each deity had a particular hymns dedicated to it much like we have specific formulas in science or mathematics to solve specific problems. No one formula applies to all the problems in a universal manner, though there are some universal ones also which can be applied to all the cases, such as the Mantra OM which is used equally for all the deities. The reason is that OM represents the supreme transcendental Brahm whose manifestations all these individual deities or Godheads are. This is like the case of one listening to a particular radio station of his choice when he must tune-in to the particular frequency in which that radio station broadcasts.

The Atharva Veda's *Hayagriva Upanishad*, verse nos. 18-19 tell us how the Mantras should be repeated during Japa, and the importance of the Mantras in helping the spiritual aspirant reach the ecstasy of spiritual realisation by citing the example of the snake and the sound of the Indian lute.

Atharva Veda's *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 12-13 describe the concept of 'Mantra' elaborately. Let us see how this concept is explained by this Upanishad in the context of the Mantras of Lord Ram—

“Verse no. 12 = Whatever deeds and actions an aspirant or seeker does or undertakes to do to achieve his goal are successful through the medium of a Mantra. The Mantra is a medium by which desired results are easily and comfortably attained; they are aids to one's fulfillment of desires and objectives in life—whether mundane or spiritual. A Mantra makes the attainment of the desired goal a certainty.

In the present case, this Mantra that is employed for doing Japa is the 'Ram Mantra' which is a Tarak Mantra (refer Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1). This indicates that the aspirant seeks his final spiritual liberation and deliverance rather than hoping to get some worldly gain by employing it. Being a 'Tarak Mantra' instead of an ordinary Mantra, this Mantra of Lord Ram is the one that liberates the person from all spiritual delusions and worldly snares, and therefore to use it for some worldly accomplishments or gains would be absolutely absurd and ridiculous.

Again, since the Mantra of Lord Ram pertains to the cosmic Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm which is pure Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation, it follows that a person who repeats this Mantra is deemed to be most enlightened and self as well as Brahm realised. He is deemed to have understood the great Truth of the 'self' and the Atma. He is rich with the divine virtues of Vairagya and Gyan as described in verse nos. 4-5 of Canto 1.

While the eclectic Ram Mantra is used by a spiritual aspirant for his liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, other Mantras of various denomination are used by other ordinary people to fulfill their worldly needs and desires, such as the case when one does a fire sacrifice to attain certain objectives in this world and uses various Mantras to successfully complete it. Such exercises are done with some sort of worldly aim in sight, such as acquiring various mystical powers called the Siddhis, or getting established in this world and attaining name, fame, majesty, strength, powers, material prosperity and wealth in this world, or for obtaining victory on opponents, and many other such desires and wishes for which a man usually uses a Mantra. But it is like bartering away the value of a precious gem in exchange of glass or worthless stone.

A Mantra indicates the result or rewards that can be expected by using it just like a certain ingredient in a medicine can indicate in advance what one can expect by the use of that particular formulation. [This is because each Mantra is like a mathematical formula, and each hymn is like an equation. Even as definitive results follow the use of certain pre-determined formula and equation in scientific quest or mathematical calculations, definitive results are also expected by employing specific Mantras for doing Japa (repetition) or Yoga (meditation) and Dhyan (contemplation) with specific objectives in mind.]

The word Mantra is derived from two words—the first word is ‘*Manan*’ which means to persistently remember something so as to make the mind firmly rooted in it, to ponder and contemplate upon it, to deeply think about it and meditate on it so that one can arrive at some certain conclusion about the truth of that particular thing, while the second word ‘*Taan*’ means to give freedom and protection from some kind of torment or miserable condition, to deliver someone from his miseries and predicaments etc. Hence, a Mantra is an instrument by the help of which a person can find spiritual liberation and deliverance from his worldly torments and miseries. This is achieved by concentrating upon the Mantra, by relying upon its mystical powers and spiritual potentials, and using it to do meditation and contemplation. Constant repetition of the Mantra helps to multiply its effect and reinforce its earlier benefits. [Repetition of the Mantra is necessary for its full benefits to accrue and take effect. It’s just like the case of a patient having to repeat a medicine over a long period of time to get rid of some chronic disease. If he stops taking it before the disease is completely routed, then not only would the disease relapse but it would do so with a vengeance. Another example can be cited about a man’s skills and expertise in a professional field—if he discontinues using his knowledge and skills after some time in life, he forgets about them and gets out of tune. All the long years he had spent acquiring the knowledge and the special skill go to a waste if they are not practiced for a lifetime. Similarly, repetition of Mantras and practice of meditation is a life-long process, and a wise man should persevere with them.] (12).

Every Mantra has a divine aspect; all of them have their own potentials and powers that are intrinsic to them, but it actually depends upon the user how good he makes of it. The wise one amongst them would obviously employ the stupendous powers and potentials inherent in any Mantra to obtain something of an eternal, abiding and matchless value—and what better use can one put the powers of the Mantra than to use it to find permanent freedom from the fetters that tie his soul to this deluding and tormenting world of a continues cycle of birth and death along with its attendant horrors and miseries.

And to top it all, if such a wise man happens to be privileged enough to come across a Mantra that is the best of them all, and which can be thousands of time more effective by putting in the least of efforts, and which gives direct access to the supreme Authority in creation which has the authority and power to grant the much-desired and much-awaited freedom for the seeker, what more can he want. Such a Mantra is this glorious ‘Ram Mantra’ which is the ‘Tarak Mantra’. It is divine, sublime, priceless and matchless in spiritual value, and provides a direct access to the supreme Brahm. This Mantra can provide ‘Mukti and Moksha’ single handedly; it is one-stop solution for all the spiritual woes of the creature as it bestows upon him liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation at one go. That is why those who accept it as their spiritual formula are deemed to be the wisest and the most enlightened souls in this creation. A man who comes to know about Lord Ram’s

‘Tarak Mantra’ would discard all other Mantras and accept this single Mantra wholeheartedly as a penance for all his spiritual problems.

This single Ram-Mantra is the letter and the spirit, the essence and the life of all the Mantras taken together. It is like the juice of all the Mantras extracted for the spiritual benefit of the spiritual aspirant. It combines at once all their varied meanings, their uses and goals, their holiness and divinity, their supernatural powers and mysticism. It is indeed like the crown jewel of all the Mantras, and it has the power and potential of all the Mantras put together into a single formula.

“Verse no. 13 = The Mantra of a deity is a complete representation of that deity.”

The *Tarak Mantras of Lord Ram* have been elaborately described in the following Upanishads dealing with the eclectic philosophy pertaining to the divinity of Lord Ram—Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Cantos 2-3, and 5; Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-12, 41-67; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1; Canto 2, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 4, verse nos. 14; Canto 5, verse nos. 4/1-47; Canto 6, verse no. 1-6.

The Tarak Mantra of Lord Ram is elaborately described in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition which is exclusively dedicated to Lord Ram, as well as in Tarak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition which is dedicated to the subject of emancipation and salvation. The Tarak Mantra preached by Lord Shiva for the benefit of a dying man is that group of esoteric, ethereal and holy words, syllables or phrases that have stupendous magical, mystical and divine powers that can achieve miracles and bestows to the aspirant great potential and abilities, and one of them is the ability to find liberation and deliverance for one’s own self, and when preached to others it can even liberate sinful creatures who can never expect to find emancipation themselves. It gives freedom from miseries, fears, torments and other misfortunes that devour a creature. It liberates a creature from the cycle of birth and death, the miseries and fears associated with this world, with old age, death and their accompanying horrors etc. (Atharva-shikhar Upanishad, 2/1; Advai-tarak Upanishad, 3; and Jabal Upanishad, canto 1. The ascetic/Yogi achieves liberation and deliverance by concentrating his internal thoughts at a point between the eyebrows where he realises the supreme, transcendental existence of Brahm, and he mentally one with Brahm after this realisation (Advai-tarak, 2-3).

<sup>2</sup>The sixth form of Bhakti is to have self restraint and inculcate noble and auspicious virtues such as humility, politeness, dignified existence, observing etiquette and social norms, to abstain from indulgences and remaining engrossed in multifarious worldly pursuits, and to diligently and honestly follow the righteous and noble path shown by and fit for saints and sages who are wise, erudite, enlightened and sagacious.

The importance of the virtues listed in this line, viz. (i) self restraint, (ii) politeness, (iii) renunciation, and (iv) living like a true saint by emulating their example are also reflected in the sage Valmiki’s advice in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 130 wherein the sage lists the following vices that one must avoid if he expects Lord Ram to live in his inner-self—Kaam (passions, lust), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance, hypocrisy), Maan (ego, pride), Moha (attachments, infatuations), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (sorrows, regret, depression, dejection), Raag and Droha (endearment with one and animosity with another), Kapat and Dambha (deceit, wickedness, conceit, pretensions etc.), and finally Maya (delusions and its attending hallucinations).

According to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, sage Valmiki lists some of the grand and auspicious virtues a true devotee of Lord Ram must possess to enable the Lord to live in his heart. Some of these eclectic characters are the following—to be friendly to all and think for their general welfare, to treat sorrow and happiness equally with great equanimity (Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 130); to feel happy by seeing the prosperity of others, and sorry at their misery (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 130); to accept the good virtues of all and leave behind their vices, to suffer for the good of others such as Brahmins and cows representing learned people and humble creatures respectively (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 131); those who are diligent followers of the various laws and principles of conduct (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 131).

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram has told Laxman that a person desirous of having Bhakti should follow the path of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility etc.) which enables him to develop the virtue of Virati (renunciation and detachment).

Then the Lord further says that one should live a life according the laws and principles laid down in the scriptures, to develop the virtue of renunciation and detachment from all material sense objects of the gross world along with total indifference to their temptations, and follow the principle of Dharma that pertains to the Lord—i.e. the principles followed by saints and holy people. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 16.

The fact that one should have no vices as Kaam, Mada, Dhambha etc. is reiterated by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 16 while teaching Laxman.]

सातवँ सम मोहि मय जग देखा । मोतें संत अधिक करि लेखा ॥ ३ ॥

आठवँ जथालाभ संतोषा । सपनेहुँ नहिं देखइ परदोषा ॥ ४ ॥

sātavam̐ sama mōhi maya jaga dēkhā. mōtēm̐ santa adhika kari lēkhā. 3.  
āṭhavam̐ jathālābha santōṣā. sapanēhum̐ nahim̐ dēkha'i paradōṣā. 4.

The next form of Bhakti, the seventh, is to have a concept of my universal existence in the form of all things in this world, to see the whole creation as my image—i.e. to believe in the philosophy of non-duality; to understand that whatever is visible in this world is one or the other form of my own divine cosmic existence. Besides this, one must treat saints and sages as more honourable and revered than me<sup>1</sup>. (3)

The eighth form of Bhakti is to be perpetually satisfied and contented with whatever one has got and never yearn for more, as well as to never find faults with others even in one's dream<sup>2</sup>. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This universal view of existence of the Supreme Being is the fundamental philosophy of the Upanishads, and it is known as Advaita Vedanta. It stresses in the non-duality of the Absolute Truth which is known as cosmic Consciousness in metaphysics.

This is a system of thought based on the Upanishads, its chief exponent being Adi Shankaracharya. It espouses the philosophy of the unity of the individual's soul, his 'self' or the pure consciousness known as the Atma, with the supreme



transcendental Brahm which is the universal cosmic ‘Self’ or the cosmic Consciousness which is also regarded as the Absolute, the Truth and the Reality of existence. This philosophy of the universality of the soul and the cosmic Consciousness is the fundamental basis of Advaita Vedanta.

References—*Non-duality* or oneness or uniformity between Brahm, the cosmic Soul, and the Atma or the individual’s soul has been elaborately explained in all the major Upanishads because this is the basic theme around which the philosophy of the Upanishads is built. Some of these Upanishads are the following—

(i) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8; Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 2-7; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 41-42; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 2-3, 29-31, 43; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 35-39.

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse no.18; Niralamba; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad.

(c) Rig Veda’s Atma-poojo-panishad; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 1.

(iii) Atharva Veda’s Atmo-panishad; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 3-4, 8; Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 2; Atharvashir Upanishad (which describes Rudra as a manifestation of Brahm); Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 4-6; Canto 2, paragraph nos. 1-8, 11; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 1-7; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse no. 2-3; Atma Upanishad; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 7; Canto 9, verse nos. 7-8; Mahavakya Upanishad, verse no. 6; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2, Canto 3, verse no. 23; Canto 5, verse nos. 61-65, 77, 79; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 8.

(iv) Sam Veda—Maho-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 7; Keno-panishad; Chandogy Upanishad.

According to the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 8, the supreme entity known as Brahm has unique and apparently paradoxical characteristics enumerated in this Upanishad’s Canto 3. This makes Brahm one of its kinds, because it is impossible to duplicate them. Advaita means non-dual. Hence the Brahm that is unique and without parallel is ‘Advaita’. The Brahm that is uniform and universal, that is irrefutably and unequivocally one, and not two, inspite of the countless forms in which it has revealed itself in this creation—is ‘Advaita’. The Brahm that is both visible as well as invisible, that is here as well as there—is known as ‘Advaita Brahm’. The Brahm that is in the present as it was in the past, and would remain the same in the future—is ‘Advaita Brahm’. Such a unique, divine, incomprehensible and incomparable cosmic Consciousness is regarded by those who are wise and in the know of things as the ‘Advaita Brahm’. This Brahm is an eternal, majestic, powerful, sublime, fascinating, almighty and stupendously magnificent entity.

The metaphysical philosophy of Jiva and Ishwar or Supreme Lord being one and non-dual is explained in many Upanishads, for instance in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47, and Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77.

The Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77 affirms that there is basically no difference between a Jiva (the living being) and the Ishwar (the

Supreme Being). To quote—“The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghatakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghatakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva, the living being or the creature, and the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived. This distinction or separation comes because one is not aware of the ‘truth and reality’, and is deluded to believe in the concept of duality or Dwaitya.

[Suppose we have different types of ornaments made of ‘gold’. A wise person is one who recognizes them all as ‘golden ornaments’, and not by their individual names, shapes or sizes, or even their usage. It is raw gold that has been crafted by the goldsmith into so many shapes and sizes, giving the same element known as ‘gold’ its myriad names and different market values. If ‘gold’ is removed from these ornaments, all of them lose their intrinsic value and inherent importance.

Similarly, everything in this creation—and that includes the Jiva—is a manifestation of Brahm. Since the Jiva is a living conscious entity that harbours the Atma, the pure consciousness, in its body, it has a special relationship with Brahm as the latter is the universal cosmic Consciousness that resides in each unit of creation. In other words, it is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has transformed itself into the living being known as the Jiva. It is just like ‘gold’ being transformed into an ornament having a name other than ‘gold’.] (77).”

The entire creation is a reflection of one Supreme Being known as Brahm in the Upanishads. It is this single Brahm that has taken as many forms as the creation has taken. For instance, water assumes the form of the vessel in which it is contained; water does not have any specific form of its own. Another example is that of the sky—it fills all the space that is available, is invisible and imperceptible but nevertheless true. No one can actually see the sky; when we see an empty vessel we see its inner walls, but what about the space between these walls? Similarly, Brahm is present throughout creation, but no one can see it. It is a universal entity that is always present wherever there is space.

Lord Ram had earlier reiterated this fact of the universality of soul that inspires the wise and enlightened person to treat everyone alike and as an image of the Supreme Brahm in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 15.

The second point in this verse is to have great respect for saints and spiritually enlightened persons because they are the ones who have realised the presence of the Supreme Lord everywhere. Such individuals must be given the highest regards as they act as the torch-bearers of truthful knowledge of Brahm; they guide the rest of the world on the path that is correct and right. Sage Valmiki has also stressed on giving great respect to sages and saintly people in his exposition on the places where Lord Ram should live in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 129.

Lord Ram had earlier reiterated this need for respect of elders and wise men when he preached Laxman in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16.

The divine and glorious virtues of saints have been enumerated by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38. Then later on, in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-16, 21 that precede Doha no. 121, the crow saint Kaagbhusund also highlights the glorious virtues of saints when he preached Garud, the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu who had come to the him to remove his delusions.

<sup>2</sup>The state of eternal contentedness is the root of all happiness, and it comes only when one has developed true sense of renunciation from the world and its material charms as well as the desire of the sense organs for self gratification. Sage Valmiki has said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 131 that a person who never wants anything and has genuine and true love for Lord Ram is the one in whose subtle heart the Lord takes up his divine residence.

Again, Lord Ram has told Laxman that ‘Virati’, or renunciation and dispassion towards the material world and the fascination of its sense objects and their sensual pleasures, is created by following the path of Dharma, and Virati in turn leads to success in Yoga (meditation and contemplation on the Absolute Truth), Gyan (realisation of this Absolute Truth), and Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation).

Another important factor listed here is not to find fault with others. This will happen only when one becomes sufficiently enlightened to realise that the Atma that constitutes the ‘real self’ of the other person, as opposed to his physical body, is an immaculate and sublime entity that is free from all taints, and that it is the same as the Atma residing in the body of the enlightened person at the individual plane of existence, and when viewed from the cosmic perspective it is the Atma that pervades throughout this living world as the cosmic Consciousness. How can this universal and

non-dual Consciousness that is immaculate, holy, divine and sublime be corrupt or tainted in one person and holy in another? To treat this Atma differently is the root cause of all spiritual dichotomies that create so much ill-will in this world. This arises from the erroneous conception that the gross physical body is the truthful identity of the individual instead of the Atma.

Of course, the body is unholy inasmuch as it is gross and directly in contact with the corrupt world. But then it is ‘not’ the truthful identity of the creature who is accused of having so many faults—for this identity is the Atma that is faultless!

No one is perfectly without fault, and therefore to say that I am holy and the other person is corrupt is nothing but pretension and haughtiness that must be avoided by a devotee on all counts.

The idea expressed in this verse is reflected in what sage Valmiki said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line 1 that precedes Doha no. 131—“those who discard the faults of others and accept only their goodness and good virtues—the Lord should treat their Mana, or heart and mind, as his good home”. The same notion applies when Valmiki further says in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 130 that—“A true devotee is friendly towards all, and is eager to be of help to everyone. He treats sorrows and happiness alike. He always speaks the truth and pleasant words by properly giving thought to what he speaks.”]

