

Volume 6

ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA
Of
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Canto 6: Laṅkā-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. 6 has the Sixth Canto of the Book: viz. Lanka Kand.

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

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 3: Ram Charit Manas, Canto 3: Aranya Kand

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

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

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

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Laṅkā-Kāṇḍa

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

- (1) Invocation : Shloka line nos. 1-5.
- (2) The bridge across the ocean was built, and Lord Ram's army landed on the soil of Lanka, the capital of the demon kingdom led by its king Ravana; the army pitched its camp on Mt. Subel : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.
- (3) Lord Ram, Laxman, Sugriv and others surveyed the area from atop this mountain; when the news of the arrival of Lord Ram with his huge army of valiant monkey and bear warriors reached Mandodari, the wife of the demon king Ravana, she made a futile attempt to dissuade her husband from continuing his hostility with the Lord, and instead sue for peace in order to avoid a disastrous war : Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Doha no. 16.
- (4) Lord Ram sent Angad as his emissary to the court of Ravana in a last attempt to make peace; a heated argument ensued between Angad and Ravana, at the end of which Angad trounced Ravana's vain pride and returned to Lord Ram with the news that there was no scope at all for making peace : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35.
- (5) Mandodari makes another futile attempt to make Ravana see the danger of waging a deadly war that would lead to his own ruin; the war starts in right earnest with the monkey and bears launching a fierce assault on the city of Lanka; the tumult in the city; the demons strike back and push the invading army backwards; the brave monkey and bear warriors recover and reverse the initial setback by beating the

demons back once again; at nightfall the first day's battle ends : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Doha no. 47.

(6) The battles resumes the next day at dawn; Meghanad, the invincible son of Ravana, takes to the battle-field; a ferocious battle ensues; Laxman falls unconscious by the arrow shot at him by Meghanad; this was the 2nd day of the war : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Doha no. 54.

(7) Hanuman is dispatched to the northern mountains in the Himalayas to bring a medicinal herb that would revive Laxman; Hanuman quickly reaches the place where the herb was located, but unable to recognize the exact plant he uprooted the whole block of the hill-like rock and lifted it on his palm to return to Lanka where Laxman lay unconscious on the ground; while on his way back, Hanuman flew over Ayodhya where he meets Bharat; upon his return, the correct herb was administered to Laxman and he immediately sat up; there was jubilation in Lord Ram's camp : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 55—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62.

(8) When Ravana came to know that Laxman has been revived back to life, he was dumbfounded and crestfallen as this marked the first failure of his son Meghanad to eliminate his enemy in any of the wars he had fought in his long life; Ravana forced Kumbhakaran, his younger brother, to join the war, which the latter very reluctantly agreed to do, even severely admonishing Ravana for his madness in fighting against Lord Ram; a fierce battle ensued between Kumbhakaran and Lord Ram, and in the end the demon was slayed by the Lord; this was his first big setback of the war for Ravana; this marked the end of the 3rd day of the war : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 72.

(9) Meghanad comforted his father Ravana and assured him that in the next day's battle (the 4th day) he would teach the enemy a very bitter lesson of his life; unable to subdue the Lord's army even after a full day's ferocious and relentless battle, Meghanad decided to do a fire sacrifice in the night to enable him to get extra powers to defeat the enemy the next day; when this news arrived in Lord Ram's camp, Laxman was dispatched with chosen warriors to tackle Meghanad; in the ensuing duel Meghanad was slayed by Laxman; this marked the 5th day of the war : Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 76.

(10) With the death of Meghanad, and earlier of Kumbhakaran, Ravana was completely devastated, and he had a premonition of an imminent defeat; Mandodari made the last desperate attempt to persuade Ravana to stop hostility with Lord Ram to preserve himself; but like a person smarting from grave insults and defeats the taste of which he had never ever been acquainted with, and who has nothing more to lose than what he has already lost, Ravana plunged into the battle himself on the 6th day of the war with a formidable ferocity, unmatched valour and dare devilry that a person facing a do-or-die situation would display. During this last and final phase of the epic War of Lanka that lasted for the next few days, a vicious and bloody battle raged between Ravana and his army on one side, and Lord Ram's army on the opposite side in the beginning of this final phase, and a ferocious face-to-face battle took place between Ravana and Lord Ram himself in the last stage of the war, at the end of which Ravana was finally slayed on the 8th day of the war. The gods celebrate Lord Ram's victory : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 77—to Doha no. 103.

(11) Mandodari lamented grievously; after the last rites of Ravana were completed, Vibhishan was appointed as the next king of Lanka; Sita was reunited with Lord Ram; gods prayed to Lord Ram and thanked him for delivering them from the scourge of the cruel demons led by Ravana; Lord Ram and his party board the airplane known as 'Pushpak' to return to Ayodhya : Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104—to Doha no. 121.

With this we come to the end of the present Canto no. 6 called the 'Lanka Kand'. What happened thereafter will be described in the next Volume no. 7 that contains Canto no. 7 which is called the 'Uttar Kand', and it is the last Canto of Ram Charit Manas.

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA
of
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Canto 6: Laṅkā-Kāṇḍa

Preface

The Story so far: Lord Ram and his formidable army of valiant monkey and bear warriors arrived at the shore of the ocean, and on the advise of the deity of the ocean it was decided that a floating bridge would be constructed across the vast expanse of the water to take the colossus army to the island of Lanka which was the capital of the demon race led by their king Ravana, and where Sita was incarcerated.

Now, in this Canto no. 6 called the ‘Lanka Kand’, we shall read about the famous Epic War of Lanka.

When the bridge was completed, Lord Ram consecrated a ‘Shiva Lingam’, which is an idol of Lord Shiva, for Shiva was revered by Lord Ram and was the Lord’s favourite deity. After worshipping Lord Shiva and invoking his blessings and grace, Lord Ram and his army embarked on the mission to vanquish the demons and free Sita by crossing over to the other side of the ocean over the floating bridge constructed by them, and reach the soil of Lanka. The army pitched its camp on Mt. Subel. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.}

Lord Ram, Laxman, Sugriv and others surveyed the area from atop this mountain; when the news of the arrival of Lord Ram with his huge army of valiant monkey and bear warriors reached Mandodari, the wife of the demon king Ravana, she made a futile attempt to dissuade her husband from continuing his hostility with the Lord, and instead sue for peace in order to avoid a disastrous war. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Doha no. 16.}

Lord Ram sent Angad as his emissary to the court of Ravana in a last attempt to make peace. A heated argument ensued between Angad and Ravana, at the end of which Angad trounced Ravana’s vain pride and returned to Lord Ram with the news that there was no scope at all for making peace. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35.}