नवम सरल सब सन छलहीना । मम भरोस हियँ हरष न दीना ॥ ५ ॥

नव महुँ एकउ जिन्ह कें होई । नारि पुरुष सचराचर कोई ॥ ६ ॥

सोइ अतिसय प्रिय भामिनि मोरें । सकल प्रकार भगति दृढ़ तोरें ॥ ७ ॥

navama sarala saba sana chalahīnā. mama bharōsa hiyaṁ haraṣa na dīnā. 5.  
nava mahum̐ ēka'u jinha kēm hō'ī. nāri puruṣa sacarācara kō'ī. 6.  
sō'i atisaya priya bhāmini mōrēm. sakala prakāra bhagati dṛṛha tōrēm. 7.

And finally, the ninth form of Bhakti is to be simple hearted, to be without any deception and fraud, to be free from all pretensions, deceit, conceit and wickedness of heart, to be straightforward in one's dealings with all others, to have unwavering and unflinching faith, conviction and reliance upon me (Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being) and on no body else, and not to feel either elated or depressed (under favourable or unfavourable developments and circumstances respectively, because a true devotee is one who has total faith in the Lord and relies solely upon him, who treats the good and bad happenings of the world with complete indifference and equanimity as these things are limited to affecting the gross body and have no reach till the Atma which is the ‘true self’ of the devotee and the pure conscious that is immaculate and pristine pure)<sup>1</sup>. (5)

Oh Sabari! Anyone who possesses even one of these forms of devotion is very dear to me, whether one is a man or a woman, or any other creature for that matter. But you have all the forms of Bhakti firmly established in your inner-being, so I am definitely pleased with you<sup>2</sup>. (6-7)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Absence of deceit, cunning, pretensions, falsehood, wickedness and other negative traits are the signs of the true devotee of the Lord. If one does not eliminate them then he has no right whatsoever to claim that he is a devotee of Lord Ram.

Sage Valmiki has extolled these virtues in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 where he says that Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who ask for only reward after doing everything, and it is to have affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram. Then the sage follows this up by saying that Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who have vices such as Kaam (passions, lust), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance and hypocrisy), Maan (pride and ego), Moha (infatuations and attractions), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (regrets, sorrow, grief etc.), Raag and Droha (attachments and animosity respectively), Kapat and Dambha (deceit, conceit, pretension, falsehood, cunning, wickedness, crookedness etc.), and Maya (delusions and its attending problems)—ref: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 130.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram told Laxman that “Oh dear, I live in the inner-self of those who have no negative traits such as Kaam, Mada, Dambha etc.” There is another way of interpreting this line as follows—“Oh dear, I am at the beck and call of those devotees who have no vices as Kaam, Mada, Dambha etc.”

As regards having complete reliance upon Lord Ram, sage Valmiki says “anyone who has taken refuge in Lord Ram’s holy feet at all times, whether he is awake or asleep, and who has no other succour and destiny except Lord Ram—verily the Lord should live in his heart and mind”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 130.

The same idea is repeated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130 in which Valmiki says “he for whom Lord Ram is the only relation that matters, he for whom Lord Ram is a friend, father, mother, guru etc.—verily, the Lord should live in the Mana or the heart and the mind of such a devotee as if this Mana is the Lord’s temple.”

<sup>2</sup>Lord Ram has preached the nine forms of Bhakti to Sabari also in Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, in its Aranya Kand, Canto 10.

The significant point to note here is that Sabari belonged to a low caste, and Lord Ram tells her that she meets all eligibility criterions that make the Lord pleased with a creature, that entitles the creature to be eligible for special favour from Lord Ram. Therefore we deduce that the Lord is not concerned with which class the man or woman is born into; the Lord looks for purity of heart and the level of devotion he or she has to shower his compassion and grace upon that person.]

जोगि बृंद दुरलभ गति जोई । तो कहूँ आजु सुलभ भइ सोई ॥ ८ ॥

मम दरसन फल परम अनूपा । जीव पाव निज सहज सरूपा ॥ ९ ॥

jōgi bṛnda duralabha gati jō'ī. tō kahum' āju sulabha bha'i sō'ī. 8.  
mama darasana phala parama anūpā. jīva pāva nija sahaja sarūpā. 9.

Therefore, the spiritual destiny that is difficult for even great ascetics and hermits to attain is available to you today<sup>1</sup>. [What it is, is hinted in the next line—] (8)

The supreme reward for a living being who has the honour and the privilege of having my holy vision is that he is able to attain his natural and truthful form that is immortal, which was his primary form prior to his becoming a mortal creature.

That is, he becomes self-realised, wise and enlightened enough to understand who he actually is. He attains knowledge of his truthful ‘self’ as being the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and that his ‘Atma’ is the same as the cosmic super Consciousness known as Brahm, the Supreme Being who is also known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma of this creation.<sup>2</sup> (9)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The ascetics follow the difficult path of Yoga (meditation) to attain liberation and deliverance for their souls. This most sought-after and eclectic destiny is now available to Sabari.]

<sup>2</sup>When this happens, the creature overcomes all delusions and their attendant spiritual fetters. With self-realisation—which entails the creature becoming aware of his ‘truthful self’ as being the Atma which is pure consciousness and a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma or the cosmic super Consciousness—the creature becomes enlightened about the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being. He realises that both these entities—the Atma and the Parmatma—are the same, albeit existing in different planes. This realisation of the truth of his own ‘self’ vis-à-vis the Supreme Self breaks him free from the fetters of spiritual ignorance and delusions.

A wise, self-realised and enlightened creature begins to understand that the gross body is not his truthful self, and therefore true liberation is to detach the Atma from the body. When this is done by becoming disinterested in the urges of the gross body and its craving for self gratification and seeking appeasement through the numerous sense objects of the world, the creature is said to have attained ‘Jivan Mukti’—i.e. to be liberated from the shackle of the body even while the creature is alive in a conventional manner. When he leaves this gross body—as when he dies in the physical sense or when his vital winds known as the Pran voluntarily leave the body during higher echelons of Yoga—he is said to have attained ‘Videha Mukti’, i.e. liberation that comes by actually shedding the physical gross body.]

जनकसुता कइ सुधि भामिनी । जानहि कहु करिबरगामिनी ॥ १० ॥  
 पंपा सरहि जाहु रघुराई । तहँ होइहि सुग्रीव मिताई ॥ ११ ॥  
 सो सब कहिहि देव रघुबीरा । जानतहँ पूछहु मतिधीरा ॥ १२ ॥  
 बार बार प्रभु पद सिरु नाई । प्रेम सहित सब कथा सुनाई ॥ १३ ॥

janakasutā ka'i sudhi bhāminī. jānahi kahu karibaragāminī. 10.  
 pampā sarahi jāhu raghurā'ī. taham' hō'ihī sugrīva mitā'ī. 11.  
 sō saba kahihi dēva raghubīrā. jānatahūm' pūchahu matidhīrā. 12.  
 bāra bāra prabhu pada siru nā'ī. prēma sahita saba kathā sunā'ī. 13.

Lord Ram asked Sabari about the whereabouts of Sita. The Lord said, ‘Oh good and noble lady (bhāminī)? Please tell me about the whereabouts of the daughter of Janak (“janakasutā”; Sita) who walks with an elegant and dignified style that resembles the way a majestic she-elephant walks (karibaragāminī). Pray, please tell me if you know anything about her.’<sup>1</sup>

[<sup>1</sup>This verse can be interpreted and read in another way also as follows: “Oh good and noble lady (bhāminī)? Please tell me about the whereabouts of the daughter of Janak (“janakasutā”; Sita) if you know anything about her. You live in the forest and have seen many a majestic she-elephants moving about (karibaragāminī). Well, Sita too walks in this style, and so can you recollect any lady going this way with a gait similar to the way an elephant walks? Pray, tell me please.”] (10)

Sabari replied, ‘Oh Lord Raghurai (Lord Ram who is the Lord of the line of kings descending from the great King Raghu)! Go to Lake Pampa where you will be befriended by Sugriv (the prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha). (11)

He shall tell you everything about her (Sita). Oh Lord with a steady and calm mind (matidhīrā)<sup>2</sup>! You know everything<sup>3</sup>, but you still ask me as if you are ignorant of developments. (12)

[<sup>2</sup>Sabari observed that Lord Ram was calm and composed during his stay at her hermitage inspite of the fact that his wife Sita was stolen by some fiend; the Lord was not agitated and looked distressed and sad like a man whose wife has been kidnapped by a fiend is expected to be. So she makes this comment.

<sup>3</sup>Of course Lord Ram knew everything—this is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

Then Sabari bowed her head at the holy feet of Lord Ram repeatedly and affectionately narrated the whole story to him<sup>4</sup>. (13)

[<sup>4</sup>What story did Sabari tell Lord Ram? It is not mentioned here which story it was. But surely it was the story about her own past and what sage Matang had told her as it would be clear in the following verses where she lit a fire and discarded her gross body by burning it in this fire, after which Lord Ram performed her last rites in accordance to her wishes. This story has been briefly narrated as a note appended to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34 herein above in this section.]

छं०. कहि कथा सकल बिलोकि हरि मुख हृदयँ पद पंकज धरे । १ ।  
तजि जोग पावक देह हरि पद लीन भइ जहँ नहिं फिरे ॥ २ ॥  
नर बिबिध कर्म अधर्म बहु मत सोकप्रद सब त्यागहू । ३ ।  
बिस्वास करि कह दास तुलसी राम पद अनुरागहू ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kahi kathā sakala bilōki hari mukha hr̥dayam̐ pada paṅkaja dharē. 1.  
taji jōga pāvaka dēha hari pada līna bha'i jaham̐ nahim̐ phirē. 2.  
nara bibidha karma adharma bahu mata sōkaprada saba tyāgahū. 3.  
bisvāsa kari kaha dāsa tulasī rāma pada anurāgahū. 4.

Having narrated to Lord Ram the whole story, she (Sabari) fixed her eyes (affectionately) on the charming face of Lord Hari (Sri Ram) and enshrined his lotus-like holy feet in her heart. (Chanda line no. 1)

Then she discarded (burnt) her gross body in the self-ignited fire of Yoga (deep meditation)<sup>1</sup>, and attained an exalted, sublime state from where there is no return to the gross mortal world and its cycle of transmigration<sup>2</sup>. (Chanda line no. 2)

Tulsidas, the saint-poet, observes—“Oh Men! All the different kinds of deeds and improper activities, as well as the many sectarian beliefs and narrow-minded self-centered schools of thought—all of them give nothing but sorrows and grief to the creature. So you will be well advised to abandon all such distractions and misleading thoughts and precepts [3], and instead, focus your attention in developing affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram (as one single window and a sure-shot formula to attain complete fulfillment and peace for your soul) [4].” (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Yoga generates heat and energy inside the body as the flow of breath is restricted, inhalation and exhalation stops, the vital winds present in the body get heated as they circulate within it, and all vital forces of life are harnessed and concentrated at focal points, called Chakras, present at different locations inside the body. The body gets naturally heated, and if breathing is not resumed within a specified period of time, the heat builds up to such an extent that the gross body starts smouldering till a stage is reached when it dries up completely from within and ultimately crumbles into a heap of ash like burnt-out firewood.

During this form of death, the vital winds present inside a person’s body, called the ‘Prans’, being unable to escape, begin to rub against each other, and this rubbing produces heat, which in turn heats the body and dries it up. Finally, the body begins to emit smoke like dried firewood would if vigorously rubbed, and eventually it is reduced to ash. Meanwhile, if the heat thus generated is strong enough, the pile of dried wood that has been assembled to make a funeral pyre too catches fire, and for all practical purposes it seems to be a formal form of cremation.

It’s surely not an easy process; and since this kind of Yoga leads to death, only those who are determined to leave this body would ever put it into practice. But a death obtained by this method is deemed to be the best way for a soul to leave the gross body of a creature. The fire ignited by Yoga is as sacred and holy as the fire of a religious sacrifice.

<sup>2</sup>When a Jiva, the living being, leaves his gross body by this method, his soul finds eternal liberation and deliverance because the body has been voluntarily abandoned and offered as a sacrifice to the holy fire. Hence, the creature gets final emancipation and salvation; his soul will no longer remain entangled in the cycle of birth and death.

To wit, Sabari attained ‘Mukti’—i.e. liberation from the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death in which the creature’s soul is usually trapped.]

दो०. जाति हीन अघ जन्म महि मुक्त कीन्हि असि नारि ।  
महामंद मन सुख चहसि ऐसे प्रभुहि बिसारि ॥ ३६ ॥  
dōhā.

jāti hīna agha janma mahi mukta kīnhi asi nāri.  
mahāmanda mana sukha cahasi aisē prabhuhi bisāri. 36.



[Tulsidas observes—] That lady (Sabari) was out-caste, shunned by the society and had a lowly birth, yet she was granted Mukti (liberation and deliverance) by the Lord.

Oh Mana (mind and heart)! Say how supremely foolish and dumb-witted you would be if you forget or neglect such a (magnanimous, benevolent, beneficent, kind, obliging, merciful and gracious) Lord, and try to seek happiness and peace elsewhere. (Doha no. 36)

[Note—The spiritual philosophy outlined in this Doha is more elaborately explained in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 12-19 that precede it. These verses are part of my Book titled “Kaagbhusund Ramayan” which has been published separately and is available for the interested reader for download or purchase via the internet.

We read in the above verses that Sabari left her mortal coil and attained deliverance by burning her gross body in the self-ignited fire of yoga. Then Lord Ram performed her last rites as he would do for his own mother. This marks the glorious end of this poor and helpless lady’s soul’s journey—a remarkable journey indeed that granted her the rarest of rare honour of being cast as Lord Ram’s mother because her last rites were performed by the Lord himself.]

चौ०. चले राम त्यागा बन सोऊ । अतुलित बल नर केहरि दोऊ ॥ १ ॥

बिरही इव प्रभु करत बिषादा । कहत कथा अनेक संबादा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calē rāma tyāgā bana sō'ū. atulita bala nara kēhari dō'ū. 1.

birahī iva prabhu karata biṣādā. kahata kathā anēka sambādā. 2.

Lord Ram then left that forest (i.e. the Dandak forest) and moved ahead (in the direction of the Pampa Lake as advised by Sabari).

Verily, the two brothers were unparalleled in their strength and valour; there were like lions in the human race. (1)

(For the purpose of external show—) The Lord behaved and lamented woefully like a passionate man suffering from excessive grief and overcome with sorrow at being separated from his beloved wife. As he moved along, he spoke of many tales and said many things that indicated this state of his (external) being<sup>1</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-17 that precede Doha no. 30 where Lord Ram’s external behaviour is the same as referred to here. It is observed in Chaupai line nos. 6 and 17 of these verses that it is a great wonder that the Lord, who is omnipotent, omniscient, dispassionate and steady would act in this way like an ordinary human being lamenting for his lost wife.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it. Here we have already read that this particular worldly behaviour of Lord Ram had so much confused Sati, the consort of Lord Shiva, that she began to doubt Shiva’s wisdom and his mental balance when he bowed at Lord Ram wondering in the forest, searching for Sita and feeling distraught and grief-stricken like an ordinary man, while he (Shiva) was on his way from sage Agastya’s hermitage to his own abode at Mt. Kailash. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas,

Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.}

But why was it; why did Lord Ram behave like an ordinary man lamenting so sorely for his wife? The Lord wanted to maintain this delusion and willingly surrounded himself with a smoke-screen of doubt and confusion about his true identity, of his being the Supreme Lord of this creation, as it was an expedient necessary for eliminating the demons headed by Ravana; for if Ravana got a hint that Lord Ram was not a human being as he doubted him to be, but the Supreme Being himself, then he would soon surrender himself before the Lord and return Sita instead of confronting the Lord and fighting him tooth-and-nail. If he surrendered and asked for forgiveness, the Lord would be morally bound to forgive him, and should this happen the scourge of the demons would remain intact, and the whole exercise of coming down to earth would go down in vain. Ravana was very clever; so in this eventuality, he would keep low for some time and let things cool off before reverting to his old evil ways. What would then happen?

All the sufferings and horrors of mother earth and the gods that Ravana and his ilk had caused, the scourge which Lord Vishnu had promised to eradicate, would be back again with a vengeance. The resurgent Ravana, whose anger and wrath were suppressed due to unfavourable conditions for him, would become more forcefully vindictive and ferociously vicious in wreaking vengeance on those who dared to complain against him to Lord Vishnu. It is a well-established doctrine of political philosophy that once an enemy is identified, he should be completely done away with; any remnant of a thorny plant or a poison, no matter how inconsequential and miniscule and seemingly harmless it seems to be, can grow back into a thorn that would prick to kill, or a potion of poison that is fermented over time would acquire scalding acid-like properties that would burn through!

The world had had enough of Ravana's cruelty and savagery; there was no scope and sense in giving him a second chance, for he was so evil and pervert that instead of actually mending his way by the opportunity given to him by way of goodwill will be employed by him only to recover himself till Lord Ram was somewhere around, and then he would pounce upon his prey, the creatures of the world and the gods of heaven, with full force like a huge meteorite striking the earth with a blast violent enough to reduce everything to rubble.

Consequently it was necessary to keep the doubts about the Lord's true identity alive; it was vital to let Ravana remain confused about who Lord Ram was, as the former already was totally confounded on this matter—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

So therefore, had the Lord remained calm and poised and emotionally unmoved when he moved in the open on the path in the forest—as he was when he met Jatau and Sabari and even Kabandha—then Ravana's spies would have immediately got the wind of it and inform Ravana. That would have spoilt the whole master-plan of the Supreme Being who had to take the trouble of becoming a human being precisely for eliminating the scourge known as 'Demonic Ravana'.]

लछिमन देखु बिपिन कइ सोभा । देखत केहि कर मन नहिं छोभा ॥ ३ ॥

नारि सहित सब खग मृग बृंदा । मानहुँ मोरि करत हहिं निंदा ॥ ४ ॥

lachimana dēkhu bipina ka'i sōbhā. dēkhata kēhi kara mana nahim chōbhā. 3.  
nāri sahita saba khaga mṛga bṛndā. mānahum' mōri karata hahim nindā. 4.

Behaving like an ordinary man who has been smitten by pangs of grief caused by his separation from his beloved wife<sup>1</sup>, Lord Ram conversed with Laxman as the two brothers wondered in the forest searching for Sita, and were moving in the direction of Rishyamook mountain as advised by Sabari, in the hope of getting some help and support from Sugriv.

Lord Ram said to Laxman thus: 'Laxman, look on the yonder. Observe closely the bewitching beauty of the forest that is so enchanting that there is no one who would not be affected by its charm and lure. (3)

All the birds and animals who live there alongside their female counterparts seem to scorn at and ridicule me; they seem to deride and criticize me for having survived the agony of separation from my beloved wife (Sita). (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>As has been reiterated earlier too, Lord Ram wanted to maintain a veil of secrecy around his intentions, his plans and his strategy to take on the demons, though he was well aware by now about who had taken Sita away, as Jatau had disclosed this to the Lord\*1, and even Sabari had endorsed what Jatau had told when she advised the Lord to head towards a lake called Pampa where he would meet Sugriv, the monkey prince, who would help Lord Ram to locate and retrieve Sita\*2. It was imperative for Lord Ram not to give any hint to Ravana that he knows everything, because then the greatest fear was that the demon king would barricade all access points to Lanka, concentrate the whole might of the demon army at the point from where Lord Ram and army could cross the ocean over to Lanka, and thereby make it all the more difficult for the Lord to accomplish his mission.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, \*1 = Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 31.

\*2 = Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede Doha no. 36.}

It must be remembered that the conversation between Lord Ram and Jatau as well as Sabari was held in private, and even if Ravana's spies were closely following the Lord they would surely not have known what transpired between them.

So therefore, the Lord acted as if he was in the dark about where Sita was, and consequently was searching for her randomly in the wilderness like a grief-stricken man who has lost his beloved wife somewhere in the wilds. This would be clear in the verses that follow herein below where we read that Lord Ram's external behaviour was like that of a crestfallen and grieving man smitten with sorrows and regret at having lost his lost wife whom he loved dearly, for while he steadily moved towards his next destination, the Pampa lake, he would talk with Laxman like a hallucinating man overcome with delirium. Lord Ram looked around the forest and saw everything from the perspective of a distraught and saddened husband who had lost all hopes of ever seeing his beloved wife again in his life, which event had affected his mind so much that every facet of Nature that comes within his view seemed to be mocking at him as if they were chiding and teasing him for not being able to protect his own wife. We will recall here that it was this precise reason why Lord Ram had wailed and lamented aloud when he returned to his hermitage at Chitrakoot and found Sita absent from it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-16 that precede Doha no. 30.]

हमहि देखि मृग निकर पराहीं । मृगीं कहहिं तुम्ह कहँ भय नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥  
तुम्ह आनंद करहु मृग जाए । कंचन मृग खोजन ए आए ॥ ६ ॥

hamahi dēkhi mṛga nikara parāhīm. mṛgīm kahahim tumha kaham' bhaya  
nāhīm. 5.  
tumha ānanda karahu mṛga jā'ē. kañcana mṛga khōjana ē ā'ē. 6.

[Taunting himself, Lord Ram continued—] When the deer and other animals prepare to run away when they see us, their female companions seem to tell them that there is nothing to worry or to have any kind of fear. (5)

They tell their male companions that they can happily enjoy their lives in the forest as usual without getting unduly perturbed at the sight of two warriors roaming in the forest as if they were searching for someone, because these strangers have come to search for a 'golden deer'<sup>1</sup>, and so they won't pay any attention to any other kind of animals. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The sarcasm is apparent. Lord Ram taunts himself when he refers to the episode of his running in hot pursuit of Marich who was disguised as a deer with a golden hide—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-14 that precede Doha no. 27.

When the male animals began to scamper away at the sight of two warriors roaming in the jungle, their female counterparts seemed to assure them that they need not be alarmed at all because these two gentlemen are searching for someone else.]

संग लाइ करिनीं करि लेहीं । मानहुँ मोहि सिखावनु देहीं ॥ ७ ॥  
साङ्ग सुचिंतित पुनि पुनि देखिअ । भूप सुसेवित बस नहिं लेखिअ ॥ ८ ॥

saṅga lā'i karinīm kari lēhīm. mānahum' mōhi sikhāvanu dēhīm. 7.  
sāstra sucintita puni puni dēkhi'a. bhūpa susēvita basa nahim lēkhi'a. 8.

The male elephants keep their female companions close to themselves, keeping a close eye on them, as if they are teaching me that I ought to have kept my own wife under close watch.

[To wit, the elephants seem to tell me that if I had been vigilant enough not to leave my wife Sita alone even for a moment, then the calamity of separation from her, and its accompanying grief that I face now, would not have befallen upon me at all.] (7)

Verily indeed, one should keep an eye on the text of scriptures and revisit or revise them frequently, going over them again and again, even though one may be well-versed in them and may have memorized the texts (because otherwise one may forget a part of the scriptures).

In the same vein, no matter how much one has served a king, one must never take the king for granted and think that the king is under one's obligations (for no one can ever predict a king's mood and how he will react).

[To wit, it will be foolhardy for one to become over confident about his relations with a king, because the mood of the king is unpredictable, and he may become unfavourable if it suits him, inspite of the person's long and faithful service to him.]<sup>1</sup> (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>What Lord Ram essentially intends to say here by way of adages and examples is that one should keep a close watch on his wife, for though she may be very faithful to him and he to her, no one can say with certainty what suddenly can happen to disrupt this harmonious relationship.

Lord Ram would clarify his meaning in the verses that follow herein below.]

राखिअ नारि जदपि उर माहीं । जुबती साज नृपति बस नाहीं ॥ ९ ॥  
देखहु तात बसंत सुहावा । प्रिया हीन मोहि भय उपजावा ॥ १० ॥

rākhi'a nāri jadapi ura māhīm. jubatī sāstra nrpati basa nāhīm. 9.  
dēkhahu tāta basanta suhāvā. priyā hīna mōhi bhaya upajāvā. 10.

Similarly, one must be wary about the safety and integrity of a woman (here referring to one's wife) even though a person dearly loves her and cherishes her in his heart, for like the scriptures she may go out of one's reach if not constantly kept an eye upon, and like the king whose attitude and mood are unpredictable even though a person has been serving him his whole life, what a woman would do and what her secret intentions are too remain elusive and unpredictable<sup>1</sup>. (9)

[Addressing Laxman, Lord Ram continues—] My dear (tāta), look around and behold the beauty of the spring season. This sight seems to frighten me as it stokes the grief of my heart and enhances my sadness at the loss of my beloved wife (Sita). (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>No negative meaning ought to be derived from this observation of Lord Ram regarding a woman being unreliable and unpredictable, for we have the example of Kaikeyi herself. She loved Lord Ram very much by her own admission\*1. This was a well known fact, and king Dasrath had expressed utter astonishment when she wanted Lord Ram to be sent to the forest\*2. Even senior ladies of the city of Ayodhya had expressed their surprise as to how Kaikeyi has suddenly turned so hostile towards Lord Ram\*3.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, \*1 = Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 15.

\*2 = Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 32.

\*3 = Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}]

दो०. बिरह बिकल बलहीन मोहि जानेसि निपट अकेल ।  
सहित बिपिन मधुकर खग मदन कीन्ह बगमेल ॥ ३७ ( क ) ॥  
देखि गयउ भ्राता सहित तासु दूत सुनि बात ।

डेरा कीन्हेउ मनहूँ तब कटकु हटकि मनजात ॥ ३७ ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

biraha bikala balahīna mōhi jānēsi nipāṭa akēla.

sahita bipina madhukara khaga madana kīnha bagamēla. 37 (a).

dēkhi gaya'u bhrātā sahita tāsū dūta suni bāta.

dērā kīnhē'u manahum̐ taba kaṭaku haṭaki manajāta. 37 (b).

Knowing that I am alone, and being overcome with grief of separation from my beloved wife, which has drained my energy and made me distraught, I have also become physically weak to resist his onslaught, Madan (i.e. Kamdeo, the patron god of love and passion) seems to have decided to attack me by way of teasing me. For this purpose he has employed his attendants such as the verdant forest, the honey bees, and the birds (and other components of beauty and charm in Nature)<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 37-a)

It seems that the wind (which is a part of Nature and one of the attendants of Kamdeo) had acted as Kamdeo's spy, and he has gone to inform him about the difficult situation in which I and my brother are.

So, as is the wont of Madan who derives immense pleasure in teasing and emotionally tormenting those who are struck with grief at the loss of their beloved, he stopped his army and pitched his camp in this beautiful forest in order to wreak havoc on my mind, and wreck whatever peace that is left for me. (Doha no. 37-b)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The idea here is that just like the case when an enemy attacks a king when it finds that the latter is weak due to some problems, Madan had decided to torment Lord Ram at a time when he was distraught and feeling lonely because his dear wife had been stolen in the forest.

According to lore, Madan, also known as Kamdeo, who is the patron god of love, passion and beauty, is always on the lookout for someone who is bitten by the love-bug, especially those whose love remains unrequited or those who suffer from its pang without being able to remedy it. Madan always targets such people who are smitten by their passions and love for the beloved; he skillfully targets them as they are easy victims to his nefarious designs, and become an easy prey to him. Madan derives sadistic pleasure in teasing and tormenting such people.

Towards this end, Madan would collect all such beautiful things in Nature that rouse emotions of love and passion, and would remind his victim of his or her beloved who is not nearby. The tools that Madan usually employs are the spring season with its abundant greenery, colorful flowers, sweet fruits, pleasant wind, verdant forests, green meadows, thick creepers embracing trees, birds merrily chirping and hopping around, bees that enjoy humming around flowers in the hope of drinking nectar, and other signs of revival of a vibrant life after a harsh winter.

How provocatively Kamdeo acts, and the various tools he employs, is nowhere else more vividly narrated than in the episode where he had not spared even Lord Shiva, and forced the Lord to break his meditation. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 87.}

There are two more examples of how Kamdeo behaves. One is when he had tried to trap sage Narad as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 126.

The other involves Lord Ram himself as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 227—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 230. The occasion here was of Lord Ram and Laxman visiting the royal garden of king Janak, where the Lord would have the first chance to see Sita who was also there at that time to offer her prayers to the family deity.]

{In the set of verses that follow herein below—viz. (a) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 38, and (b) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Doha no. 40— we read about the pristine beauty of Mother Nature in all its finery during the spring season. Later on in the story, we shall be reading extensively on more such wonderful description of the bewitching beauty of Mother Nature when Lord Ram goes to live on Mt. Prabarshan in Kishkindha—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 17.}

चौ०. बिटप बिसाल लता अरुझानी । बिबिध बितान दिए जनु तानी ॥ १ ॥  
कदलि ताल बर धुजा पताका । देखि न मोह धीर मन जाका ॥ २ ॥  
caupāī.

biṭapa bisāla latā arujhānī. bibidha bitāna di'ē janu tānī. 1.  
kadali tāla bara dhujā patākā. dēkhi na mōha dhīra mana jākā. 2.

Countless long creepers are stretched across the forest path to twine themselves around numerous tall trees to form a multitude of canopies high above the ground<sup>1</sup>.  
(1)

The thick plantain trees and the stately palm trees<sup>2</sup> with their swaying tops resemble flags and standards (of Kamdeo) that are flying high. They present such a majestic view that if they do not succeed in captivating the mind of the beholder, then surely the latter is a true dispassionate and detached person. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The plantain tree is shorter, while the palm tree is tall. Their different heights refer to the different kinds of flags and standards held aloft by the soldiers in Kamdeo's army—some with a short shaft and some with a long shaft.

We have read just a while ago that Lord Ram says that Kamdeo 'has pitched his camp in the forest with his troops' —apropos: Doha no. 37-b herein above. This imagery of 'the canopies and flags' fits in very well with the broader picture of an army that has pitched camp within the forest as visualized in the aforesaid Doha.]

बिबिध भाँति फूले तरु नाना । जनु बानैत बने बहु बाना ॥ ३ ॥  
कहुँ कहुँ सुंदर बिटप सुहाए । जनु भट बिलग बिलग होइ छाए ॥ ४ ॥

bibidha bhāmṭi phūlē taru nānā. janu bānaita banē bahu bānā. 3.  
kahum̐ kahum̐ sundara biṭapa suhā'ē. janu bhaṭa bilaga bilaga hō'i chā'ē. 4.

Different species of trees bearing a wide variety of flowers<sup>1</sup> are spread all around as if countless warriors attired in different costumes, in accordance with their group codes and position in the army's hierarchy, are arrayed in different formations. (3)

Here and there are some special kinds of trees that stand out from the crowd (i.e. trees that are of the same species as the rest around them, but have some distinctive qualities that distinguish them from the rest), and they resemble commanders and other leaders of their respective groups or contingents. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We find a similar scene created by Kamdeo, concerning colourful trees and flowers, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 126.]

कूजत पिक मानहुँ गज माते । ढेक महोख ऊँट बिसराते ॥ ५ ॥  
मोर चकोर कीर बर बाजी । पारावत मराल सब ताजी ॥ ६ ॥

kūjata pika mānahum̐ gaja mātē. ḍhēka mahōkha ūmṭa bisarātē. 5.  
mōra cakōra kira bara bājī. pārāvata marāla saba tājī. 6.

The piercing sound of the cuckoo against the background of the silence in the forest is like the shrill cry (trumpet) of war elephants that reverberate in the wilderness<sup>1</sup>.

The sound made by the herons and the rooks are like the cry of the camels and mules (of Kamdeo's army). (5)

Similarly, the peacocks, the red-legged partridges and the parrots are like his (Kamdeo's) wonderful war horses.

The pigeons and the swans are his magnificent Arab steeds. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We find a similar scene created by Kamdeo, concerning the charming sounds of peacocks and bees, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 126.]

तीतिर लावक पदचर जूथा । बरनि न जाइ मनोज बरूथा ॥ ७ ॥  
रथ गिरि सिला दुंदुभीं झरना । चातक बंदी गुन गन बरना ॥ ८ ॥

tītira lāvaka padacara jūthā. barani na jā'i manōja barūthā. 7.  
ratha giri silā dundubhīm̐ jharanā. cātaka bandī guna gana baranā. 8.

The large flocks of partridge and the quails are his foot soldiers.

Verily indeed, the army of Kamdeo (manōja barūthā) is so exceptional, fascinating and wonderful that it is not possible to do justice to its charm by attempting to describe it. (7)



The huge boulders and rocks of the surrounding mountains are like his countless chariots of all shapes and sizes.

The (sound of) waterfalls are like (the sound of) his war trumpets and kettledrums.

The birds known as Chatak (the sparrow hawk) are his bards and court minstrels who never tire of singing his praises in merry abundance. (8)

मधुकर मुखर भेरि सहनाई । त्रिबिध बयारि बसीठीं आई ॥ ९ ॥  
चतुरंगिनी सेन सँग लीन्हें । बिचरत सबहि चुनौती दीन्हें ॥ १० ॥

madhukara mukhara bhēri sahanā'ī. tribidha bayāri basīṭhīm ā'ī. 9.  
caturaṅginī sēna saṁga līnhēm. bicarata sabahi cunautī dīnhēm. 10.

The loud humming and buzzing of the black-bee is like the sound made by the army of Kamdeo's trumpets and clarionets<sup>1</sup>.

The breeze that is blowing now has three characteristics, viz. it is cool, it is soft and it is scented (i.e. the wind that is pleasant in all respects) resembles the good news of the arrival of a messenger<sup>2</sup>.

[To wit, the soft wind that is blowing is soothing for the senses, and a harbinger of good news. It seems that through this medium, Kamdeo is sending a feeler to me (i.e. to Lord Ram) that inspite of all other things, he does not want to harm or offend me in any way.] (9)

In this aforesaid way, it seems that Kamdeo is moving around with the four wings of his army fearlessly in the world, confident that he would subdue all those who try to oppose him.' (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We find a similar scene created by Kamdeo, concerning the charming sounds of peacocks and bees, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 126.

<sup>2</sup>We find a similar imagery concerning the wind in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 126.]

लछिमन देखत काम अनीका । रहहिं धीर तिन्ह कै जग लीका ॥ ११ ॥  
एहि कें एक परम बल नारी । तेहि तें उबर सुभट सोइ भारी ॥ १२ ॥

lachimana dēkhata kāma anīkā. rahahīm dhīra tinha kai jaga likā. 11.  
ēhi kēm ēka parama bala nārī. tēhi tēm ubara subhaṭa sō'i bhārī. 12.

Lord Ram said to Laxman: 'See Laxman, those wise and enlightened persons who are able to practice self-restraint, exercising control over their senses and emotions, in the wake of an onslaught of Kamdeo—then verily indeed, such noble souls find glory in this world; they acquire fame and good name, and they are counted amongst the few people who are embodiments of the grand virtues of self-control, dispassion, detachment and courage.

[This is because it is almost impossible to overcome passion, lust and longing for sensual pleasures and worldly comforts. It needs exemplary courage to overcome desires and longings; it is very difficult to overcome lust and passion. It is easy to preach self-control and self-restraint, but difficult to actually practice these virtues. So therefore, if someone actually succeeds in it, then surely and certainly he is worthy of praise and applause.] (11)

In all sooth, a woman is a powerful ally and a source of power of this notorious fellow known as Kamdeo; she is used by him as an infallible weapon to vanquish his enemies.

Hence, he who is able to escape this weapon, and is able to resist the bait thrown by Kamdeo in the form of a woman in order to tempt his victim to become his prey, then surely and certainly such a man is a real warrior and a true hero (as it is very difficult to resist surging waves of longing, lust and passion that are naturally aroused when one sees a beautiful lady ready to submit herself before her suitor or lover)<sup>1</sup>. (12)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In this context, refer to Lord Ram's discourse for Narad wherein a similar idea is reiterated—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 44.

So then, why does Kamdeo employ a woman to carry on with his vile plans to defile a person; why did he choose a woman to become his greatest ally? It is because her charms and allurements are too strong to resist; it is a bait that is too attractive to easily overlook. And why is it so dangerous to fall in the trap of a woman? It is because she is unpredictable and unreliable; no one can be certain when and why she would turn hostile and unfaithful. It is difficult to correctly gauge her character and integrity. {Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.}]

दो०. तात तीनि अति प्रबल खल काम क्रोध अरु लोभ ।

मुनि बिग्यान धाम मन करहिं निमिष मुहुँ छोभ ॥ ३८ ( क ) ॥

लोभ कें इच्छा दंभ बल काम कें केवल नारि ।

क्रोध कें परुष बचन बल मुनिबर कहहिं बिचारि ॥ ३८ ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

tāta tīni ati prabala khala kāma krōdha aru lōbha.

muni bigyāna dhāma mana karahim̐ nimiṣa mahum̐ chōbha. 38 (a).

lōbha kēm̐ icchā dambha bala kāma kēm̐ kēvala nāri.

krōdha kēm̐ paruṣa bacana bala munibara kahahim̐ bicāri. 38 (b).