Mandodari makes another futile attempt to make Ravana see the danger of waging a deadly war that would lead to his own ruin. The war starts in right earnest with the monkey and bears launching a fierce assault on the city of Lanka; the tumult in the city. The demons strike back and push the invading army backwards, but the brave monkey and bear warriors recover soon and reverse the initial setback by beating the

demons back once again. At nightfall the first day's battle ends. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Doha no. 47.}

The battles resumes the next day at dawn. Meghanad, the invincible son of Ravana, takes to the battle-field. A ferocious battle ensues, at the end of which Laxman falls unconscious by the arrow shot at him by Meghanad. This was the 2nd day of the war. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Doha no. 54.}

Hanuman is dispatched to the northern mountains in the Himalayas to bring a medicinal herb that would revive Laxman. Hanuman quickly reaches the place where the herb was located, but unable to recognize the exact plant he uprooted the whole block of the hill-like rock and lifted it on his palm to return to the ground in Lanka where Laxman lay unconscious on the ground. While on his way back, Hanuman flew over Ayodhya where he met Bharat. Upon his return, the correct herb was administered to Laxman and he immediately sat up. There was jubilation in Lord Ram's camp. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 55—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

When Ravana came to know that Laxman has been revived back to life, he was dumbfounded and crestfallen as this marked the first failure of his son Meghanad to eliminate his enemy in any of the wars he had fought in his long life. Ravana forced Kumbhakaran, his younger brother, to join the war, which the latter very reluctantly agreed to do, even severely admonishing Ravana for his madness in fighting against Lord Ram. A fierce, no-holds barred and blood-curdling battle ensued between Kumbhakaran and Lord Ram, and in the end the demon was slayed by the Lord. This was his first big setback of the war for Ravana. It marked the end of the 3rd day of the war. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 72.}

Meghanad comforted his father Ravana and assured him that in the next day's battle (the 4th day) he would teach the enemy a very bitter lesson on its life. Unable to subdue the Lord's army even after a full day's ferocious and relentless battle, Meghanad decided to do a fire sacrifice in the night to enable him to get extra powers to defeat the enemy the next day. When this news arrived in Lord Ram's camp, Laxman was dispatched with chosen warriors to tackle Meghanad. In the ensuing duel Meghanad was slayed by Laxman. This marked the 5th day of the war. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 76.}

With the death of Meghanad, and earlier of Kumbhakaran, Ravana was completely devastated and had a premonition of imminent defeat because he lost two of his family members, one his son and another his brother, who had always been at his side through thick and thin of his long adventurous life. Mandodari made the last desperate attempt to persuade Ravana to stop hostility with Lord Ram to preserve himself, but like a person smarting from grave insults and defeats, the taste of which he had never ever been acquainted with, and who has nothing more to lose than what he has already lost, Ravana plunged into the battle himself with a formidable ferocity and unmatched valour that a person facing a do-or-die situation would display. The battle between Ravana and Lord Ram's army in the beginning, and between Ravana and Lord Ram himself at the later stages of this final phase of the war raged on for several days.

Ravana was finally slayed on the 8th day of the war. Then the gods celebrated Lord Ram's victory and showered flowers on him from the heavens. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 77—to Doha no. 103.}

Mandodari lamented grievously. After the last rites of Ravana were completed, Vibhishan was appointed as the next king of Lanka. Then Sita was reunited with Lord Ram. Gods prayed to Lord Ram and thanked him for delivering them from the scourge of the cruel demons led by Ravana. Lord Ram and his party board the airplane known as 'Pushpak' to return to Ayodhya. This marks the end of Lanka Kand. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104—to Doha no. 121.}

What happened thereafter will be described in the next Volume no. 7 that contains Canto no. 7 which is called the 'Uttar Kand', and it is the last Canto of Ram Charit Manas.

The remarkable aspect of this war from a spiritual perspective is that Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, had granted deliverance, emancipation, salvation, and eternal bliss and beatitude to the demon brothers Kumbhakaran*1 and Ravana*2. Not only them, but the Lord had been so exceptionally graceful that all the warriors who had died during the war were given the same treatment as the two brothers*3. In the case of Kumbhakaran and Ravana we would discover that they were granted special honour by Lord Ram, because when they died their souls emerged from their gross bodies to merge with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram himself. From a metaphysical perspective, this kind of destiny of the soul is the best sort one can expect to attain for one's self. It is called 'Moksha', the final and ultimate deliverance of the soul because after this end, there is no return into the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world, known as transmigration.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, *1 = Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 (Kumbhakaran).

*2 = Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103 (Ravana).

*3 = (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45 (chief demon warriors); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114 (general demon warriors).}

Another incident that is remarkable in Lanka Kand is the discourse that Lord Ram gave to Vibhishan on the battle-field of Lanka. In this discourse, the Lord describes a symbolic Chariot that a person can ride to achieve a sure success in life, and overcome difficulties that he or she may face during the course of their respective lives. It came to be known as the "Dharma Rath of Lord Ram". {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 80 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede it.}

That said, let us now commence with our narration and reading of this wonderful Chapter which describes the horrors of war, and how the Epic War of Lanka unfolded and ended.

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA
of
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Canto 6: Laṅkā-Kāṇḍa

षष्ठ सोपान
(लङ्काकाण्ड)

ŚrīRāmaCaritaMānasa

ṣaṣṭha sōpāna

(laṅkā-kāṇḍa)

श्लोक

रामं कामारिसेव्यं भवभयहरणं कालमत्तेभसिंहं
योगीन्द्रं ज्ञानगङ्गं गुणनिधिमजितं निर्गुणं निर्विकारम् । १ ।
मायातीतं सुरेशं खलवधनिरतं ब्रह्मवृन्दैकदेवं
वण्डे कण्दावदातं सरसिजनयनं देवमुर्वीशरूपम् ॥ २ ॥

ślōka.

rāmaṁ kāmāri-sēvyam bhavabhaya-haraṇam kālamattēbha-siṁhaṁ
yōgīndraṁ jñānagamyam guṇanidhim-ajitam nirguṇam nirvikāram. 1.
māyātītam surēśam khalavadha-niratam brahmavṛndaikadēvaṁ
vaṇḍe kaṇḍāvadātam sarasija-nayanam dēvamurviśarūpam. 2.

{Prayer to Lord Ram in order to invoke his blessings and grace. These verses outline some of the glorious virtues of Lord Ram.}

Lord Ram is worshipped, adored and revered by Lord Shiva who had vanquished Kamdeo (the patron god of passion, lust and worldly infatuations)¹.

Lord Ram eliminates the mortal fear that a living being suffers from due to the endless cycle of transmigration (i.e. of birth and death, together with its accompanying pains, grief and horrors) in this gross, mortal world².