My dear Laxman (tāta)! The three—Kaam (lust and passion), Krodha (anger and wrath), and Lobha (greed, rapacity)—are very strong and formidable enemies of a person.

They are so powerful and irresistible that they can trounce even the most learned and wise sages, who are supposed to be above the influence of worldly things, and they can cause immense consternation and emotional trauma to them in a fleeting moment. (Doha no. 38-a)

Desires, accompanied by the deceits and pretensions that one employs to fulfill those desires, are what gives strength to Lobha (greed, rapacity).

[To wit, greed will go on increasing on the strength of desires; the more is the desire to want this and that, the more would greed increase to acquire more and more of a given thing. Since it may not be easy to make desired gains so easily, one would be inclined to employ lies, deceit and pretensions to attain one's objective. It's a sort of a chain reaction in which one component leads to another in a vicious cycle that never tends to end.]

But, on the other hand, Kaam (lust, passion, longing for sensual pleasures) derives its strength from a single source, and it is a woman.

[To wit, unlike greed that has aides such as desires, deceits and pretensions, lust and passion, and the accompanying longing for sensual gratifications, especially pertaining to sex and one's carnal desires, collectively known as 'Kaam', is supported by only one element—i.e. a woman. Without her aid, no one would be aroused sexually, and her absence would help a person to exercise self-control over his carnal desires very easily.]

In the same vein, harsh words give strength to anger; the fire of anger is further stoked with the use of harsh words.

[This is very obvious. It is said that the best way to conquer anger and wrathfulness is to become silent. This is because the more harshly one speaks during a fit of anger, the more the situation goes out of hand. Rough words are like fuel in the fire of anger, while calmly spoken and polite words act as water to douse the same fire.]

Oh Laxman—this is the considered opinion of illustrious sages and wise people.' (Doha no. 38-b)

चौ०. गुनातीत सचराचर स्वामी । राम उमा सब अंतरजामी ॥ १ ॥

कामिन्ह कै दीनता देखाई । धीरन्ह के मन बिरति दृढ़ाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gunātīta sacarācara svāmī. rāma umā saba antarajāmī. 1.

kāminha kai dīnatā dēkhāī. dhīranha kēm mana birati dṛḥāī. 2.

[Lord Shiva tells his consort Uma—] 'Oh Uma (umā)! Lord Ram is beyond the influence of the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama); he is the Lord of the whole creation consisting of animate creatures as well as inanimate things; and he knows the inner thoughts and feelings of all living beings. (1)

By his external behaviour (as narrated herein above wherein the Lord seems to be affected by the sight of different facets of Nature as if they were taunting and ridiculing him)<sup>1</sup>, he has shown how a passionate and lustful man would behave when he is deprived the comfort of being in the company of his beloved, and at the same time, with his comments vis-à-vis Kaamdeo as well as on the three formidable enemies of a creature (viz. Kaam, Krodha and Lobha), he has shown how a truly dispassionate and detached person should live<sup>2</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 38 along with Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede it.]

क्रोध मनोज लोभ मद माया । छूटहिं सकल राम कीं दाया ॥ ३ ॥  
 सो नर इंद्रजाल नहिं भूला । जा पर होइ सो नट अनुकूला ॥ ४ ॥  
 उमा कहउँ मैं अनुभव अपना । सत हरि भजनु जगत सब सपना ॥ ५ ॥

krōdha manōja lōbha mada māyā. chūṭahim sakala rāma kīm dāyā. 3.  
 sō nara indrajāla nahim bhūlā. jā para hō'i sō naṭa anukūlā. 4.  
 umā kaha'um' maim anubhava apanā. sata hari bhajanu jagata saba sapanā.  
 5.

Truly, the negative traits of Krodha (anger), Manoj (lust; passion; longing for sensual gratifications), Lobha (greed; rapacity), Mada (ego, haughtiness, arrogance), and Maya (delusions that lead to ignorance about the reality and truth in this world)—all of them can be discarded or overcome by the grace of Lord Ram<sup>1</sup>. (3)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, a person on whom Lord Ram, the greatest Master of all delusions and maverick tricks (naṭa), becomes benevolent and favourable, then such a man would not befooled by any kind of worldly delusions and temptations. (3)

Uma, I tell you by my own experience that in this mortal gross world there is only one Truth, and it is to worship and have devotion for Lord Hari (the Supreme Being represented here by Lord Ram)<sup>2</sup>, for everything in this world is like a dream which has no truth or pith in it.' (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 118; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 200; (b) Kishkindha Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 21; (c) Uttar Kand, (v) Doha no. 116 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

<sup>2</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 127 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

पुनि प्रभु गए सरोबर तीरा । पंपा नाम सुभग गंभीरा ॥ ६ ॥  
 संत हृदय जस निर्मल बारी । बाँधे घाट मनोहर चारी ॥ ७ ॥  
 जहँ तहँ पिअहिं बिबिध मृग नीरा । जनु उदार गृह जाचक भीरा ॥ ८ ॥

puni prabhu ga'e sarōbara tīrā. pampā nāma subhaga gambhīrā. 6.  
 santa hṛdaya jasa nirmala bārī. bām̐dhē ghāṭa manōhara cārī. 7.  
 jaham̐ taham̐ pi'ahim̐ bibidha mṛga nīrā. janu udāra gṛha jācaka bhīrā. 8.

Thereafter, Lord Ram proceeded to reach the banks of the lake called Pampa<sup>1</sup>. It was a deep fresh water lake with an exceptionally charming environment all around it. (6)

The water of Pampa lake was as clean, sweet, cool and crystal clear as is the heart of a saint. It was beautifully bounded on the four sides with well-laid leading to its water. (7)

Large numbers of different kinds of animals were drinking water from this lake on all its four sides just like there is a crowd of alms seekers, and those expecting donations and largesse, at the door of a person who has a charitable disposition and a benevolent nature<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>It was Sabari who had advised Lord Ram to go to Pampa lake where he would meet Sugriv, the prince of the monkey race, who would inform the Lord about Sita and also help him to locate and retrieve her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 36.

<sup>2</sup>A large number of animals had gathered around the Pampa lake, some actually drinking its water and others waiting for their turn. Naturally there must be a bit of jostling and shoving around amidst these animals as one animal tried to push itself in to drink water while attempting to push out the animal standing nearest to it to clear the space.

This sight reminded one of the scene observed at the gate or a door of a charitable person who is always ready to oblige all those who come to his house seeking something. A huge crowd of alms seekers, and those expecting some sort of donation or largesse of some other kind, is usually seen before a benevolent person's home, for everyone is certain that he would get something or the other, but never return empty-handed. If there is a crowd, jostling and shoving is natural, as every person wants to stand first in the queue and beat others to receive the things that are being given away as charity. And just like no one in this crowd is sent disappointed, so was the case with the animals going to quench their thirsts at Pampa lake, for sooner or later every animal had a chance to drink water.]

दो०. पुरइनि सघन ओट जल बेगि न पाइअ मर्म ।  
 मायाछन्न न देखिए जैसैं निर्गुन ब्रह्म ॥ ३९ ( क ) ॥  
 सुखी मीन सब एकरस अति अगाध जल माहिं ।  
 जथा धर्मसीलन्ह के दिन सुख संजुत जाहिं ॥ ३९ ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

pura'ini saghana oṭa jala bēgi na pā'i'a marma.  
 māyāchanna na dēkhi'ai jaisēm̐ nirguna brahma. 39 (a).  
 sukhī mīna saba ēkarasa ati agādha jala māhim̐.  
 jathā dharmasīlanha kē dina sukha sanjuta jāhim̐. 39 (b).

Since the surface of the Pampa lake was covered with a thick blanket of leaves of the lotus flower, its water was not easily visible—just like the case that when a creature is surrounded by a veil of Maya (delusions), he is not able to perceive the Truth about Brahm as he remains beyond the creature's vision<sup>1</sup>. (Doha no. 39-a)

All fish dwelling in the deep waters of this lake live a life of eternal joy and happiness (as they are sure that the water will not dry up, that the water is sweet and it would be a pleasant habitat for them, and that there is no one to catch them in the wilderness)—in the same way as those people who live a life in accordance with the principles of Dharma (by observing the principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, good conduct and noble thoughts) are assured of a contented life of peace, joy and happiness in this world<sup>2</sup>. (Doha no. 39-b)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The term 'Brahm' refers to the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth behind this creation. It is a sublime and subtle entity that is not visible to the naked eye, though it is omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing and the only Truth in this creation.

'Maya' is a term that broadly refers to 'delusions that makes a person think that something is true when the fact is that it is not so'. This creates an illusion of reality when, or where, it does not exist. So therefore, when a veil of Maya covers the intellect of a person, he begins to think that this gross perishable world, with its material charms, is the truth of creation, and it is all there is to it, and there is nothing beyond it. With Maya covering his perception like a veil, he sees everything around himself as conditioned by it; his vision and understanding are tampered.

Put simply, it means that a person under the influence of Maya is not able to see the behind this existence, the Truth that is known as Brahm in its real form, a form of Reality that is eternal and universal, a form that is an embodiment of bliss and beatitude, because this eclectic form becomes invisible to him, it is beyond his perception, and the truth that he sees and believes it to be so, is not the 'real truth', but it is the visible form of this gross perishable world of materialism that has characteristics that are opposite of bliss and beatitude that are associated with Brahm.

<sup>2</sup>This idea is very simple and noble: If a person wishes to live peacefully and contentedly, then he must follow the principles of Dharma. If he does so, he can be assured of happiness and joy at all times and under all circumstances in his life as long as he lives in this world.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17.]

{The beauty and charm of Pampa lake, and the forest surrounding it, were most enchanting, enthralling and captivating for the senses. Later on in the story we will come across a similar, but a more vivid and detailed account of the beauty of Mother Nature in all her finery in Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 17. These verses describe the environment of the forest and Mt. Prabarshan where Lord Ram would abide for some time during the months of the rainy and autumn season at Kishkindha.}

चौ०. बिक्से सरसिज नाना रंगा । मधुर मुखर गुंजत बहु भुंगा ॥ १ ॥

बोलत जलकुक्कुट कलहंसा । प्रभु बिलोकि जनु करत प्रसंसा ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

bikasē sarasija nānā raṅgā. madhura mukhara guṇjāta bahu bhr̥ṅgā. 1.  
bōlata jalakukkuṭa kalahansā. prabhu bilōki janu karata prasansā. 2.

Lotus flowers of different hues of colours were thriving in that lake; countless black bees were buzzing and humming around in merry abundance. (1)

Swans and waterfowls made loud cheerful sounds, as if they had burst into a chorus of applause and were praising the glories of Lord Ram as soon as they saw him.<sup>1</sup> (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The bewitching beauty of Pampa lake can be compared to the beauty and charm of the many ponds and lakes that were present in the city of Ayodhya and its surrounding areas during the reign of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede it.]

चक्रबाक बक खग समुदाई । देखत बनइ बरनि नहिं जाई ॥ ३ ॥  
सुंदर खग गन गिरा सुहाई । जात पथिक जनु लेत बोलाई ॥ ४ ॥

cakrabāka baka khaga samudā'ī. dēkhata bana'i barani nahim̐ jā'ī. 3.  
sundara khaga gana girā suhā'ī. jāta pathika janu lēta bōlā'ī. 4.

Flocks of ruddy goose and herons looked so magnificent to behold that their sight captivated the beholder by their charm, but the latter was unable to describe their beauty in words.

[To wit, the sight of these birds was so fascinating and wonderful that one would stand gazing at them as if hypnotised by their charm, but he would be unable to describe what he saw in words, as words can't do justice to the charming view that is seen by the person's eyes.] (3)

The different varieties of the sounds made by the birds around the lake were very enchanting, and they appeared to invite and welcome the traveller who was passing through their realm<sup>1</sup>. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 29, line no. 4.]

ताल समीप मुनिन्ह गृह छाए । चहु दिसि कानन बिटप सुहाए ॥ ५ ॥  
चंपक बकुल कदंब तमाला । पाटल पनस परास रसाला ॥ ६ ॥

tāla samīpa muninha gr̥ha chā'ē. cahu disī kānana biṭapa suhā'ē. 5.  
campaka bakula kadamba tamālā. pāṭala panasa parāsa rasālā. 6.

Hermitages of sages, hermits and ascetics were located near the banks of this Pampa lake, while all around them was a dense forest with plenty of beautiful trees. (5)

Trees of a variety of species flourished in that forest—such as the Champa tree (*Michelia Champacca*; a tree that bears fragrant yellow flowers; or a kind of sweet plantain), the Bakul tree (*Mimusops Slengi*; a tree with fragrant flowers), the Kadama tree (*Neculea Cadamba*; a kind of tall, fragrant grass), the Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant; the evergreen tree known by the botanical name *Xanthocymus Epictorius*), the Paatal tree (the tree of the trumpet flowers; a red-coloured tree), the Panas tree (the jackfruit tree), the Paanas tree (also known as the 'Paalash tree'; the tree *Butea Frondosa*; it is a carnivorous leafy tree), the Rasaal tree (the mango and the sugarcane trees, so-called because they bear either sweet, succulent fruits such as the mango, or their stems themselves are sweet such as the sugarcane). (6)

नव पल्लव कुसुमित तरु नाना । चंचरीक पटली कर गाना ॥ ७ ॥  
 सीतल मंद सुगंध सुभाऊ । संतत बहइ मनोहर बाऊ ॥ ८ ॥  
 कुहू कुहू कोकिल धुनि करहीं । सुनि रव सरस ध्यान मुनि टरहीं ॥ ९ ॥

nava pallava kusumita taru nānā. cañcarīka paṭalī kara gānā. 7.  
 sītala manda sugandha subhā'ū. santata baha'i manōhara bā'ū. 8.  
 kuhū kuhū kōkila dhuni karahīm. suni rava sarasa dhyāna muni ṭarahīm. 9.

New leaves and fragrant flowers of different colours and shapes and sizes were seen on these trees<sup>1</sup>.

Rows after rows of black bees were seen hovering over these flowers (and leaves too), singing their multifarious tunes in merry abundance. (7)

A pleasant breeze, that was cool, soft and fragrant, always blew in that place; this breeze would enchant the heart and the mind of all those whom it touched (as if affectionately caressing them). (8)

The cuckoos made their pleasant calls which were so sweet to hear that even dispassionate and detached sages and hermits were lured by their sound and felt enchanted. (9)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 15.]

दो०. फल भारन नमि बिटप सब रहे भूमि निअराइ ।  
 पर उपकारी पुरुष जिमि नवहिं सुसंपति पाइ ॥ ४० ॥  
 dōhā.

phala bhārana nami biṭapa saba rahē bhūmi ni'arā'i.  
 para upakārī puruṣa jimi navahīm susampati pā'i. 40.



All the trees were so heavily laden with fruits that they virtually bent down under their weight so as to almost touch the ground below—just like the case of a benevolent and charitable man who would become humbler and more modest when he acquires more wealth and fortunes.

[To wit, a noble-hearted man, an honourable man with a charitable heart and benevolent nature would become more and more humble and modest with the rise in his wealth and fortunes. He would not become more arrogant and greedy, but thankful to the Lord who had given him so much that he never expected it. Then this man would like to pay back by way of being humble and charitable; his modesty would shine through, and he will never show-off his wealth, or become haughty and arrogant.]<sup>1</sup> (Doha no. 40)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We have just read who captivately beautiful and enchanting the environs of the lake known as Pampa had become when Lord Ram came there. A similar glimpse, of how exceptionally charming, how wonderfully pleasant, and how bewitchingly beautiful the forest and its environment would automatically become when Lord Ram steps in to abide in their midst for some time, is had when we read the episode of the Lord coming to dwell in Chitrakoot; the forest and its hills had transmuted into a paradise-on-earth during the days the Lord stayed there—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.]

चौ०. देखि राम अति रुचिर तलावा । मज्जनु कीन्ह परम सुख पावा ॥ १ ॥

देखी सुंदर तरुबर छाया । बैठे अनुज सहित रघुराया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi rāma ati rucira talāvā. majjanu kīnha parama sukha pāvā. 1.

dēkhī sundara tarubara chāyā. baiṭhē anuja sahita raghurāyā. 2.

When Lord Ram saw this most beautiful and enchanting lake (Pampa), he liked it very much. The Lord took a refreshing bath in this lake, and he derived immense comfort by it. (1)

Looking around, the Lord saw a fine tree with a lot of cool shade around it, so he went there and sat down under the tree with his younger brother (Laxman). (2)

तहँ पुनि सकल देव मुनि आए । अस्तुति करि निज धाम सिधाए ॥ ३ ॥

बैठे परम प्रसन्न कृपाला । कहत अनुज सन कथा रसाला ॥ ४ ॥

taham̐ puni sakala dēva muni ā'ē. astuti kari nija dhāma sidhā'ē. 3.

baiṭhē parama prasanna kṛpālā. kahata anuja sana kathā rasālā. 4.

No sooner the word spread of Lord Ram's arrival at that spot, but all the gods as well as the sages who lived nearby came to pay their obeisance to him. After praying to Lord Ram, all of them went back to their respective places (i.e. the gods went back to the heaven, and the sages to their hermitages)<sup>1</sup>. (3)

Lord Ram sat there in a very happy and cheerful mood. He passed his time relaxing and telling his younger brother Laxman many interesting stories (from the scriptures)<sup>2</sup>. (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>We have read earlier that when Lord Ram visited sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, all the sages and hermits who lived nearby had come to pay their respects to him\*1. Similarly, when he came to Chitrakoot, the gods and the sages had visited him there too\*2.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, \*1 = Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 108.

\*2 = Doha no. 134 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

<sup>2</sup>The environment of Pampa lake was so charming that Lord Ram, after refreshing himself by taking a bath in its cool waters, felt very relaxed. The Lord sat under the cool shade of a nearby tree and conversed pleasantly with Laxman, his only companion in the wilderness, in order to divert his as well as Laxman's mind away for some time away from the difficulties that they were facing, and the daunting task that lay ahead.

We have read earlier that during his stay at Chitrakoot, Lord Ram would entertain and provide comfort to Laxman and Sita by narrating many episodes from the Purans and other ancient scriptures whenever the Lord discovered that they were feeling lonely and sad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 141.]

बिरहवंत भगवंतहि देखी । नारद मन भा सोच बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥  
मोर साप करि अंगीकारा । सहत राम नाना दुख भारा ॥ ६ ॥  
ऐसे प्रभुहि बिलोकउँ जाई । पुनि न बनिहि अस अवसरु आई ॥ ७ ॥

birahavanta bhagavantahi dēkhī. nārada mana bhā sōca bisēṣī. 5.  
mōra sāpa kari aṅgīkāṛā. sahata rāma nānā dukha bhārā. 6.  
aisē prabhuhi bilōka'um̐ jāī. puni na banihi asa avasaru āī. 7.

Now it so happened that sage Narad had been observing Lord Ram wandering in the forest in a grief-stricken mood because his dear wife had been taken away by some rascal. This sight filled Narad with a lot of regret. (5)

Narad was ashamed at himself even as he felt guilty of causing so much pain and suffering to Lord Ram. He said to himself: 'Verily, it is because of me that the Lord had to endure different kinds of troubles and problems in the forest; he had to undergo so much sufferings and pains just in order to honour the curse that I had cast unfortunately upon him in a fit of rage<sup>1</sup>. (6)

So therefore, I must now go and meet such a gracious Lord who had so willingly accepted my curse without getting angry at me, or punishing me for my irreverent and audacious behaviour.

Now the Lord is sitting in a relaxed mood and seems to be cheerful. So this is the most appropriate time for me to go and meet him. [This would give me a chance

to pray to him and ask for forgiveness, as well as to learn from him why he did not allow me to marry the lady I so dearly wanted to make my wife.]’ (7)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Narad cursed Lord Ram that just like the Lord had prevented him (Narad) from marrying the lady of his choice, thereby forcing him to suffer pangs of separation from the one the he fell in love with, the Lord too would have to suffer similarly when he would be separated from a lady whom he loved dearly—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 137 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

This entire episode is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 139.]

यह बिचारि नारद कर बीना । गए जहाँ प्रभु सुख आसीना ॥ ८ ॥

गावत राम चरित मृदु बानी । प्रेम सहित बहु भाँति बखानी ॥ ९ ॥

yaha bicāri nārada kara bīnā. ga’ē jahām’ prabhu sukha āsīnā. 8.  
gāvata rāma carita mṛdu bānī. prēma sahita bahu bhānti bakhānī.

With this compelling thought in his mind, sage Narad, with his trademark Indian lute in his hand, went to the place where Lord Ram was sitting comfortably (under the shade of a tree near the banks of Pampa lake). (8)

All the while, the sage was singing the magnificent glories of Lord Ram in a sweet voice (using the lute to give music to his lyrics).

The sage was singing affectionately, and he was glorifying the Lord and singing his praises in a variety of ways. (9)

करत दंडवत लिए उठाई । राखे बहुत बार उर लाई ॥ १० ॥

स्वागत पूँछि निकट बैठारे । लछिमन सादर चरन पखारे ॥ ११ ॥

karata daṇḍavata li’ē uṭhā’i. rākhē bahuta bāra ura lā’i. 5.  
svāgata pūm̐chi nikaṭa baiṭhārē. lachimana sādara carana pakhārē. 6.

When Lord Ram saw that the sage was prostrating before him to pay his obeisance, the Lord immediately lifted him and clasped the sage to his bosom, holding him thus for quite some time (to show how warmly the Lord had welcomed the sage, and how much the Lord loved him)<sup>1</sup>. (10)

Lord Ram welcomed sage Narad by asking about his well-being, and then seated him next to himself.

Then, Laxman offered his respects to the great sage by washing his feet with water. (11)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The way Lord Ram met sage Narad—lifting the sage and keeping him clasped to his bosom for a prolonged time— was meant to tell the sage that he was

most warmly welcomed by the Lord, that the sage need not worry that the Lord had taken any kind of offence or harbours any kind of ill-will for the sage for his casting a curse on the Lord on some previous occasion\*1, a curse that had purportedly# caused so much sufferings to the Lord. Lord Ram wished to hint to Narad that whatever happened was only due to the Lord's own wish\*2, and therefore the sage need not feel sorry or sad at all.

#The 'purported sufferings' of the Lord was his way of atonement for causing insult to the sage in front of others when the Lord had transformed Narad's face into that of a monkey\*3.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, \*1 = Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 137.

\*2 = Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 138.

\*3 = Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 133.}]

दो०. नाना बिधि बिनती करि प्रभु प्रसन्न जियँ जानि ।  
नारद बोले बचन तब जोरि सरोरुह पानि ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

nānā bidhi binatī kari prabhu prasanna jiyam̐ jāni.  
nārada bōlē bacana taba jōri sarōruha pāni. 41.

Nevertheless, sage Narad was so overwhelmed with a sense of regret and guilt that he continued to pray to Lord Ram in different ways in order to please the Lord, and subtly ask the Lord to forgive him for his mistakes.

Finally, when the sage observed that the Lord was very pleased with him, he joined the palms of his hands as a gesture of respect and submission, and then spoke most politely (as narrated in the verses herein below). (Doha no. 41)

चौ०. सुनहु उदार सहज रघुनायक । सुंदर अगम सुगम बर दायक ॥ १ ॥  
देहु एक बर मागउँ स्वामी । जद्यपि जानत अंतरजामी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu udāra sahaja raghunāyaka. sundara agama sugama bara dāyaka. 1.  
dēhu ēka bara māga'um̐ svāmī. jadyapi jānata antarajāmī. 2.

Sage Narad said to Lord Ram: 'Oh Lord Ram, the leader and the exalted Lord of the race of illustrious kings descending from the ancient king by the name of Raghu of Ayodhya (raghunāyaka), thou art most magnanimous, benevolent and charitable by nature.

Thou art fully able to grant all kinds of boons to seekers, whether such boons are ordinarily difficult to access, or are easy to have. (1)

Oh my Lord (svāmī)! Grant me one boon which I wish to have, though of course you know what I wish to say because thou art all-knowing, and therefore thou certainly doth wot what is in mine mind.

[To wit, though it is true that you already know what I want to have and wish to say as you are all-knowing and are fully aware of the thoughts of a creature's mind, yet I take your leave to express my earnest desire in my own words for the sake of my satisfaction.]' (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When sage Narad was assured that Lord Ram was pleased with him, he gathered courage to ask the Lord to grant him a boon. In the following verses we read that the Lord obliged him, saying that there is nothing in this world that he cannot give Narad if he so wished. So Narad asked the Lord something for the welfare of the entire world—he requested the Lord that his divine and holy name, i.e. 'Ram', which is the supreme and the most exalted of all the holy and divine names of all the Gods, should shine majestically like a beautiful full moon amongst countless stars in the subtle sky representing the heart of all devotees in the night that is symbolized by Bhakti (devotion).

Lord Ram gladly granted Narad this boon. Then Narad bowed cheerfully in the holy feet of the Lord.

After that, finding Lord Ram was very pleased and in a cheerful mood, Narad asked the Lord another question: why did he not allow the sage to marry when he was eager to do so if the Lord says that he is always grants all the wishes of his devotees? The answer that Lord Ram gave Narad will be narrated herein below in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46.]

जानहु मुनि तुम्ह मोर सुभाऊ । जन सन कबहुँ कि करउँ दुराऊ ॥ ३ ॥  
कवन बस्तु असि प्रिय मोहि लागी । जो मुनिबर न सकहु तुम्ह मागी ॥ ४ ॥  
जन कहूँ कछु अदेय नहिं मोरें । अस बिस्वास तजहु जनि भोरें ॥ ५ ॥

jānahu muni tumha mōra subhā'ū. jana sana kabahum' ki kara'um' durā'ū. 3.  
kavana bastu asi priya mōhi lāgī. jō munibara na sakahu tumha māgī. 4.  
jana kahum' kachu adēya nahim mōrēm. asa bisvāsa tajahu jani bhōrēm. 5.

Lord Ram replied to Narad: 'My dear sage (muni), you know what my nature is—do I hide anything from my devotees? (3)

Oh most exalted sage (munibara)! Is there anything in this world that is so dear to me that you can't ask for it (because you may doubt that I can't or won't like to give it to you)? (4)

Remember: There is nothing that I can't give to my devotees and ardent followers. Be certain about this principle and believe it faithfully; never forget to have faith in this advice of mine (that there is nothing in this world that I can't give or grant to my devotees).<sup>1</sup> (5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>An exactly similar idea is expressed in the episode describing king Manu asking the Lord to grant him a wish of his choice—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 148—to Doha no. 149.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 267 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

तब नारद बोले हरषाई । अस बर मागउँ करउँ ढिठाई ॥ ६ ॥  
 जद्यपि प्रभु के नाम अनेका । श्रुति कह अधिक एक तें एका ॥ ७ ॥  
 राम सकल नामन्ह ते अधिका । होउ नाथ अघ खग गन बधिका ॥ ८ ॥

taba nārada bōlē haraṣā'ī. asa bara māga'um̐ kara'um̐ dhiṭhā'ī. 6.  
 jadyapi prabhu kē nāma anēkā. śruti kaha adhika ēka tēm̐ ēkā. 7.  
 rāma sakala nāmanha tē adhikā. hō'u nātha agha khaga gana badhikā. 8.

At Lord Ram's assurance, Narad felt very glad (that his wishes would be granted). So, feeling exhilarated, he said: 'Oh Lord, I beg your leave to be bold enough to ask for a boon, and it is as follows--- (6)

Although you have many names, and the Vedas affirm that they are countless in number, each more glorious and greater than the other --- (7)

--- Yet, I prithee that your holy name "Ram" (pronounced as Raam; "rāma") should be the most prominent, most adorable, and at the top of all other names; it should be the most glorious, the most divine, spiritually fulfilling, and the holiest amongst all other names of the Lord<sup>1</sup>.

Oh Lord, let it be so that this 'Ram' name of yours be so powerful and potent that it can eliminate all kinds of sins and their consequences, like a skillful hunter who can easily catch and kill any kind of bird.' (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The glory, holiness, divinity and spiritual importance of Lord Ram's name has been extensively praised in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 46.]

दो०. राका रजनी भगति तव राम सोइ सोम ।  
 अपर नाम उडगन बिमल बसहुँ भगत उर ब्योम ॥ ४२ ( क ) ॥  
 एवमस्तु मुनि सन कहेउ कृपासिंधु रघुनाथ ।  
 तब नारद मन हरष अति प्रभु पद नायउ माथ ॥ ४२ ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

rākā rajanī bhagati tava rāma nāma sō'i sōma.  
 apara nāma uḍagana bimala basahum̐ bhagata ura byōma. 42 (a).  
 ēvamastu muni sana kahē'u kṛpāsindhu raghunātha.  
 taba nārada mana haraṣa ati prabhu pada nāya'u mātha. 42 (b).

Sage Narad continued: 'Oh Lord! The virtue of devotion for you (known as Bhakti) is like a full moon's night. Your holy name "Ram" (rāma) is like the full moon that adorns that night and lends it its famed glory and charm.

All the rest of your names are like the countless stars that adorns the same sky.

Oh Lord, in this symbolic way, you should dwell and adorn the subtle sky symbolized by a devotee's heart and mind.'<sup>1</sup> (Doha no. 42-a)

Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus who was an ocean of mercy, compassion, benevolence and grace (krpāsindhu raghunātha), granted Narad what he sought by saying 'So shall it be'.

Thence, Narad felt exhilarated in his heart and bowed his head before the Lord's holy feet to express his gratitude. (Doha no. 42-b)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In this imagery it is obvious what Narad intends to say, and it is a pictorial depiction of his submission in the verses that precede this Doha. When the full moon shines in a clear sky, it occupies a dominant position in as much as its light fades the combined light of all other stars. So therefore, Narad, by way of this example, wishes to make it clear what he wants to say regarding the prominence of Lord Ram's name "Raam—Rāma" in comparison to all other names of the Supreme Being that are mentioned in the scriptures.]

चौ०. अति प्रसन्न रघुनाथहि जानी । पुनि नारद बोले मृदु बानी ॥ १ ॥  
 राम जबहिं प्रेरैउ निज माया । मोहेहु मोहि सुनहु रघुराया ॥ २ ॥  
 तब बिबाह मैं चाहउँ कीन्हा । प्रभु केहि कारन करै न दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ati prasanna raghunāthahi jānī. puni nārada bōlē mṛdu bānī. 1.  
 rāma jabahim prērē'u nija māyā. mōhēhu mōhi sunahu raghurāyā. 2.  
 taba bibāha mairi cāha'um' kīnhā. prabhu kēhi kārana karai na dīnhā. 3.

Finding Lord Ram extremely pleased and cheerful, Narad once again said very politely. (1)

Narad said to the Lord: 'Oh Lord Ram! When your Maya (delusion creating cosmic powers), that is controlled and commanded by you, inspired to act by you, and works only on your instructions, played its cunning and maverick tricks upon me --- (2),

--- I wished to marry. Lord, why did you not allow me to do so?<sup>1</sup> (3)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Narad stresses here that the desire to marry that crept into in his heart was not something that he was naturally interested in or was due to his innate passionate nature, because as a true Sanyasi, also known as a Parivrajak, he is wise enough to understand and know that for a man who has taken the vows of Sanyas (renunciation, dispassion and non-involvement with worldly affairs and harbouring any kind of passion and lust) it is absolutely a despicable idea to even think of a woman and other worldly ties. So, this desire to marry was not his own fault, but Maya was to be blamed for it, and this Maya in turn is inspired by the Lord himself. That is alright as it is a fact declared by the scriptures. But since the Lord inspired Maya that in turn instigated Narad to desire to marry, it is natural to deduce that the Lord wished him to marry. For had it not been so, why did the Lord pushed him to the brink in the first place?

The answer is found clearly in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 125, till Doha no. 127. In brief the reason is that once Narad had gone to an extremely pleasant place to meditate. The god of lust and passion, known as Kamdeo (pronounced as “Kaamdeo”), was summoned by Indra, the king of gods, to go and disturb Narad because Indra erroneously thought Narad wished to usurp his heavenly throne. Such is the fear of a jealous, mean and crooked man whom Indra personifies. Nevertheless, Kamdeo tried his best to corrupt Narad’s mind by his lascivious gestures and decadent behaviour, but failed miserably to sway the sage even a bit. At last, fearing for his life and expecting severe punishment, Kaamdeo went and fell at the sage’s feet, asking forgiveness. The compassionate sage did forgive him, but unfortunately he became proud of his ability to conquer the most powerful force of creation, the force of ‘Kaam’—the virtually unconquerable force of passion and lust that arouses an overwhelming desire for sensual pleasures and gratification.

After this conquest of Kaam, Narad had gone to meet Lord Shiva, the Lord who has indeed successfully trounced Kaam and is regarded not only as the most enlightened and wise God in the entire creation but is also therefore the patron god and role model for all ascetics and sages. Narad was filled with pride for not only having vanquished Kaam and coming out unscathed from his vicious attack but also being exemplarily forgiving by not cursing him when he came to meet Shiva—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 127. Shiva tried to persuade him to get rid of this pride, but Narad did not pay any heed to it—refer: Doha no. 127, and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

Now, the Lord is so alert as regards the good and welfare of his devotees that he did not wish that this unwarranted negative trait of pride and self-praise should make a foothold in Narad’s mind and heart as the long-term consequences would be bad for the sage. So the Lord felt it was his moral duty to bring Narad to his senses, and the best way to do it is to make him fall to the passionate overtures of and becoming a slave of the same Kaamdeo that he was so proud of defeating and conquering.

That is why the caring and merciful Lord decided to inspire his Maya to make the sage fall victim to arousal at seeing a beautiful girl, then desiring to marry her to satisfy his urge for carnal, sensual pleasures. And this is also the obvious reason why the Lord did not actually allow Narad to marry and fall in the trap laid by Kaamdeo as the sage was a Parivrajak for whom marrying and having sex with a woman was a most reprehensible, most despicable and most decadent act. The Lord wished Narad to be free from all spiritual taints because the Lord loved him very much, thought for the fleeting moment Narad thought that the Lord was jealous of him and was creating a spanner in the wheel—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 136, to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 137.

The Lord withdrew his Maya, and suddenly all delusions vanished like a cloud driven away to reveal the bright sun. Narad was dumbfounded, regretted whatever had happened, and being overwhelmed with a sense of guilt he sought forgiveness from Lord Ram. The gracious and merciful Lord told Narad then that he need not worry and regret, for it was the Lord who had wished that the things happen as they did happen, because nothing happens without the Lord’s wish and consent—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 138 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.



But still Narad was not sure why the Lord did not allow him to marry. And the present question and the Lord's answer should be read and understood in the context of the narration above.

The Lord obviously did not mean any harm to Narad, but was only trying to show him that his exalted stature as a high-class sage and renunciate is due to the Lord's protection, and the sage should realise and be aware that if the Supreme Lord withdraws this protection or decides on something then not only Narad but any or all other power, force or authority in creation would be able to do anything, or protect themselves or have no support or daring to oppose the wish of the Supreme Lord.

Narad was confounded because left to his own nature and instincts, he would never have desired to marry as he was a sage and such passionate thoughts should not have at all occurred in his mind and heart in the normal course of things. The fact that such desire did arise in him was none of his own fault; it is the Lord-inspired Maya that corrupted his wisdom and intellect, and somehow got the better of his inborn nature to remain aloof from such passionate entanglements. Since this Maya is driven and controlled by the Lord, it simply means that the desire to marry that arose in Narad's mind and heart was not of his own creation but showed that the Lord wanted him to marry. If this is so, then why did he stop him later on?

The irony of the matter is that inspite of being so wise and enlightened, sage Narad could not know the answer. Why? Again the answer is obvious—because the loving Lord wished to remove from him the pride of being a wise and learned sage. Otherwise how is it it logically possible that Narad who had himself preached on the tenets, the philosophy and the principles of Sanyas in an Upanishad titled 'Narad Parivrajak Upanishad', which is the 8<sup>th</sup> Upanishad pertaining to the Atharva Veda tradition, would not know why a Sanyasi should never think of marrying and having a company of woman?

This entire episode of Narad's desire to marry is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124, till Doha no. 138.]

सुनु मुनि तोहि कहउँ सहरोसा । भजहिं जे मोहि तजि सकल भरोसा ॥ ४ ॥  
करउँ सदा तिन्ह कै रखवारी । जिमि बालक राखइ महतारी ॥ ५ ॥

sunu muni tōhi kaha'um̐ saharōsā. bhajahim̐ jē mōhi taji sakala bharōsā. 4.  
kara'um̐ sadā tinha kai rakhavārī. jimi bālaka rākha'i mahatārī. 5.