Lord Ram is like a lion who can easily vanquish the fear from a wild and intoxicated elephant symbolizing Kaal (death and time) that torments a creature endlessly. [To wit, just like a lion is able to easily kill an elephant, no matter how wild, strong and intoxicated the latter is, Lord too is able to eliminate the fear of death and adverse times from which a creature suffers endlessly in this world. This implies that by taking shelter with Lord Ram and getting an assurance of the Lord's

protection, a creature is assured of peace, succour and solace even during tough and turbulent times in his life.]

Lord Ram is the Lord and the Master of Yogis (ascetics). [Since Lord Ram is a manifestation of the Supreme Being, it follows that he obviously is the deity who is worshipped by ascetics and other saintly souls not only in his manifested or a visible form known as 'Lord Ram', but also in his all-pervading and invisible form known as supreme cosmic 'Consciousness'. Ascetics meditate upon Lord Ram by using his divine Name "Raam" as a Mantra (spiritual formula) for fulfillment of their spiritual objectives. At the same time, Lord Ram is the deity who fulfills the wishes of such ascetics, and grants them his grace and protection.]

Lord Ram is the object of Gyan (gnosis; enlightenment and spiritual wisdom) and is attainable by it. [To wit, the truth of Lord Ram can be known by having Gyan; Lord Ram's truthful form as the cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Soul of creation can only be known and understood by deep study of the scriptures that enlighten a person about the Reality and Truth behind what is seen in this artificial world by removing all his delusions and doubts. It is also possible by Lord Ram's grace, and to obtain this grace a creature has to have devotion for the Lord.]³

Lord Ram is an abode (or a treasury) of the best of auspicious virtues and excellent characters; he is a personified form or an embodiment of such virtues and characters.

Lord Ram is invincible and unconquerable.

Lord Ram's primary form as the Supreme Being or the Parmatma or the cosmic Consciousness is invisible and without any attributes.

Lord Ram is free from any kind of faults or taints associated with this mortal world. (Shloka line no. 1)

Lord Ram is beyond the reach and purview of 'Maya' (delusions, confusions, doubts and misconceptions that lead to all sorts of consternations and distractions in this world).

Lord Ram is the Lord of all the Gods.

Lord Ram is vigilant and always ready to get rid of those who are wicked, evil, vile and sinful.

Lord Ram is the only Lord and protector of Brahmins. [To wit, Lord Ram is a patron Lord of those who are learned, wise and elderly in the society. The Lord protects them against persecution, exploitation and sufferings.]

Lord Ram has a dark complexion like that of a rain-bearing cloud. [This symbolism has great significance. It implies that like the dark clouds that give the world its life-line in the form of rain that sustains, protects and fosters life in this world, for without rain the entire world would die of thirst and hunger, Lord Ram too supports and protects this world by his merciful nature, grace, munificence and benevolence.]

Lord Ram has eyes that are like the petals of a lotus flower. [The petals of the lotus flower are regarded as symbols of beauty in classical literature. Hence, it means that Lord Ram's eyes are large, beautiful and attractive.]

Lord Ram is the King-Emperor of this earth; he is the supreme Authority in this world.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, I reverentially offer my worship and prayers to Lord Ram, and seek the Lord's grace and blessings. (Shloka line no. 2)

[Note—¹This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 107 (sage Bharadwaj).

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 127 (sage Valmiki); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 19 that precedes Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-13 that precede Doha no. 13 (sage Agastya).]

शङ्खेन्द्राभमतीवसुन्दरतनुं शार्दूलचर्माञ्जरं
कालव्यालकरालभूषणधरं गङ्गाशशाङ्कप्रियम् । ३ ।
काशीशं कलिकल्मषौघशमनं कल्याणकल्पद्रुमं
नौमीड्यं गिरिजापतिं गुणनिधिं कन्दर्पहं शङ्करम् ॥ ४ ॥

śaṅkhēndvābham-atīvasundaratanuṁ śārdūla-carmāmbaram
kālavālakarāla-bhūṣaṇadharam gaṅgāśaśāṅka-priyam. 3.
kāśīśaṁ kalikalmaṣaugha-śamanam kalyāṇa-kalpadruman
naumīḍyam girijāpatim guṇanidhim kandarpaham śaṅkaram. 4.

{Prayer to Lord Shiva to invoke his grace. These verses, like the previous set of verses that were dedicated to Lord Ram, outline some of the glorious virtues of Lord Shiva.}

Lord Shiva has an attractive body which has a radiant and fair complexion like that of a conch and a full moon.

Lord Shiva wraps himself with the hide of a tiger. [Like a true ascetic, Lord Shiva does now wear ordinary clothes to cover his body, but he wraps himself in tiger's skin.]

Lord Shiva sports deadly serpents, which are ferocious and hissing like personified forms of Kaal (death), as his ornaments. [These snakes form a garland around his neck, and a girdle around the matted hairs on his head. Some of these snakes lie on his shoulders, with their hoods raised and fangs wagging at evil-mongers.]

Lord Shiva loves the holy river Ganges (that is present on the top of his head, locked in the matted hairs that form a virtual crown on Shiva's head), and the Moon (which is present on his forehead in the form of a sickle-shaped curved jewel representing the crescent form of the moon). (Shloka no. 3)

Lord Shiva is the patron deity and the Lord of the holy pilgrim city of Kashi (known as Varanasi in modern-day India).

Lord Shiva is the destroyer of the whole lot of sins, evils and vices that thrive during the age of Kali-Yuga. [The 'Kali-Yuga' is the fourth of the four-age one cycle of creation and destruction of this world. We are currently passing through the Kali-Yuga. This era is marked by all sorts of corruptions, sins and evil tendencies; its an age when Dharma, or the principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics,

goodness etc., becomes defunct. Good characters go downhill and almost vanish, while evil characters become ascendant and dominant features.]

Lord Shiva is like a Kalpa Tree (which is a legendary evergreen tree of the heaven renowned for its mystical powers to grant wishes) that grants auspiciousness and welfare in every sphere of life.

Lord Shiva is the destroyer of Kaamdeo, for the Lord had reduced to ashes the patron deity of worldly lust, passions and infatuations to ashes when the latter had tried to disturb Shiva's meditation¹.

Lord Shiva is the Lord and husband of goddess Girija (i.e. Parvati, the daughter of the king of the snow-covered mountains known as the Himalayas).

Lord Shiva is an abode or a treasury of excellent characters and the best of auspicious virtues.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, I reverentially pray and bow before Lord Shiva and invoke his grace and blessings. (Shloka line no. 4)

[Note—¹This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

More specifically, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87.]