Lord Ram replied—'Listen sage! I solemnly and very emphatically tell you, with all the emphasis that I can command<sup>1</sup>, that I diligently care for all those who have unflinching and undivided devotion for me, and who worship me exclusively after discarding all reliance upon anyone else. Verily I say to you that I look after their welfare like a mother does for her child. (4-5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>It is important to take note of the word *Saharosa* (i.e. the fifth word of line no. 4. It is derived from the root word 'Roshā', which means to say something with indignance, annoyance, anger or irritation. Therefore, the way Lord Ram began to answer Narad can be interpreted as follows—"Listen sage! I tell you with a bit of annoyance (as I am irritated at your foolishness and lack of maturity) that those who worship me, have devotion for me, and are completely dependent upon me for their

welfare and well-being, verily I say that I protect them like a mother protects her innocent young child.”

Now, the question arises, why was Lord Ram angry or annoyed or indignant at Narad inspite of the fact that this sage is one of the greatest devotees of the Lord? There are a number of reasons for this. Some have been expounded in note to Chaupai line nos. 2-3 above.

A very long period of time has passed since Narad first desiring to marry, and now when the Lord is in the last quarter of his 14-year forest exile. Yet, the sage is still infatuated with a woman; he had no other question to ask but this silly one—why was he not allowed to marry? He is a Sanyasi, a mendicant sage who is supposed to have complete control over his base instincts and sensual desires. The very fact that Narad chose to ask this stupid question after the gap of so many years, without even thinking what impression it would create, was enough to annoy the Lord.

Another plausible reason is this: Why did Narad select this particular moment to ask the Lord about a woman when he knew that the Lord is frantically searching for his own wife Sita who had been abducted by Ravana? Did Narad wish to tease the Lord that he had prevented him (Narad) from marrying but was himself overwhelmed by grief when he lost his wife Sita? Did Narad, in his utter stupidity, not realise that the Lord had to act in the way he did (lamenting and feeling extremely heart-broken as he searched for his lost wife) because it was the sage himself who had cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being to suffer the agony and pain that comes when one is not allowed the company of a woman he loves very much, like Narad was subjected to when the Lord did not allow him to marry the woman of his choice?

Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 137 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 wherein it is clearly stated that “Narad cursed Lord Vishnu to take a form which he prevented the sage from taking; and since Narad’s face was made to look like a monkey, they will help the Lord when he becomes a human; and the Lord has done a great favour to him by preventing him from marrying—so the Lord will have to suffer the agony of separation from a woman (wife). Lord Vishnu had willingly accepted the curse of the sage, and had instead prayed to him to calm down.”

The spark that caused anger and indignation in the Lord was that he himself preferred to suffer by the sage’s curse instead of punishing him for violating the laws of Dharma whereby a person who has become a Sanyasi is expected to never think, talk or see a woman, the foolish sage is still lingering with his passions and lowly desires. What signal will it give to the rest of the world?

This is exactly the reason why the Lord cited the analogy of a mother protecting her child if he is harmed. It happens that the mother herself gets injured in this process—for instance, the snake will bite her, or the fire would burn her, but she prefers to suffer in her single-minded pursuit of protecting her child whom she loves dearly. The same analogy applies here—the compassionate and gracious Lord prefers to suffer himself in his eagerness to give full protection to his devotee, and here is Narad asking such impertinent and stupid question about not marrying a woman! The very fact that this question has lingered on in his mind even after so long a period is in itself a loathsome idea.

So, in the following line the Lord cites the instance of the mother who leaps to protect her child if ignorantly or inadvertently he tries to catch a blazing fire or a serpent to stress that the Lord ensures the safety of his devotees if they do something that is harmful for them. In the case of Narad it was the desire to get entangled in the numerous problems that a creature faces in this world by marrying and raising a

family. It acts as a heavy shackle that keeps him tied to this mundane world endlessly, and the countless responsibilities that come in the wake of the family that he raises leaves him drained of energy and short of time to focus on ethereal matters of the Spirit. Marriage acts like a worldly trap for him, sucking him of energy and peace of mind.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99 it is emphasized that “all men are compelled to remain under the influence of women so much so that they dance to the latter’s commands and demands even as a monkey dances to the orders of the monkey charmer”.]

गह सिसु बच्छ अनल अहि धाई । तहँ राखइ जननी अरगाई ॥ ६ ॥  
 प्रौढ़ भएँ तेहि सुत पर माता । प्रीति करइ नहिं पाछिलि बाता ॥ ७ ॥  
 मोरें प्रौढ़ तनय सम ग्यानी । बालक सुत सम दास अमानी ॥ ८ ॥

gaha sisu baccha anala ahi dhā'ī. taham' rākha'i janani aragā'ī. 6.  
 praur̥ha bha'ēm' tēhi suta para mātā. prīti kara'i nahim pāchili bātā. 7.  
 mōrēm praur̥ha tanaya sama gyānī. bālaka suta sama dāsa amānī. 8.

When a small and innocent child runs to catch hold of fire or a serpent (thinking that they are playthings, not aware that they are very dangerous and will kill him instead), the mother instantly leaps forward to pull the child away from danger<sup>1</sup>. (6)

When the little child grows up, the mother continues to love him but she is no longer so worried for his safety and well-being as when he was an infant or a small innocent child, because as an adult he is able to take care of himself better, fend for himself, and think and act for himself. (7)

Those who are ‘Gyanis’ (i.e. those who are known as wise, learned, self-realised and enlightened men) are like my grown-up children.

On the other hand, those who are my ardent followers and devotees who are completely dependent upon me for all their welfare and needs are like the innocent child who is completely dependent upon his mother for everything in this world (and therefore like the mother it becomes my responsibility to take meet their genuine needs, as well as to care of them and their welfare)<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The Lord means that he also is extremely careful and vigilant that his devotees who rely upon him completely like the child is on his mother are not brought to any harm whatsoever. In the case of Narad, it was his desire to enjoy the sensual pleasures that come by marrying, but which would have been detrimental for his spiritual welfare and unfettered freedom that he now enjoys. A true devotee is like a child not only because his mind and heart are pure and free from all worldly corruptions and entanglements like that of a child, but also because he is totally dependent upon the Lord just like the little child is upon his mother.

<sup>2</sup>Here, Lord Ram compares himself to the mother, and the creature as her off spring. This is indeed true because Lord Ram is the incarnate Supreme Being who is the cosmic Creator of whatever exists in this world. According to the Upanishads, the

entire creation was conceived and is nourished by the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. This Viraat is also known as Lord Vishnu who had manifested as Lord Ram. Vishnu is responsible for protection, sustenance and well-being of the world. So, to compare himself with the mother who conceives the child in her womb, nourishes him, and finally gives him birth is most appropriate.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43, Lord Ram told the citizens of Ayodhya who had assembled to hear his words of wisdom that “that follower or devotee is extremely dear to me who faithfully carries out my orders and principles laid out by me (and codified as the many laws of Dharma, the laws of proper conduct and morality)”.]

जनहि मोर बल निज बल ताही । दुहु कहँ काम क्रोध रिपु आही ॥ ९ ॥

यह बिचारि पंडित मोहि भजहीं । पाएहुँ ग्यान भगति नहिं तजहीं ॥ १० ॥

janahi mōra bala nija bala tāhī. duhu khamā kāma krōdha ripu āhī. 9.  
yaha bicāri paṇḍita mōhi bhajahīm. pā'ēhum' gyāna bhagati nahīm tajahīm.  
10.

My devotee has only my strength as he is completely reliant upon me, whereas those who have Gyan rely upon their own strength for their spiritual welfare. But both of them have common enemy—such as Kaam (worldly passions, lust, yearnings etc.) and Krodha (anger)<sup>1</sup>. (9)

Considering all these factors and keeping in mind the virtues of Bhakti, those who are wise and intelligent, those who know the reality and the truth, those who understand the fundamental meaning and the essence of the maxims and axioms of the scriptures—they verily prefer to have Bhakti for me (in comparison to following the path of Gyan for their spiritual welfare, to access happiness, peace and bliss, and to attain liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation).

Therefore, inspite of them having access to Gyan, i.e. though they are learned, wise, self-realised and enlightened, they never abandon Bhakti and barter it for exclusive Gyan.

[To wit, inspite of having knowledge of the various other powerful and potent tools that will help them attain their spiritual goals, those who are intelligent and discriminating always rely upon Bhakti as a sure-shot and easy method to reach the same goal without the risks and hassles that are natural in the path of Gyan.]<sup>2</sup> (10)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>All the worldly corruptions and vices are like the enemy of a creature. They are compared to the ‘enemy’ because they will never allow the creature to rest in peace if they are not conquered and crushed.

In this context, sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that “Bhakti is the spiritual victory that is obtained by protecting oneself with a shield symbolized by Vairagya (deep sense of renunciation, detachment, non-involvement and dispassion), and a sword symbolized by Gyan (wisdom, enlightenment and awareness of the Truth and Reality) to fight the enemy represented by Mada (arrogance, ego, hypocrisy etc.), Lobha (greed) and Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations) and other such vices”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 120 Kha.

The countless spiritual faults that torment the innocent creature are called the *Vikaars*. They are the numerous faults, shortcomings, imperfections, drawbacks or errors and blemishes in the character of a creature that cast a shadow on the otherwise ideal, immaculate and perfect nature of the subject under consideration. These *Vikaars* are like the dark shadow of the earth that eclipses the bright disc of the beautiful moon during the lunar eclipse. In other words, they prevent the original beauty and shine of the subject to come to the fore by casting a dark veil of evil tendencies and traits over its surface like the case of the solar eclipse when the moon prevents the brilliant splendour of the sun from being viewed from earth by coming in between the sun and the earth during the solar eclipse.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*, in its Canto 3, verse no. 24, asserts that the best method to get rid of the numerous *Vikaars* is to burn them or eliminate them as soon as they raise their head. To quote—“When worldly negative traits called the ‘*Vikaars*’ such as ‘*Raag*’ (attachments, infatuations, attractions and strong yearnings for anything or anyone in this material world) etc. are first observed to be making their appearance, and a wise man uses his discrimination and intelligence to burn (eliminate) them in their infancy, there is no scope of their developing into full blown traits (which would then be most difficult to uproot and a cause of must dismay and agony for the man later on) (24).”

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of *Krishna Yajur Veda*, verse nos. 14-15 stress that *Gyan* or truthful knowledge of the reality as well as *Yoga* or meditation and contemplation are the two important tools to overcome the various faults that engulf the creature and cause a hindrance in his spiritual progress. To quote—“Verse no. 14 = [The following verses describe the ways to overcome the different faults and shortcomings enumerated above.]

Now I shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the *Atma*. Say, how can *Gyan* (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of *Yoga* (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent *Moksha* (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul from the torments of the trap in which the *Atma* has been allowed to fall due to ignorance? (14).

“Verse no. 15 = Similarly, *Yoga* devoid of *Gyan* also cannot bestow *Moksha*. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining *Moksha* (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy, a harmony between both *Gyan* and *Yoga*. That is, they should employ both *Gyan* and *Yoga* in a well coordinated and synchronized manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).”

The 19 *Vikaars* or faults—The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of *Krishna Yajur Veda*, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen *Vikaars* or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual’s soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement.

To quote—“Verse no. 10-11 = Some of the inherent faults, shortcomings, imperfections and drawbacks that mire the creature’s spiritual progress and pull him

down from reaching the high of spiritual achievement that would make him equivalent to the supreme Soul of creation are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled), Bhaye (fear, consternation and perplexities arising out of uncertainties, confusions and other factors such as fear from death and enemy, fear of failure and its attending shame, fear of sufferings of the body due to old age and diseases etc.), Moha (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging to this material world and attractions for the illusive charms that its sense objects offer, along with their sensual pleasures and comforts), Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Raja (the quality of remaining engrossed in this world of material objects, to think that one is the doer of deeds and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds etc.), the problems associated with the cycle of Janma and Mrityu (birth and death), Kaarpanya or Kripantaa (to be miserly and pinch-fisted, shallow-hearted and small-minded, frugal, illiberal, niggardly, avaricious, stingy), Shok (grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds), Standra (sleepiness, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties), Kshudha (hunger) and Pipasa (thirst) [10],---

---Tirshnaa (thirst for acquiring and enjoying worldly things and desire for self gratification; greed, avarice and rapacity for the material world and its sense objects and their enjoyments), Lajja (shame at doing something dishonourable and ignominious) and its attendant fear of losing face, self respect, dignity and position in society, all sorts of Dukha and Vishaad (sorrows, miseries, agonies, grieving, lamentations, feeling of gloom and guilt, melancholy, sadness, depression, dejection, low-spirited etc.), and Harsh (the opposite of Dukha and Vishaad; the feeling of elation, happiness, joy, ecstasy and exhilaration; to feel glad, cheerful and joyous).

These are the shortcomings or imperfections that cast their shadow on the otherwise immaculate and perfect Atma of the creature, thereby miring it in a number of unwarranted problems and separating it from its pure nature. Until the creature is freed from their clutches or tainting effects, he cannot ever hope to become as pure as the Shiva, i.e. the creature cannot attain his true primary nature which is pristine pure, uncorrupt, truthful, auspicious, neutral and beautiful like the form of Shiva [11]. (10-11)."

<sup>2</sup>In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 115, till Doha no. 120, the crow-saint Kaagbhusund has elaborately described to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, the virtues of Bhakti (devotion and love for Lord God) vis-à-vis Gyan (acquisition of wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge of the various metaphysical principles and becoming skillful in various tools that help a creature realise his spiritual objectives).

During this discourse, Kaagbhusund stresses that—

(i) to pursue Gyan at the cost of Bhakti is like not paying attention the Kaamdhenu cow (the all wish-fulfilling cow) living in one's own home and roaming around searching for milk from a swallow wort plant—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 115;

(ii) if anyone abandons Bhakti and seek spiritual happiness elsewhere, then he is absolutely stupid and block-head who wishes to cross the vast ocean without a ship—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115;

(iii) the path of Gyan is like a double-edged sword; oh king of birds (Garud)—it does not take time to fall from this path and get mortally wounded—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119;

(iv) by following the path of Bhakti, one is able to get freedom from his destiny that shackles a creature endlessly to this mundane world and its equally endless cycle of birth and death—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119;

(v) Bhakti for Lord Ram is like a self-illuminated and all wish-fulfilling gem that gives eternal illumination (self-realisation, enlightenment, wisdom, peace, contentedness, bliss, happiness etc by removing the ghost of darkness) to the inner-self of the creature without the need for any artificial lamp that needs a wick or oil to keep lighted—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 120;

And (vi) if this gem-like Bhakti lives in the heart of a creature, then he does not have to suffer in the least from any kind of sorrow and grief—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precede Doha no. 120.]

दो०. काम क्रोध लोभादि मद प्रबल मोह कै धारि ।

तिन्ह महँ अति दारुन दुखद मायारूपी नारि ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

kāma krōdha lōbhādi mada prabala mōha kai dhāri.  
tinha maham̐ ati dārūna dukhada māyārūpī nāri. 43.

Kaam, Krodha, Lobha etc. are like a huge and formidable army of Mada.

Out of them, a woman who represents a personified form of Maya (delusions, attachments, infatuations) that acts like fetters for the creature is the most vicious, the fiercest and the most troublesome.<sup>1</sup> (Doha no. 43)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 121 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 28-37, saint-crow Kaagbhusund enumerates the following faults of the Mana (mind and heart) that torment the creature interminably—Moha (worldly attachments, infatuations, attractions) is the root of all troubles—refer: Chaupai line no. 29; Kaam (passions) is like the painful disease of rheumatism, Lobha (greed) is like cough, Krodh (anger) is like the hot bile which creates heartburn—refer: Chaupai line no. 30; the desire for gratifying the organs of the body, and to acquire things that are innumerable and unreachable, known as ‘Vishaya’ (temptations of the material sense objects of the world which have a tendency to attract their relevant sense organs towards them to seek gratification) and ‘Manorath’ (having desires for such objects and seeking self gratification), are like the disease that create a lot of pain—refer: Chaupai line no. 32; Mamta (attachments, infatuations with near and dear ones, with the body, the world and its material things and their charms, with one’s material possessions, etc.) is like eczema, Irshya (jealousy) is like its itch, Harsh and Vishaad (to respectively feel elated and happy, or depressed and dejected) are like the disease of the throat—refer: Chaupai line no. 33; to burn in jealousy and have envy towards other by watching them happy and prosperous is like the wasting disease, and wickedness, cunning, conceit, deceit, pretensions and other vices are like leprosy—refer: Chaupai line no. 34; Ahankar (false pride, ego, vanity) is like the formation of knots and stones or arthritis, Dambha, Kapat (deceit, conceit, pretension, fraud,

wickedness, crookedness) and Maan (arrogance, hypocrisy, ego) are like the diseases of the nerves and veins—refer: Chaupai line no. 35; Trishna (severe yearning for the world and its material sense objects) is like dropsy; and the three types of desires (for son, wealth and honour) are like the ague fever—refer: Chaupai line no. 36; Matsarya (ill-will, jealousy, malice) and Avidya (lack of wisdom and discrimination) are like two types of severe fever—refer: Chaupai line no. 37.]

चौ०. सुनु मुनि कह पुरान श्रुति संता । मोह बिपिन कहूँ नारि बसंता ॥ १ ॥  
जप तप नेम जलाश्रय झारी । होइ ग्रीष्म सोषड़ सब नारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu muni kaha purāna śruti santā. mōha bipina kahum̐ nāri basantā. 1.  
japa tapa nēma jalāśraya jhārī. hō'i grīṣama sōṣa'i saba nārī. 2.

Listen sage! The ancient scriptures such as the Purans and the Srutis (Vedas that were transmitted orally by the process of telling and hearing, hence known as the 'Sruit', i.e. one that is heard), as well as the wise sages, seers and saints have unanimously asserted that a woman is akin to the spring season that makes the forest representing the negative virtue of 'Moha' (attachments, infatuations, attractions etc.) to develop, to get denser and richer, to become more verdant, to bloom and to multiply in variety.

[To wit, all the problems that a man faces due to his involvement in the world and its entangling affairs can be avoided if one avoids the company of a woman. The woman is the cause of many negative qualities in a man which he would not have faced had he guarded himself from any sort of attachment to a woman or from having anything to do with her.]<sup>1</sup> (1)

A woman is like the hot summer season that dries up all sources of water represented by accumulation of auspicious spiritual virtues that come as a result of doing Japa (repetition of the Lord's holy name), Tapa (austerity, penance and hardships undertaken for one's spiritual welfare), and Niyam (observance of sacraments and strict religious codes of conduct)<sup>2</sup>. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>To explain how the company of women can entangle a man in worldly fetters, the poet Tulsidas has drawn this parallel from Nature. The trees that look dried up and withered after the severity of winter begin to become green, sprout new shoots, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits with the arrival of the spring season. In fact, this part of the year derives its name from this natural phenomenon that new life begins to 'spring' forth after hibernating during the cold months of the winter season. Normally the trees require water for development and growth, but during the spring season life springs up on its own without needing any external infusion of life-giving elements.

Animals, insects and birds also arrive with the onset of the spring season. There is a lot of activity and cheer in the forest which was cold and foreboding during the chilly period of winter.

Similarly, once one marries and has a wife, a number of entanglements come in its wake—for instance, there is a new family to take care of, requiring the need for money, food, homestead, clothes etc. This necessitates involvement in worldly affairs, and the latter is like the bait which a normal fish finds virtually impossible to resist. And even if a man has the resilience and patience to desist from falling to temptations,



a lot of his energy is spent merely in this effort to keep the mind and body under check. Passions, lust, greed, desires, wishes, expectations, hopes, jealousy, ill-will, pride, anger—and so many other negative emotions are bound to ‘spring forth’ automatically when they find the ground fit for breeding. The man then finds himself sucked and stuck in this pit which whirls him viciously like a swiftly turning whirlpool, flinging him from one misery to grief.

Moha is said to be the king of all vices, and it is the springboard of the rest of vices that come running in as soon as they find the person engaged in Moha. In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 235 it is said that—“The king symbolized by the auspicious virtue of Vivek (wisdom, analytical intellect and the power of discrimination) who has conquered the king symbolized by the negative virtue of Moha along with his army (consisting of the chain of other vices and demeaning qualities that come quickly as soon as Moha comes) can rule fearlessly, and without any obstacles and intrigues. In the kingdom of such a king (who has conquered Moha), there is always happiness, cheer, wealth and prosperity.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 29 that precedes Doha no. 121 it is said that—“Moha is the root cause of all spiritual problems and troubles which torment the creature like so many horrifying diseases. From it arises so many countless miseries, problems, torments and grief that are like the pain that accompanies these chronic diseases.”

The spring season is also likened to a king; it is said to be the king of seasons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 86 where ‘Basant’, the spring season, is called the ‘Rituraaaja’—the ‘king of seasons’.

One can imagine the power and punch of the vicious army of these two kings, the ‘Spring’ and ‘Moha’, when they join hands to conquer the creature, imprison him and enslave him for life!

<sup>2</sup>Here, company of woman is likened to the hot summer season during which a creature is tormented by scorching heat and rapidly dwindling sources of water. In other words, whatever good effects that Japa, Tapa and Niyam has produced in relation to the creature’s spiritual wellbeing are nullified by the negative influences that are inherent in the company of a woman.

What are they, and how they affect the creature, are enumerated below in the following lines. It must be noted here that Lord Ram is answering Narad’s question in which the sage wanted to know why he was not allowed to marry. Narad was not a householder, but a celestial sage for whom renunciation, detachment and dispassion was the rightful way of thought and conduct. He was a Sanyasi—i.e. a person who is supposed to have broken all worldly relationships and devote his entire life to Lord God. For a Sanyasi it is the most despicable and decadent thing to even think of a woman, what to talk of being overcome with passions for a woman and talk of marrying her. Unfortunately Narad had fallen in this trap. Now, Lord Ram has firmly asserted that if one has submitted himself to the Lord, then it becomes the Lord’s responsibility to shoulder the burden of taking proper care and ensure the welfare of such a devotee like a mother takes care of her innocent child—refer: Lord Ram’s opening sentences when he began explaining to Narad in Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43 above.

Even the Upanishads that extensively deal with the philosophy of Sanyas stress that a person who has taken the vows of Sanyas should never ever think and talk of a woman. Hence, what Narad wanted was completely unacceptable, and would

have led to his downfall had the Lord preferred to fulfill his wishes because Narad was his ardent devotee. Had the Lord done so and allowed Narad to marry, it would have been wrong.

The Lord cheerfully accepted the consequent curse of Narad when the sage became angry at the Lord for not allowing him to marry—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 137.

Therefore, though the Lord himself had to suffer the consequences of annoying Narad by denying him the opportunity to marry as the Lord had to become a human being in the form of the king of Ayodhya named Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124), the Lord willingly preferred to cope with this curse and its consequences rather than allowing his beloved devotee from going astray from his chosen spiritual path and falling in the worldly trap from which Narad would have found extremely difficult to extricate himself later on. The whole world would then have blamed the Lord for not living upto his self-proclaimed vow and declaration of taking care of the interests of his devotee no matter what happens, even if it means that the devotee feels the Lord is not listening to his prayers or accuses the Lord of selfishness and bias as Narad actually did—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 136, to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 137.]

काम क्रोध मद मत्सर भेका । इन्हि हरषप्रद बरषा एका ॥ ३ ॥

दुर्बासना कुमुद समुदाई । तिन्ह कहँ सरद सदा सुखदाई ॥ ४ ॥

kāma krōdha mada matsara bhēkā. inhahi haraṣaprada baraṣā ēkā. 3.  
durbāsanā kumuda samudāī. tinha kham̐ sarada sadā sukhadāī. 4.

‘Kaam’ (passions, lust and yearnings for sense gratification), ‘Krodha’ (anger, vehemence, wrathfulness), ‘Mada’ (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy), and ‘Matsarya’ (jealousy, ill-will, malice) are like frogs. A woman is like the rainy season which makes these frogs (representing the above mentioned four vices) cheerful—i.e. these negative qualities are encouraged, fostered and motivated to become active and dominant over the creature when he becomes passionate about a woman, longing for her and her company.

All his wisdom, rationality, morality, sense of propriety, sobriety and conscientiousness are thrown to the wind when he is overcome with lust and aroused by passions for a woman. (3).

Bad Vasanas (bad desires, especially those related to the senses and their urge for gratification) are like the cluster of water lilies<sup>1</sup>, and she (the woman) is equivalent to autumn to make them bloom and feel very happy.

[The bad Vasanas are fostered and bolstered by the thought and company of a woman. The woman is regarded as a personified form of Vasanas—passions, lust and desire for sexual gratification.] (4)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The water lily develops and blooms during autumn. The metaphor is employed to emphasise how a woman stokes passions and yearning for sexual gratification in a man. It is a natural phenomenon like the lily blooming automatically during the autumn seasons even without any request to do so.]

धर्म सकल सरसीरुह बृन्दा । होइ हिम तिन्हहि दहइ सुख मंदा ॥ ५ ॥  
पुनि ममता जवास बहुताई । पलुहइ नारि सिसिर रितु पाई ॥ ६ ॥

dharma sakala sarasīruha bṛndā. hō'i hima tinhahi daha'i sukha mandā. 5.  
puni mamatā javāsa bahutā'ī. paluha'i nāri sisira ritu pā'ī. 6.

All the Dharma (good virtues and auspicious qualities) are like clusters of lotus flowers, and the lowly and mean woman is like the chilly winter season when snow begins to fall, killing the lotus<sup>1</sup>. (5)

Then again, the company of a woman is like the winter season that promotes a dense growth of barley plants symbolizing 'Mamta' (infatuations, attachments, attractions, endearment etc.) that bloom and flourish during this season<sup>2</sup>. (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The auspicious and virtuous characters in a man are compared to the lotus flower because this flower is deemed to remain clean inspite of living in the dirty water of a pond. Here this pond and its dirty water are equivalent to the world and its numerous taints and corruptions. A man manages to retain his principles of Dharma inspite of having to live in a world full of impurities if he is careful and conscientious. But if a woman comes in his life then this Dharma is sure to wither away and die like the lotus flower withering and dying in winter when snow falls. As in the case of lilies, this is also a natural phenomenon.

<sup>2</sup>The barley plant is sown in the winter season, and is harvested later. This metaphor stresses that the company of a woman creates all those emotions that come under the overall definition of Mamta—i.e. infatuations, attachments, attractions, endearment etc. A person cannot keep himself free from these traits once he is attached to a woman.]

पाप उलूक निकर सुखकारी । नारि निबिड़ रजनी अँधिआरी ॥ ७ ॥  
बुधि बल सील सत्य सब मीना । बनसी सम त्रिय कहहिं प्रबीना ॥ ८ ॥

pāpa ulūka nikara sukhakārī. nāri nibiṛa rajanī aṁdhi'ārī. 7.  
budhi bala sīla satya saba mīnā. banasī sama triya kahahim prabīnā. 8.

For the group of owls representing all sorts of sins, a woman is akin to the darkness of the night when they become active<sup>1</sup>. (7)

Wise men assert that a woman is like the fishing rod that is used to catch fish symbolized by such glorious virtues as one's Buddhi (intellect), Bal (strength, vigour, vitality), Sheel (various auspicious virtues and character such as politeness, sobriety, civility, courteousness etc.), and Satya (truthfulness)<sup>2</sup>. (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The owl becomes active during the darkness of night. The 'darkness of the night' stands for all delusions and ignorance as well as everything that is unrighteous,

illegal, inauspicious, unholy, unethical and improper. The owl represents a man who indulges in all sorts of evil deeds just to please the woman of his passionate desires and keep her under his control. He will go to any length to charm the woman with whom he is infatuated, throwing all guard to the wind. He acts surreptitiously and cunningly, is full of pretensions and deceit, uses all means, good or bad, that come to his mind to woo her and court her into submission, and then keep a tight grip on her, all of which are metaphorically symbolized by the owl who sees in the darkness of the night instead of the light of the sun—because a man who is overwhelmed by passions and lust loses all sense of bearing, and his wisdom, rationality and intelligent thinking powers are pushed aside to give way to base sensual instincts and passions that are aroused by the woman.

<sup>2</sup>A man loses his morality, strength of character, his ability to think rationally and wisely, his politeness and sober behaviour, and to be truthful and honest once he allows himself to be trapped by the bait thrown by a woman. The passion, lust and desire for sensual pleasure that comes with association of woman are such an overwhelming proposition that a man's wisdom and intellect are eclipsed, and instead, delusions, moral decadence and mental turpitude take over.]

दो०. अवगुन मूल सूलप्रद प्रमदा सब दुख खानि ।

ताते कीन्ह निवारन मुनि मैं यह जियँ जानि ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

avaguna mūla sūlaprada pramadā saba dukha khāni.  
tātē kīnha nivārana muni mair̥ṃ yaha jiyam̐ jāni. 44.

A young woman is like a root from which arise all sorts of bad habits, characters and qualities (like so many shoots of a tree). She is the cause of all sorts of worldly and spiritual miseries, entanglements and torments (that rob the man of his peace and happiness). She is like the treasure trove that opens the Pandora's Box of all sorrows, grief and horrors for the man (who falls in her trap and becomes infatuated with her).<sup>1</sup> (Doha no. 44)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>A careless reading of the above teaching of Lord Ram will lead to the wrong deduction that women are being derided and insulted. This is not the case at all. The teaching must be understood in the correct context and the proper perspective.

Narad was not a householder; he was a Parivrajak, a Sanyasi, and a sage who is expected to remain aloof from and untainted by such emotions as getting infatuated with a woman, and from becoming passionate enough to desire to marry her at any cost, and when denied this opportunity, to lose his patience and go the extent of committing a sin by cursing the benevolent and loving Lord God himself who was simply trying to protect the devotee from falling into a trap, as Narad unfortunately did. For a Sanyasi it is completely unacceptable to think of women, let alone to have a desire to marry her and become mad after her, as Narad was.

This same story of Lord Ram known as the Ram Charit Manas is rich with instances of women of immense virtues and glories, such as Ahilya who was in the form of a stone due to some curse but was provided liberation by Lord Ram by the touch of his holy feet. Then we have Anusuiya who was a wife of sage Atri and had

blessed Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram, herself. Then there was Arundhati, the wife of sage Vasistha who was the court priest and preceptor of the dynasty in which Lord Ram was born. Mandodari, the wife of the demon king Ravana, too was a wise woman who had known the truth of Lord Ram not being an ordinary man but the Supreme Being himself.

What more, even Sita herself had come out unscathed from the raging fire to prove her chastity and purity inspite of living in Lanka in captivity of a demon king who was lustful.

Therefore, the idea is not at all to insult a woman or womanhood, but to drive home the point that one must not fall prey to lust and passions so much so that he overlooks the advice of his wisdom, intellect and mind on the one hand, and transgresses the principles of conduct ordained for a Sanyasi once he has selected this way of living in his life as Narad had chosen. For a Sanyasi and a sage it is not at all advisable to fall prey to passions, lust, infatuations and desires for sensual pleasures that Narad had been victim of.]

चौ०. सुनि रघुपति के बचन सुहाए । मुनि तन पुलक नयन भरि आए ॥ १ ॥  
कहहु कवन प्रभु कै असि रीती । सेवक पर ममता अरु प्रीती ॥ २ ॥  
जे न भजहिं अस प्रभु भ्रम त्यागी । ग्यान रंक नर मंद अभागी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunī raghupati kē bacana suhā'ē. muni tana pulaka nayana bhari ā'ē. 1.  
kahahu kavana prabhu kai asi rītī. sēvaka para mamatā aru prītī. 2.  
jē na bhajahim asa prabhu bhrama tyāgī. gyāna rañka nara manda abhāgī. 3.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram ('Raghupati'), Narad's body was thrilled and tears welled up in his eyes. [Why—because Narad finally realised how much the Lord cared for his well-being, and how much he loved him that the Lord preferred to suffer in the body of a human being due to the sage's curse but not let the sage fall in the trap of passions and lust.] (1)

He thought to himself—'Say, which Lord is as gracious and kind as to have such great love and care for his follower and devotee as Lord Ram! (2)

He who does not have devotion and affection for such a gracious and kind Lord is indeed of a bankrupt intellect and mind, is most lowly and unfortunate.' (3)

पुनि सादर बोले मुनि नारद । सुनहु राम बिग्यान बिसारद ॥ ४ ॥  
संतन्ह के लच्छन रघुबीरा । कहहु नाथ भव भंजन भीरा ॥ ५ ॥

puni sādara bōlē muni nārada. sunahu rāma bigyāna bisārada. 4.  
santanha kē lacchana raghubīrā. kahahu nātha bhava bhanjana bhīrā. 5.

Sage Narad said to Lord Ram once again—'Oh Lord Ram, the wisest amongst the wise ones, and the most erudite Lord!' (4)

Narad said to Lord Ram—‘Oh Lord Raghubir (Ram)! You are the destroyer or eliminator or dispeller of the fear of this world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death from which a creature suffers. Please tell me about the virtues and character of saints and pious souls.’<sup>2</sup> (5)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Narad has now realised that Lord Ram is wise and erudite. The Lord knew that it was unacceptable for a Sanyasi to marry, but Narad who had prided himself for his wisdom did not realise what a despicable deed he was about to do when he fell head over heels for the woman he wished to marry and then lose his cool so much as to curse the Lord to become a human being and suffer the agony of separation from a woman—the reason why Sita was abducted and Lord Ram had to spend a lot of time wailing and searching for her. Actually this conduct of Lord Ram had confused Narad in the first place, that he wished to learn why the Lord had prevented him from marrying when he himself is wailing and so worried for a woman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 41.

<sup>2</sup>The auspicious virtues and noble character of saints has been described by Lord Ram to Bharat, his younger brother, along with other citizens in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 38. We shall read them by-and-by when we reach that part of the Story.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and hence is the Lord who is indeed able to free the tormented creature from all his fears. It is only as long as the creature remains separated from the Lord that he has to fear from the trap laid by the world and the cycle of birth and death. Once a creature finds closeness with the supreme Liberator and Vanquisher of all worries, obviously there remains no cause for more fear in him.]

सुनु मुनि संतन्ह के गुन कहऊँ । जिन्ह ते मैं उन्ह कें बस रहऊँ ॥ ६ ॥  
षट बिकार जित अनघ अकामा । अचल अकिंचन सुचि सुखधामा ॥ ७ ॥

sunu muni santanha kē guna kaha'ūṁ. jinha tē mair̥ unha kēm basa raha'ūṁ. 6.

ṣaṭa bikāra jita anagha akāmā. acala akiñcana suci sukhadhāmā. 7.

Lord Ram replied—‘Oh sage, now listen! I shall narrate the noble characters and good virtues of saints and pious souls by the virtue of which I am humbled by them.

[To wit, by the auspicious qualities that the saints possess they are able to bring the Lord under their command in a polite way just as a wise man is able to subdue the king and make the latter humble before himself.]<sup>1</sup> (6)

The saints and pious souls have conquered (i.e. have eliminated) the six legendary spiritual faults<sup>2</sup> that taint the creature and prevent his spiritual elevation.

They are free from sins and have no trace of Kaam (worldly passion, lust, desire).

They are steady and constant in their spiritual path, have a steady mind and a focused intellect that prevents any kind of wavering or dithering for even a moment.

They have inculcated the grand virtue of total and sincere dispassion, detachment and renunciation.

They are pure and incorrupt, internally and externally.

They are therefore deemed to be an abode (i.e. a personified form) of happiness, peace and bliss. (7)

[Note—Lord Ram has enumerated the grand and auspicious virtues and characters of true saints elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 38. We find that more or less the eclectic virtues and qualities that are being described to sage Narad by Lord Ram in the current verses are also reiterated by the Lord to Bharat in the aforesaid verses.

<sup>2</sup>The six faults or shortcomings in one's character are the following—(i) 'Kaam' or lust, yearning and passions as well as worldly desires; (ii) 'Krodha' or anger, wrathfulness and being vehement; (iii) 'Lobha' or greed and rapacity; (iv) 'Moha' or infatuations, attractions, longing, attachments etc.; (v) 'Mada' or haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy; and (vi) 'Matsarya' or jealousy, ill-will, malice, envy.

According to the *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition, and *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 10 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the six faults, which are considered as enemies of a man, are the following—Kaam, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsarya.]

अमितबोध अनीह मितभोगी । सत्यसार कबि कोबिद जोगी ॥ ८ ॥

सावधान मानद मदहीना । धीर धर्म गति परम प्रबीना ॥ ९ ॥

amitabōdha anīha mitabhōgī. satyasāra kabi kōbida jōgī. 8.

sāvadhāna mānada madahīnā. dhīra dharma gati parama prabīnā. 9.