यो ददाति सतां शङ्खुः कैवल्यमपि दुर्लभम् ।

खलानां दण्डकृद्योऽसौ शङ्करः शं तनोतु मे ॥ ५ ॥

yō dadāti satām śambhuḥ kaivalyamapi durlabham.

khalānām daṇḍakṛdyō'sau śaṅkaraḥ śaṁ tanōtu mē. 5.

Lord Shiva is so merciful, munificent, benevolent and gracious that he would not hesitate to liberally grant the ultimate form of deliverance, emancipation and salvation that is known as 'Kaivalya Mukti' to a dying person, which gives the person's soul (known as the Atma) eternal peace, beatitude and a blissful state, a destiny that is very difficult to access as well as a very rare achievement for the soul of a creature¹.

At the same time, Lord Shiva also gives punishment to those who are wicked, evil and sinful².

Let such a munificent, benevolent, merciful and graceful Lord Shiva grant me auspiciousness and welfare. (Shloka line no. 5)

[Note—¹And how does Lord Shiva grant this boon to a dying person? Well, Lord Shiva utters the holy name of Lord Ram in the person's ears, and this acts like a magic charm to grant the soul of the dying person the boon of Kaivalya Mukti. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

²To wit, if a person realizes his mistakes in life and yearns for deliverance, emancipation and salvation, but finds it difficult to attain due to a variety of factors or reasons, then Lord Shiva would come to his aid and grant his soul Kaivalya Mukti. But on the other hand, if a person continues with his wicked ways, if he does not

mend his ways and refuses to relent and repent, then Lord Shiva has no mercy for such an evil person who then faces the Lord's wrath in the form of punishment that is in accordance with the sins and vices of the concerned person.]

दो०. लव निमेष परमानु जुग बरष कलप सर चंड ।

भजसि न मन तेहि राम को कालु जासु कोदंड ॥ क ॥

dōhā.

lava nimēṣa paramānu juga baraṣa kalapa sara caṇḍa.

bhajasi na mana tēhi rāma kō kālu jāsū kōḍaṇḍa. a.

{The poet-saint Tulsidas exhorts his own self, i.e. his mind and his heart known as the 'Mana', to worship and adore Lord Ram who is none but the Supreme Being himself in a physical form. Addressing his Mana, the learned poet says:-}

'Oh my Mana! Why don't you worship Lord Ram and have devotion for the Lord for whom the different divisions of Time, extending from a second, a minute and a moment, i.e. a fraction of time that is as miniscule as an atom, to as large and extensive as a year, an age or an era known as Kalpa (which is the time taken for one cycle of birth and destruction of this creation) are like his invincible "arrows", and for whom the factor of Time itself (that is known as 'Kaal') is like a "bow".#'

[#This Doha can also be read as follows: " 'Oh my dear Mana! Why don't you worship and adore Lord Ram—the Supreme Being whose primary form is cosmic and timeless in nature, a form that transcends the boundaries of Time as it is eternal and infinite, a form that is all pervading and all-encompassing—for whom the 'Kaal' (the factor of immortal Time; the factor of Time that precedes this creation and would even follow its conclusion) is the cosmic 'Bow', and the different divisions of this Time factor, both at the microcosmic level as well as the macrocosmic level of existence, from the very tiny fractions such as Lava, Nimesh and Parmaanuu (referring to an hour, a minute and a second), to the cosmic scale of the measurement of Time known as Yuga, Varsha and Kalpa (referring to an era, a year and one cycle of creation) are different types of 'Arrows', fierce and powerful, that the Lord employs both for short-range as well as for long-range use respectively." '] (Doha no. a)

[Note—This verse refers to the cosmic form of Lord Ram that is known as 'Brahm', the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness. According to the metaphysical philosophy of the Upanishads, Brahm extends throughout this creation, from one end to another. By citing the Bow and the Arrow of Lord Ram, it is meant that being the Supreme Authority and Lord of this creation, Lord Ram controls every aspect of it; nothing is beyond his powers and authority. Being almighty and all-able, Lord Ram is able to grant all the wishes of his devotees. This being the case, why should, and why would, a wise person knock at the door of this and that Lord or Master in the hope of getting help from them when Lord Ram is there to fulfill all his wishes at one go?

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 (Mandodari's vision of the cosmic form of Lord Ram); (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 81 (Kaagbhusund's vision of the cosmic form of Lord Ram).

The factor of Time and how the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram uses it to exercise his control over this creation should be clearly understood. When anything comes into existence it has a certain life-span or life-time at the end of which time it ceases to exist. This is a universal Law of Nature that is true for everything, both at the macrocosmic level of creation and its microcosmic counterpart. Therefore, by exercising control over this factor of Time, and ensuring that this Law of Nature remains inviolable, the Lord ensures that each and every entity in this creation remains within its designated limits.

The Lord himself also follows this Law of Nature that has been promulgated by him—and this is the reason why when the time came for him to leave this world and return to his heavenly abode he willingly accepted it and shed his worldly mortal coil. This fact is explicitly narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-39 where we read that ‘Kaal’, the god of death, came to Lord Ram and reminded him that his time on earth has come to an end, and it would be proper for him to return to heaven. The Lord willingly accepted this advice, and thereafter he maneuvered things in such a clever way which gave him an excuse to make an honourable exit from this mundane, physical and gross world. How Lord Ram steered his exit has been narrated in detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 40-72, and Canto 9, verse nos. 1-67.

In the current verse we are reading, it is the cosmic form of Lord Ram that is being invoked. This form is also known as Brahm in the Upanishads. This form has no physical characteristics, for it is without any attributes, is invisible, sublime and subtle, is all-pervading and all-encompassing. The Upanishads assert that there is nothing beyond Brahm, and this Brahm is a term that is used to refer to the ‘cosmic Consciousness’ that is the only Truth in this creation. Without this Consciousness there will be no ‘life’ in this world, and a world without life is dead.

Lord Ram is the Supreme Emperor of this creation, and like an Emperor he employs different means to control his realm. At the microcosmic level of creation the Lord ensures that the cycle of creation keeps on rotating or moving in the form of each passing moment represented by seconds, minutes and hours. Similarly, on a larger plane, or at the macrocosmic level, he ensures that the creation slowly revolves and changes from one year to another, from one era to the next, and from one cycle of creation to the next, a fresh cycle.

This is like a gigantic wheel rotating slowly but certainly, without pause and stopping. Whatever has come into existence would end one day, whether that ‘day of end’ is measured in an hour, a year or an era, but the fact is that the end cannot be avoided.

But then, what remains after that ‘end’? It is the immortal Time, known as ‘Kaal’, that presides the birth and death of everything; it is Kaal that brings about an ‘end’ of what exists, and it also Kaal that sees the ‘beginning’ of another or a new phase of everything. But Kaal has no ‘life’ or ‘authority’ of its own; it is but a tool in the hands of Brahm, the Supreme Being, the cosmic Consciousness. Lord Ram represents this Brahm. So therefore it follows that Time, known as Kaal, is an instrument in the hands of Lord Ram by which he controls this creation.