Such saints and pious souls have immense wisdom and are highly enlightened.

They have no desires and wants whatsoever.

They remain contented in whatever comes their way, and can cheerfully do with the bare necessities of life, without harbouring any yearning for anything more.

They are steadfast in following the path of truthfulness; they are firm in their principles that think of nothing else but truth.

They are like wise, learned and erudite ascetics. [Ascetics follow the path of truth, and practice meditation and contemplation. They are not at all concerned by the world and its corruptions, but focus their attention on their inner-self to experience the presence of the Consciousness inside their own bosom. They are able to exercise exemplary self-control over their sense organs of perception as well as action. They have no desires and wants, nor any sort of hopes and expectations from this world. From the perspective of spiritualism they are the ones who have attained true realisation of the truth because they have witnessed the presence of the Atma in their own self, and the accompanying bliss, ecstasy and contentedness.] (8)

Saints and pious souls are very careful (in everything they do and think).

They give due respect, honour and credit to others.

They do not have any sense of pride and ego.

They have resilience and forbearance; they are patient, tolerant and courageous.

They are experts in the principles of Dharma (i.e. principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility, ethics and morality), and diligently follow this path. [They are steady in the righteous path of Dharma that they have chosen to follow, and make it a point to carefully and diligently follow it without wavering and demurring.]<sup>1</sup> (9)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 38 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that virtually say the same thing as taught by the Lord to Narad here.]

दो०. गुनागार संसार दुख रहित बिगत संदेह ।  
तजि मम चरन सरोज प्रिय तिन्ह कहूँ देह न गेह ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

gunāgāra sansāra dukha rahita bigata sandēha.  
taji mama carana sarōja priya tinha kahum̐ dēha na gēha. 45.

Saints and pious souls are a treasure-trove of good and auspicious virtues and characters.

They are free from all the miseries, sorrows and torments associated with this mundane world<sup>1</sup>.

They are wise, enlightened and self-realised so much so that they are free from all confusions, doubts, perplexities, consternations and vexations.

Except my holy lotus-like feet, they have affection for neither their own body nor their household, or for that matter, anything else<sup>2</sup>. (Doha no. 45)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are countless fears and miseries related to this mundane mortal world. According to *Mudgal Upanishad*, 4/7 of the Rig Veda tradition, they are the following:--(1) hunger, (2) thirst, (3) grief, (4) Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations leading to a chain of problems and entrapments), (5) horrors of old age, and (6) death.

<sup>2</sup>To wit, true saints are totally devoted to worshipping me and my holy feet, and nothing is dearer to them than this. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38 that reiterates the same idea.]

चौ०. निज गुन श्रवन सुनत सकुचाहीं । पर गुन सुनत अधिक हरषाहीं ॥ १ ॥  
सम सीतल नहिं त्यागहिं नीती । सरल सुभाउ सबहि सन प्रीती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nija guna śravaṇa sunata sakucāhīm. para guna sunata adhika haraṣāhīm. 1.  
sama sītala nahim̐ tyāgahim̐ nīti. sarala subhā'u sabahi sana prīti. 2.



True saints and pious souls<sup>1</sup> feel hesitant or shy when they hear themselves being praised and honoured, but feel happy when they hear about the goodness and glories of other.

[This is because they are humble and polite, and are not jealous of other people. Information about other people's goodness and glories is like music for their ears because this awareness generates a positive energy in their own mind and heart. Just like bad news irritates a man, good news should make him feel happy—of course if he is not jealous of the happiness of others, for otherwise this good news will have the same negative impact on his inner-self as actual hearing of a bad news.] (1)

The saints and pious souls are even-minded, have equanimity, forbearance and tolerance. Therefore, they remain calm, poised, unruffled, placid and tranquil inspite of all the turmoil and provocations that they have to face. Verily, they never abandon the right path and the right course under any circumstance.

They are simple, polite, humble and unpretentious by their inherent nature.

They are friendly towards all, and love all the creatures. (2)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The present teaching of Lord Ram describing the virtues of true saints is in favour of sage Narad. The Lord has taught on the same subject, i.e. what are the qualities of saints and how do they differ from non-saints, to Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 38 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it. These verses reflect the same characters of true saints that Lord Ram narrates to Narad here.

Briefly, it is stressed in these lines that a saint is one who “has exemplary dispassion towards the sense objects and their sensual temptations in this world; has equanimity and forbearance; is a true renunciate who has inculcated the virtues of complete dispassion, detachment and non-involvement with anything that is concerned with the gross world of material sense objects and its temptations; he has no greed and desires; he neither feels elated or depressed as he practices equanimity and tolerance; he has no fear of any kind; he is kind, gracious, compassionate, polite; he is free from the influences of Maya (delusions); he feels sad when he sees others unhappy, and happy when he sees others also happy; he gives respect to all others but remains humble himself, expecting no honour or praises for himself; he is calm and composed, polite and cheerful; is simple, humble, unpretentious and friendly; he remains unmoved, calm and poised whether he is being criticized or praised.”

It should also be noted that these auspicious virtues are also present in devotees of the Lord, and if we examine Lord Ram's listing of nine forms of Bhakti that he taught Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36, we will find a remarkable resemblance between the virtues of saints and those of devotees of the Lord. That is the reason why Lord Ram says that both saints and devotees are very close and dear to his heart—reference: (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36; (iii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 38; (iv) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 114.]

जप तप ब्रत दम संजम नेमा । गुरु गोबिंद बिप्र पद प्रेमा ॥ ३ ॥

श्रद्धा छमा मयत्री दाया । मुदिता मम पद प्रीति अमाया ॥ ४ ॥

japa tapa brata dama sanjama nēmā. guru gōbinda bipra pada prēmā. 3.  
śrad'dhā chamā mayatrī dāyā. muditā mama pada prīti amāyā. 4.

The saints and pious souls are very particular to be diligent in following the auspicious path as advised by the scriptures, such as to do Japa (repetition of the Lord's holy name), Tapa (doing penance and observing austerity), Brat (keeping vows and steadfastly following the path of righteousness and probity no matter what comes), Dam and Sanyam (observing or practicing self-restraint of the sense organs and the mind), and Nem (faithfully keeping the right religious path and observing sacraments and other religious observances).

They should have affection and dedication for the holy feet of the Guru (their moral preceptor, guide and teacher), Govind (Lord God), and Vipra (Brahmins; the learned and elderly in society). [The idea is that they should be ready to serve them faithfully and diligently, with eagerness and cheer, and not as a burden on them. This service will stand them in good stead because when the teacher, the Lord and the learned Brahmin are pleased with them, they will bless the saint with all good virtues and long-term well-being.] (3)

The saints and pious souls should have the following auspicious virtues in them—they must have 'Shraddha' (faith and trust in the Lord and in their Atma, the pure Consciousness that represents the Supreme Consciousness known as Brahm residing in their own self), 'Kshama' (the grand virtue of forgiveness), 'Mayatri' (friendship, brotherhood), and 'Daya' (mercy, compassion).

They should be always 'Mudita' (to remain always cheerful and happy; to not feel depressed and unhappy).

They should have affection and dedication in my (Lord Ram's) holy feet. [It must be remembered here that Lord Ram is not trying to eulogise himself and preaching self-praise by telling others to bow before him and pay their obeisance to him as if he were some emperor who will punish the non-worshipper. Lord Ram is not a human being that this can be expected from him. He is an incarnate Supreme Being who is advising the world what to do and what to avoid if one wishes to be counted as being a saintly and holy person who is worthy of respect and honour.]

They should be free from all 'Maya' (delusions and their attendant problems).  
(4)

बिरति बिबेक बिनय बिग्याना । बोध जथारथ बेद पुराना ॥ ५ ॥

दंभ मान मद करहिं न काऊ । भूलि न देहिं कुमारग पाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

birati bibēka binaya bigyānā. bōdha jathāratha bēda purānā. 5.  
dambha māna mada karahim na kā'ū. bhūli na dēhim kumāraga pā'ū. 6.

The saints and pious souls should also have the following auspicious and grand virtues in them—'Virati' (detachment and dispassion from all attachments and gross sense objects of the mundane world, their pleasures and comforts, desire for self-gratification, etc.), 'Vivek' (wisdom, rationality, power to discriminate between the wrong and the right), 'Vinai' (politeness, humility, civility, courteousness, dignity), and 'Vigyan' (analytical mind and intellect, insight, deep understanding),

They should have a ‘Bodha’<sup>1</sup> (awareness and understanding) of what are the true and essential teachings of the primary ancient scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (5)

The saints and pious souls should never have even a trace of such negative qualities as ‘Dambha’ (pretensions, deceit, conceit, wickedness, crookedness, cunning, falsehood and lies), ‘Maan’ and ‘Mada’ (pride, ego, vanity, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy etc.).

They must never, even by mistake, put their feet in a path that is unholy, unrighteous, inauspicious, improper, corrupt, unethical and immoral.

[Which is such a path? The simple answer is that path which is not sanctioned by the scriptures, when one’s inner voice of conscience revolts should one inadvertently step on a path or wishes to follow it under worldly temptations, is the path that all true saints are ordained to avoid as it was a poison for them. Any deed or action, any thought and view, anything in life that is not good for the spiritual welfare and upliftment of the creature, any path that leads to his entrapment instead of freedom, is the wrong path for him.] (6)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word *Bodha* can be added to the list of other independent virtues such as Virati, Vivek, Vinai and Vigyan. In this case, ‘Bodha’ would mean enlightenment and realisation of the truth of the ‘self’ as the pure conscious soul known as the Atma, that this individual soul is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Soul known as the Parmatma, and that true liberation and deliverance is freedom from ignorance and delusions that had hitherto prevented this enlightenment and realisation.]

गावहिं सुनहिं सदा मम लीला । हेतु रहित परहित रत सीला ॥ ७ ॥

मुनि सुनु साधुन के गुन जेते । कहि न सकहिं सारद श्रुति तेते ॥ ८ ॥

gāvahim sunahim sadā mama līlā. hētu rahita parahita rata sīlā. 7.  
muni sunu sādhunha kē guna jētē. kahi na sakahim sārada śruti tētē. 8.

Saints and pious souls should spend their time in singing, narrating and preaching, as well as hearing and discussing my divine deeds and stories<sup>1</sup>.

They are always eager to do well of others in a kind and gracious manner, without any consideration or reward in mind, without exploiting such help later on to put some pressure on the person helped earlier, or to go around boasting of their good deed or action to get milage from it.

[To wit, they do not help others with vested interest in mind. They do not expect to be reciprocated later on. They do not help others to oblige them, but out of their inherent temperament to be kind and helpful towards others who are in need and are distressed. They believe that by helping others and alleviating their suffering to the best of their abilities, they are serving the Lord God—because they have developed a holistic view of existence in as much as they see the same Atma in all the creatures, and know that this Atma is nothing but their Lord in an invisible and subtle form. So, they believe that helping others is equivalent to serving the Lord directly. That is why they are polite and courteous when helping others—as they are undertaking this auspicious deed out of their own free will and not out of compulsion,

and therefore they should not be rude and insult the Atma of the person they are helping because that would be tantamount to insulting the Lord.] (7)

Listen sage (Narad)! The virtues and glories of saints and pious persons are so immense and intense that they cannot sufficiently be narrated and explained even by Saarad (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of knowledge, wisdom, speech) and the Srutis (Vedas, so called because they were transmitted by the process of speaking and hearing). (8)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-4; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8, 11 that precede Doha no. 16; and (iii) Doha no. 35.

The spiritual importance and the eternal value of the story of Lord Ram, known as 'Ram Charit Manas', has been enumerated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 34; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 43.]

छं०. कहि सक न सारद सेश नारद सुनत पद पंकज गहे । १ ॥  
 अस दीनबंधु कृपाल अपने भगत गुन निज मुख कहे ॥ २ ॥  
 सिरु नाइ बारहिं बार चरनहि ब्रह्मपुर नारद गए । ३ ॥  
 ते धन्य तुलसीदास आस बिहाइ जे हरि रँग रँए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kahi saka na sārada sēṣa nārada sunata pada paṅkaja gahē. 1.  
 asa dīnabandhu kṛpāla apanē bhagata guna nija mukha kahē. 2.  
 siru nā'i bārahiṁ bāra carananhi brahmapura nārada ga'e. 3.  
 tē dhan'ya tulasīdāsa āsa bihā'i jē hari raṅga ramē. 4.

Listen Narad, neither Saarada nor Sesh (the celestial serpent known as Lord Seshnath) can enumerate the grand virtues of saints and sages who are pious souls.'

Narad clasped the holy feet of Lord Ram even as the Lord finished his teaching. In this way, the Lord who is a friend of the distressed and the downtrodden, who is ever so kind, gracious and merciful, has narrated and enumerated the glorious virtues of his devotees with his own mouth—so that there is no confusion about them, so that these virtues and qualities get a stamp of authority from the Lord himself. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

Thereafter, Narad repeatedly bowed his head at the august lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram, and then went on his way to the heaven where the abode of Brahma, the creator, is located. [Brahma is Narad's father.]

Tulsidas says that those persons who have abandoned all hopes and expectations from anyone else except Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu, whose incarnation is in the form of Lord Ram), and are steeped in Lord Ram's love and devotion, have complete reliance and faith in the Lord, are indeed blessed and fortunate! (Chanda line nos. 3-4).

दो०. रावनारि जसु पावन गावहिं सुनहिं जे लोग ।  
 राम भगति दृढ़ पावहिं बिनु बिराग जप जोग ॥ ४६ ( क ) ॥  
 दीप सिखा सम जुबति तन मन जनि होसि पतंग ।  
 भजहि राम तजि काम मद करहि सदा सतसंग ॥ ४६ ( ख ) ॥

dōhā.

rāvanāri jasu pāvana gāvahiṁ sunahiṁ jē lōga.  
 rāma bhagati dṛṛha pāvahiṁ binu birāga japa jōga. 46 (a).  
 dīpa sikhā sama jubati tana mana jani hōsi pataṅga.  
 bhajahi rāma taji kāma mada karahi sadā satasaṅga. 46 (b).

Verily indeed, those who listen to and sing the glories of Lord Ram, who was the vanquisher of the enemy (of the world) called Ravana, the king of the demon race, then such persons are sure to attain the spiritual reward of having a sturdy devotion for the Lord (who was a personified form of the Supreme Being), even if they can't follow or practice any other means— such as having Vairagya (renunciation and detachment from this material world), or doing Japa (repetition of Mantras, which are spiritual formulas) and Yoga (meditation and contemplation to bring about a union between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram)— to attain their spiritual objectives.

[To wit, the best spiritual reward that a seeker would want to have is to be able to develop steady and sturdy virtue of Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram. This spiritual aim can be easily and very conveniently attained by singing or narrating, as well as listening to the divine Story of Lord Ram. Though there are other methods too, such as Vairagya, Japa and Yoga, but they are often times beyond the reach of the ordinary man, for they are difficult to practice, and require a lot of effort and diligence if one wishes to be successful in them. Compared to these tough and often too cumbersome methods, singing and listening to Lord Ram's glories and his stories is a very easy and simple method.] (Doha no. 46-a)

[Summarizing what Lord Ram had just told Narad why the Lord prevented the sage from falling into the trap of marrying a damsel, the poet Tulsidas makes the following observation while addressing his own mind—] 'Oh my mind ("Mana")! Remember this: The body of a young lady is like a lighted lamp that attracts insects, but these insects get burnt if they are lured by this charm and get too close to the lighted wick of the lamp.

So therefore, be careful and wary of falling into this snare. If you ('mind') want to have eternal peace and happiness in this life, if you wish to retain your integrity and calmness, then abandon such deprecating thoughts related to lust, passions and desire for gratification of sensual urges arising from carnal desires and yearning for physical pleasures (that you wish to have in the company of a young woman). Instead of it, you must always keep company of saints (because there you would hear the glories of Lord Ram being sung on a regular basis, and this company would also inculcate in you noble virtues that would in their turn grant you eternal peace and happiness.' (Doha no. 46-b)

[PAUSE 22 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

इति श्रीमद्रामचरितमानसे सकलकलिकलुषवि.वंसने  
तृतीयः सोपानः समाप्तः ।

(अरण्यकाण्ड समाप्त)

iti śrīmadrāmacaritamānasē sakalakalikaluṣavidhvansanē

tr̥tīyaḥ sōpānaḥ samāptaḥ.

(end of araṇya-kāṇḍa)

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---To be continued in Volume 4, Canto 4, Kishkindha Kand ---

## About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) [www.pothi.com](http://www.pothi.com) (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) [www.draft2digital.com](http://www.draft2digital.com) (in 'e-book' version).

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi Ramayan" based on Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) "Narad Bhakti Sutra"—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) "Shandilya Bhakti Sutra"—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) "Bhakti Sutra Mala"—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the

form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram's Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) "Sundar Kand" of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) 'Dohawali'; (2) 'Parvati Mangal'; (3) 'Kavitawali'; (4) 'Janki Mangal'; (5) 'Ram Lala Nahachu'; (6) 'Geetawali Ramayan'; (7) 'Vairagya Sandipani'; (8) 'Vinai Patrika'; (9) 'Barvai Ramayan'.

(A-3) A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', otherwise also known as the "Ramayana" according to Goswami Tulsidas. My English version of this Book is comprehensive and an elaborate one, as it runs into many thousands of pages that endeavour to explain each single verse of the Book 'Ram Charit Manas' in fine detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

(A-4) Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.

(A-5) (i) English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.  
(ii) English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.  
(iii) English rendering of Devi Puran's Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.  
(iv) A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name.

All the Author's Books listed under (A-1, A-2 and A-3) are available as e-books and printed books on the internet at the following websites: (a) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com); (b) [www.draft2digital.com](http://www.draft2digital.com); and (c) [www.pothi.com](http://www.pothi.com).

(B-1) Further, Books listed under A-3, A-4 and A-5 are available in Printed Book format from a reputed Indian Publisher as follows:

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(B-2) The following Books of Goswami Tulsidas listed under A-2—viz. Vinay Patrika, Geetawali Ramayan, Kavitaawali Ramayan, Dohawali, Parvati Mangal, Janki Mangal, Vairagya Sandipani, Barvai Ramayan, Ram Lala Nahachu, along with certain other Books (e.g. Upanishads Dedicated to Lord Ram, Shandilya Bhakti Sutra, Narad Bhakti Sutra etc.) are being published by the following Indian Publisher:

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