And just like the case of an Emperor who presides over a vast administrative machinery with a governor at the helm of each division of his extended empire, and then appoints other authorities to help these governors to exercise proper control over the realm, Lord Ram, in his cosmic role as the Supreme Being, employs Time and its various divisions as outlined in this verse to exercise his control over the vast realm known as ‘creation’.]

[Now, the narration of the Story resumes from where it was paused at the end of Sundar Kand, the 5th Canto of this magnificent Book called the ‘Ram Charit Manas’. Let us start reading what happened next.]

सो०. सिंधु बचन सुनि राम सचिव बोलि प्रभु अस कहेउ । १ ।
 अब बिलंबु केहि काम करहु सेतु उतरै कटकु ॥ २ ॥
 सुनहु भानुकुल केतु जामवंत कर जोरि कह । ३ ।
 नाथ नाम तव सेतु नर चढ़ि भव सागर तरहिं ॥ ४ ॥

sōraṭhā.

sindhu bacana suni rāma saciva bōli prabhu asa kahē'u. 1.
 aba bilambu kēhi kāma karahu sētu utarai kaṭaku. 2.
 sunahu bhānukula kētu jāmavanta kara jōri kaha. 3.
 nātha nāma tava sētu nara caḍhi bhava sāgara tarahim. 4.

After hearing the advice of the Deity of the ocean¹, Lord Ram summoned his advisors and ministers (such as Sugriv, Vibhishan, Jamvant, Angad, Hanuman etc.) and instructed them: ‘Why are you delaying now? Get cracking immediately and make preparations for building a bridge across the ocean so that the army can cross it and land on the other shore.’ (Sortha line nos. 1-2)

Jamvant (the old bear chieftain) joined his hands in prayer and politely submitted to Lord Ram, ‘Listen oh Lord Ram who symbolizes the exalted glory of the Solar Race (bhānukula kētu). Your divine and holy Name is itself a symbolic bridge which helps creatures cross this mundane world of birth and death with its accompanying torments and horrors, thereby helping them to attain eternal peace and beatitude². (Sortha line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 59 and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it.

²Jamvant said: “Oh Lord, by taking the help of your holy Name a creature easily finds liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration. Your divine Name helps the creature’s soul to attain emancipation and deliverance. Your exalted Name provides peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity to the tormented creature.

This being the case, if a creature can be certain to cross this vast ocean-like world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death along with its attendant grief and horrors, an ‘ocean’ that seems to have no end in sight, then getting across this ‘worldly ocean’ is no problem. Of course we have to construct a bridge, but your Name is so powerful that if it is constructed by invoking your Name each time its blocks are put into the water then it is assured that they will never sink, and so by employing this method we will be able to build the bridge step by step.”]

चौ०. यह लघु जलधि तरत कति बारा । अस सुनि पुनि कह पवनकुमारा ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु प्रताप बड़वानल भारी । सोषेउ प्रथम पयोनिधि बारी ॥ २ ॥
 तव रिपु नारि रुदन जल धारा । भरेउ बहोरि भयउ तेहिं खारा ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनि अति उकुति पवनसुत केरी । हरषे कपि रघुपति तन हेरी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

yaha laghu jaladhi tarata kati bārā. asa suni puni kaha pavanakumārā. 1.
 prabhu pratāpa baravānala bhārī. sōṣē'u prathama payōnidhi bārī. 2.
 tava ripu nāri rudana jala dhārā. bharē'u bahōri bhaya'u tēhim khārā. 3.
 suni ati ukuti pavanasuta kērī. haraṣē kapi raghupati tana hērī. 4.

[Jamvant continued—] In the context of what I have just said, what does this humble worldly ocean mean? [If your Name is so powerful that it enables the creature to cross over the infinite ocean of transmigration, than what is there to worry about this worldly ocean which has a limited dimension, especially when you yourself are present here to tame it and help us to cross over it?]¹

Hearing these words of Jamvant, the son of the wind god (Hanuman) said ---
 (1),

‘Oh Lord (prabhu)! Your majesty’s anger had created such a fierce underwater fire known as ‘baravānala’² that it has already dried up the ocean. What is seen now is salty water that has filled the cavity that was formed when the original water was evaporated. (2)

The emptied cavity or trough of the ocean was then filled with streams of tears shed by your enemy’s wives, and that is why the water of the ocean is so salty and alkaline³.’ (3)

Hearing this witty observation of the son of the wind god (Hanuman), all the assembled monkeys and bears glanced at Lord Ram and marvelled at this idea, feeling joyous in their hearts. [To wit, everyone heard Hanuman’s witty statement and thoroughly enjoyed it.]⁴ (4)

[Note—¹Jamvant said: “Oh Lord! If your Name is so powerful, potent, majestic and authoritative that by merely remembering it and invoking its mystical powers a creature is able to help his soul cross over the endless barriers that come in the way of his liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration that is like a huge cosmic ocean without any end, then this body of water which lies in the front, and which the world likes to call an ‘ocean’, is of no consequence, for its dimensions are equivalent to a small puddle of water collected in the hollow made in the ground by the hoof of a cow as compared to the dimensions of the ocean symbolizing the cycle of birth and death which the creature crosses easily by simply relying on the mystical powers of your holy and divine Name. So therefore, there is nothing to worry about. Just issue your instructions and see how we tame this ocean.’

²The “baravānala fire” is the fierce fire that burns in the bowls of the earth, underneath the bed of the ocean. It is believed that it keep the water of the ocean warm and helps sustain a rich culture of marine life, both zoological and botanical, even in great depths of the ocean, a life which would otherwise have died due to

constant dampness and coldness of the water. The existence of this life-sustaining underwater fire is the reason why liquid water and marine life are sustained even under glaciers that would have otherwise frozen everything under them.

Like overland volcanoes, this underwater fire also erupts once in a while, giving rise to spouts of water and steam that are observed rising from the surface of the ocean at some places. It is also this underwater fire that produces ‘hot water springs’.

Perhaps it was produced at the time when the ocean was vigorously churned by the gods and the demons in some ancient time in search of the ambrosia known as ‘Amrit. In order to churn the celestial ocean they used Mt. Madrachal as the churning rod, and it was placed on the bed of the ocean. The vigorous turning of this ‘rod’ created friction that produced the ‘*baravānala*’.

Another possibility is that some drops of the exceedingly hot and corrosive ‘Halal poison’ that was produced due to this churning may have fallen in the ocean, which in turn not only heated its water but also caused it to become corrosive. In due course of time this Halal poison so much affected the rocks already present in the water that they formed into corals.

According to ‘Kalki Puran’, when Lord Shiva produced the shaft of fire that burned Kamdeva (because this god of passion was tormenting the Lord and disturbing his meditation), the creator Brahma intervened to stop further destruction in this creation. Brahma converted this horrifying dart of fire into a ‘sea-horse’ and sent it to the ocean in an attempt to cool it down. The marine creature of this name and the underwater fire were the result of this.

Valmiki Ramayan says that the ‘*baravānala*’ is the anger of a sage named Aurva, and it is this fire that one day would heat the ocean so much that it would eventually evaporate and dry up, leading to an end of all water resources that cool this world that would eventually result in the extinction of all life on earth as it becomes a hot ball of fire.

Another narrative appears in Padma-Puran, Shristi-Khand, Pushkar-Mahatamya where it is said that Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, was asked by the creator Brahma to take the golden pot full of eternally burning fire from the possession of Lord Vishnu and keep it in the custody of the god of the ocean because the creator feared this pot could fall in the hands of the demons who had many a times attacked heaven.

³We have read earlier that Lord Ram had prepared to shoot his fiery arrow or missile at the ocean to burn it and dry it up, when the Deity of the ocean appeared before the Lord and pleaded for mercy. The Ocean asked the Lord to shoot the arrow in the ‘northern direction’. The Lord shot his arrow as requested. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 57—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 60.}

But then what might have happened? This fierce and hot arrow dried up the water body where it landed, and then bored itself into its bed. Since the water was shallow and it dried up quickly, the arrow was not sufficiently cooled down, and so when it drilled itself into the earth it made the bowls of the earth hot too. This event could have produced an event that in modern times we can liken to an underground nuclear explosion. This phenomenon not only heated the bowls of the earth and dried up the water where the arrow landed but it also contaminated all the water that had any link with the water body where the arrow landed, i.e. the lagoon that was referred to by the Ocean, and at which Lord Ram had shot his arrow.

This is possibly why the entire ocean became corrosive, and this is also what might have caused the underground fire, because the red hot arrow may have ignited the vast underground reservoir of natural gas and oil that lies under the bed of the ocean.

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 82-83 we read that the “Lord’s formidable arrow returned to his quiver after successfully completing its assignment”. This means in practical terms that the entire stretch of water, from where the Lord stood now till the place where the arrow was initially shot at, was dried up by the Lord’s missile.

Then how was the cavity of the ocean filled again? Hanuman gives here an interesting way how it may have happened, and why the ocean became saline and corrosive. He says that when the original water, that was sweet, evaporated due to the heat of Lord Ram’s arrow, the empty cavity was filled by streams of tears of the wives of demon warriors who wept bitterly at the prospect of the death of their male relatives in the war that loomed on the horizon of Lanka. These tears formed streams that flowed into the empty ocean just like ordinary rivers today do when they fall into the ocean. This imagery is indeed a fantastic and a wonderful way of depicting an event that may have actually happened long-long ago!

Was it possible for the ocean to dry up instantly while everyone was observing it, and then how did it get so quickly filled with the tears of the ladies of the demon warriors? What did Hanuman actually mean? Well, from the more practical perspective Hanuman meant that from the time Lord Ram decided to go to Lanka to eliminate the demons, his anger was seething inside him much like the underground fire that burns invisibly inside the earth. This wrath of the Lord had quietly dried up the ocean, and by the time they reached its shores it was filled by the tears of weeping demon ladies.

Why were the demonesses so sure that their male relatives would all die? Well, the whole city of Lanka had witnessed what havoc Hanuman had unleashed when he had burnt it down during the time he had gone there in search of Sita. In fact, large numbers of demon warriors were already killed in the skirmishes they had with Hanuman at that time. So the signs were loud and clear: that doom was not far away. So the demonesses wept and grieved bitterly, shedding tears endlessly that flowed into the cavity of the ocean.]

⁴Everyone present heard Hanuman’s witty observation and thoroughly enjoyed the subtle sense of humour it contained. They glanced at the Lord to see how he reacted to Hanuman’s reasoning, and when they saw him smile they understood that he too enjoyed the wit of Hanuman. After the somber situation that had just ended with the Ocean succumbing to the Lord, it was a pleasant turn of events. An otherwise serious and grave atmosphere was suddenly changed into a pleasant one by Hanuman, lifting everyone’s spirits and sending a ripple of laughter in the rank and file of the Lord’s army. Of course, Lord Ram too enjoyed and appreciated it.]

जामवंत बोले दोउ भाई । नल नीलहि सब कथा सुनाई ॥ ५ ॥

राम प्रताप सुमिरि मन माहीं । करहु सेतु प्रयास कछु नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

jānavanta bōlē dō'u bhā'ī. nala nīlahi saba kathā sunā'ī. 5.
rāma pratāpa sumiri mana māhīm. karahu sētu prayāsa kachu nāhīm. 6.

Jamvant (the bear chieftain) called the two brothers Nala and Neela, and told them about everything. [Jamvant related to the two brothers what the Deity of the ocean had told Lord Ram a little while ago—that to cross the ocean a bridge across the surface of the water had to be constructed, and for this purpose the two brothers, Nala and Neela, were fully qualified and very competent¹.] (5)

He exhorted them to start the construction of the bridge forthwith, saying, 'You must remember the glory of Lord Ram and feel rest assured that you would be successful in constructing the bridge. So don't worry. Building this bridge will not need any great effort, and you will be able to do it as if it was a mere sport for you.' (6)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 60.]

बोलि लिए कपि निकर बहोरी । सकल सुनहु बिनती कछु मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
राम चरन पंकज उर धरहू । कौतुक एक भालु कपि करहू ॥ ८ ॥
धावहु मर्कट बिकट बरूथा । आनहु बिटप गिरिन्ह के जूथा ॥ ९ ॥
सुनि कपि भालु चले करि हूहा । जय रघुबीर प्रताप समूहा ॥ १० ॥

bōli li'ē kapi nikara bahōrī. sakala sunahu binatī kachu mōrī. 7.
rāma carana paṅkaja ura dharahū. kautuka ēka bhālu kapi karahū. 8.
dhāvahu markṭa bikaṭa barūthā. ānahu biṭapa girinha kē jūthā. 9.
suni kapi bhālu calē kari hūhā. jaya raghubīra pratāpa samūhā. 10.

After briefing Nala and Neela, Jamvant summoned large number of monkey and bear warriors and addressed them as follows: 'I pray to all of you to listen to my little request. (7)

This request is a simple one. First invoke the glory of Lord Ram and enshrine his holy feet in your hearts, and then engage yourselves in a little sporting activity¹. (8)

All of you who are full of daring and courage must get cracking immediately. Run in all the directions, wherever you wish to go. Find trees and rocks, pick them up, and bring them here as fast as you can.' (9)

As soon as the multitudes of monkeys and bears heard this instruction they gave out a thunderous cheer (as there was nothing better they could have been asked to do). Then they embarked on this mission instantly, with immense zeal and energy.

They enthusiastically applauded Lord Ram and exclaimed in unison, 'Hail Lord Ram; Glory to you. [Oh Lord, off we go! Just wait for some more time and see what wonder unfolds right in front of you.]' (10)

[Note—¹Jamvant told the assembled monkey and bear warriors, "Listen my friends! What I will now ask you to do is something all of you will enjoy doing. You have

always been playing around with huge trees and their branches, and you have always enjoyed throwing big boulders and rocks here and there as well at each other playfully. I mean that you have been doing this since your childhood days; all of you are habituated in uprooting great trees and rocks, and using them as tools for your games and other sporting activities. Now well, it is the time to employ this skill and put it to some good use.

I am absolutely sure that you will thoroughly enjoy this activity—of uprooting trees and boulders and rocks from wherever you can find them, and then bringing them here and dumping them into the ocean so that Nala and Neela could use them to build a bridge. So go ahead and enjoy yourselves!

Remember: Never earlier you had a chance of being actually asked to uproot trees and dislodge rocks and boulders from hills and mountains, and then get praised for this mischievous deed of yours. Since this is a natural game for you, since it is a habit for all of you, and the icing on the cake is that now you are being actually asked to do it instead of being reprimanded for it, so get cracking immediately and thoroughly enjoy this freedom to engage in an activity that suits your natural temperament. This is a sort of a boon for you. So go ahead; you have my permission. Good luck!”]

दो०. अति उत्तंग गिरि पादप लीलहिं लेहिं उठाइ ।
आनि देहिं नल नीलहि रचहिं ते सेतु बनाइ ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

ati utaṅga giri pādapa līlahiṁ lēhiṁ uṭhā'i.
āni dēhiṁ nala nīlahi racahiṁ tē sētu banā'i. 1.

The huge army of monkeys and bears got a bonanza of their lives. They uprooted large trees as well as stones, boulders and rocks of all sizes and shapes from mountains and hills, and brought them immediately to the shore of the ocean. There they handed their collection over to Nala and Neela who used these trees, stones, boulders and rocks to construct the floating bridge across the width of the ocean in a step-by-step manner. (Doha no. 1)

[Note—We must remember that Nala and Neela were blessed by a boon that anything they touched would float on the water. So it means that the rocks and boulders which the warriors brought were first handed over to the two brothers, and not directly dumped into the water because then they would have sunk. When Nala and Neela touched these heavy rocks and boulders they began floating. There was of course no problem with tree trunks as they naturally float on the surface of the water.

Nala and Neela had merely to put these trees, stones, rocks and boulders into their proper position and tie them up. Perhaps they first tied up the trees using thick but soft stems and creepers as twines, and then over this temporary float they placed the rocks and the boulders, fixing them tightly over the tree trunks that acted as rough wooden planks over which slabs of stones were placed to make a strong floating bridge.

It has also been said that the stones that were used to construct this miraculous bridge were actually porous and light, and not solid rocks, thereby enabling them to float on the surface of the water instead of sinking.

A very interesting question arises here: Ravana was surely informed by his spies on this development, that a bridge is being constructed. Why then did he not react; why did he not do anything to disrupt it somehow even if his attempt failed?

There are two ways to look at the answer of this question. One is that Ravana wanted to find deliverance from his evil body of a demon, and it was for this purpose he had abducted Sita in the first place as this would force Lord Ram to come and kill him. This 'killing' of his gross body would free his soul that was trapped in it. So therefore, in spite of all the pretensions of hostility, boastful talk and angry posturing, Ravana secretly welcomed the move of building the bridge as this would ensure that Lord Ram actually came to Lanka.

Ravana actually wished that the Supreme Being in the physical form of Lord Ram set his holy feet on the soil of Lanka which would purify his land. Not only this, being a magnanimous and generous king, albeit of the evil demon race, he wished that all other demons of his race could also find liberation and spiritually benefit by the actual presence of the Supreme Lord in their midst. This being his desire, why would he disrupt the bridge?

There is another angle to the reason why Ravana did not do anything to break the bridge while it was still under construction. He was so extremely deluded about his own powers, strength, invincibility and authority that he was sure that the Deity of the ocean would never ever dare to offend him by allowing his enemy Lord Ram to get across. He was therefore sure that the ocean is playing some trick on the Lord by seemingly being cooperative, but would suddenly break the bridge either before its completion, or when the whole army of Lord Ram was on it while crossing to Lanka. In the former case, both Nala and Neela, along with their aides, would be drowned, and so there would be no one left to continue with the bridge. It would also completely demoralize the rest of the Lord's army. In the second case—when the ocean would make the bridge collapse while the army was mid-way across it, it would be the end of the whole story.

Besides this, even in the remote chance of the ocean betraying Ravana, the latter felt that the demon warriors were strong and powerful enough to easily get rid of the invaders. Or, he would cut the bridge himself from the place where it touched the soil of Lanka at the right time. He minced no words in this regard when later on in the story we read that he first reassured his wife Mandodari that there is nothing to fear because not even gods dared to stand before him so what is there to worry about monkeys, bears and humans—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 8.

Then, when the Lord's army actually launched the attack, Ravana thought that his demon warriors would easily overcome the enemy by simply eating them up as it was the habit of meat-eating demons. So he ordered his hungry demons to 'go and eat those monkeys and bears and human brothers alive'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (1) Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 8; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 40.

So, the deluded and over-confident Ravana, who was too haughty, proud and egoist to come to terms with ground realities that there was someone stronger and more powerful than him in this world, decided to 'wait and watch' while the bridge was being constructed. In the end when Lord Ram's army succeeded to cross the ocean and land on the soil of Lanka, and this news was conveyed to Ravana, he was absolutely shocked, stunned and amazed as he had never ever imagined even in his wildest of dreams that this thing, of crossing the virtual un-crossable ocean, is actually possible. His astonishment and inability to digest this bit of news is clearly mentioned

in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5; and (ii) Devi Puran Mahabhagvat Ramayan, Canto 40, verse no. 8. We shall be reading them by-and-by.]

चौ०. सैल बिसाल आनि कपि देहीं । कंदुक इव नल नील ते लेहीं ॥ १ ॥
 देखि सेतु अति सुंदर रचना । बिहसि कृपानिधि बोले बचना ॥ २ ॥
 परम रज्ज उत्तम यह धरनी । महिमा अमित जाइ नहिं बरनी ॥ ३ ॥
 करिहउँ इहाँ संभु थापना । मोरे हृदयँ परम कल्पना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

saila bisāla āni kapi dēhīm. kanduka iva nala nīla tē lēhīm. 1.
 dēkhi sētu ati sundara racanā. bihasi kṛpānidhi bōlē bacanā. 2.
 parama ramya uttama yaha dharanī. mahimā amita jā'i nahim baranī. 3.
 kariha'um' ihām' sambhu thāpanā. mōrē hrdayam' parama kalapanā. 4.

The monkeys (and bears) brought heavy rocks and boulders and handed them over to Nala and Neela who received them as if they were balls. [To wit, the warriors brought the large rocks and boulders and simply flung them towards Nala and Neela, who caught them like one catches a football.] (1)

When Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, saw the progress of the construction of this wonderful bridge that looked exceptionally magnificent and wondrous as it stretched in front of him as far as the eyes could see (i.e. appearing to touch the horizon), he was very glad and fascinated¹. He marvelled at this sight, smiled and said --- (2),

‘This land is very beautiful, charming and auspicious. Its glory and importance cannot be sufficiently described². (3)

I wish to sanctify it by establishing (consecrating) Lord Shiva here (in the form of his Lingam).

[To wit, I will make this land holy and purified by establishing an idol of Lord Shiva here and consecrate it. I will sanctify this place by worshipping Lord Shiva first before setting my foot on the bridge.]³

This has been the cherished wish of my heart for long; I had imagined that I would be able to fulfill my heart's wish soon, and I had been planning to do it for a long time.’ (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram stood on the shore and gazed at this fascinating sight of the construction of the bridge and its rapid progress into the distant horizon. He watched amused as thousands of his warriors were singing and dancing merrily as they untiringly and full of enthusiasm brought boulders and rocks and trees and creepers of all imaginable sizes, shapes and denominations, either dumping them on the shore of the ocean to be used later when required, or directly passing them over to those who were engaged in helping Nala and Neela in the construction work.

The Lord surveyed his surroundings: to his left, right and front stretched a vast expanse of water of the ocean. A pleasant breeze blew from all the directions. There was a chorus of noises made by the excited monkey and bear warriors who sang,

cheered and joked with each other, encouraging their companions and boosting the energy of one another.

Lord Ram marvelled at this fascinating scene and smiled in amusement. He called his trusted lieutenant Sugriv to his side and shared his joy with him. Then the Lord said, “Look Sugriv! Behold this wonderful sight. Look around yourself and see how beautiful the scene is. It’s awe-inspiring and most fascinating, is it not? Well, I had an inspiration. While our troops are engaged in the construction of this bridge, which is obviously going to take some time during which period we have some free time in our hands, it is my earnest wish to utilize it to honour and worship Lord Shiva. My friend, it is an established tradition that one should worship one’s revered deity and seek the latter’s blessings before starting on an enterprise. So let me first pay my obeisance to Lord Shiva whom I adore, and who himself adores me, during the free time that we have before the bridge is completed, for once it is finished there would be no time to be lost. Hence, summon those warriors who are free and not directly engaged in the construction work, and send them to nearby sages, hermits and seers with an invitation for them to come here to attend the consecration ceremony of Lord Shiva’s Lingam which I propose to establish here. This will not only sanctify this place but also ensure that the bridge is completed without any hurdle.”

²⁻³Why is this land so special? And why did Lord Ram wish to worship Lord Shiva here before embarking on his mission to Lanka? Now, let us examine these points one by one.

First, let us see why Lord Ram worshipped Lord Shiva. There are a variety of reasons why Lord Ram worshipped and prayed to Lord Shiva before he set foot on the bridge and his actually embarking on his campaign to eliminate the cruel demons in Lanka. Let us see some of the most important reasons.

When the bridge across the ocean was getting ready and Lord Ram was about to embark on his military campaign to Lanka with his majestic and vast army not only to free his wife Sita from the captivity of the demon king Ravana but also to eliminate, with freeing Sita as an obvious excuse, the cruel and sinful demons from the world so that the rest of the creatures can live fearlessly in peace and harmony, and the laws of Dharma can be restored, he decided to offer his worship to Lord Shiva and pay his obeisance to the latter.

Before launching any enterprise it is necessary and prudent to offer one’s respects and worship to one’s chosen deity to invoke the latter’s blessing, good wishes and patronage. Lord Shiva is not only the revered God of the whole world in general as he is the ‘Maha-Deva’, the ‘Great God’, but is also the God revered by Lord Ram himself, as well as the patron God of Ram’s arch enemy and rival Ravana, the king of Lanka and of the demon race.

So therefore, Lord Ram offered his worship to Lord Shiva before he stepped on the bridge to launch his campaign for the conquest of Lanka. It was on this occasion that Lord Ram praised Shiva and declared that if anyone wants to have devotion for him (Ram as an incarnation of the Supreme Being) then it is ordained upon him to first offer his respects and worship to Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva was not an ordinary god; he is honoured by the epithet of ‘Maha-Deva’, i.e. a ‘Great God’. Amongst all the gods of the Hindu pantheon, Lord Shiva occupies a very important and revered place; he is regarded as being the wisest, the most enlightened and extremely self-realised amongst all the gods. Whenever the gods needed help they approached him for correct guidance. It is narrated in the book

‘Ram Charit Manas’ that when the cruelty and terror unleashed by the demons led by Ravana reached a point that was intolerable and the whole creation began to suffer, all the gods and mother earth first approached the Creator (Brahma) for help. Controlling Ravana was beyond his means, so he suggested to the group that they pray to Lord Vishnu who would surely help them as he is responsible for the safety, security and welfare of this creation. Now the big question was where to find Vishnu. It was then that Lord Shiva intervened and advised that the Supreme Being, Lord Vishnu, is available wherever his devotees seek him if they pray to him with sincerity and devotion. So on his advice, all the gods, including Brahma himself, prayed to Lord Vishnu who revealed himself and assured the assembled gods that he will come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to take care of things. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Doha no. 187.}

Since it was Lord Shiva who showed the gods the correct way to access Lord Vishnu, so when the latter manifested himself as Lord Ram he now wished to request Shiva to do the same to him, i.e. to show him the path to victory, because Lord Shiva, being very wise and enlightened, knows the correct path that would help anyone to achieve his desired goal.

The second reason is this: Lord Shiva is the third God of the Trinity, the others being Lord Vishnu, the protector and sustainer of creation, and Lord Brahma who is the creator. Lord Shiva represents the deity that presides over the third phase of creation, i.e. the end of creation. Therefore, Shiva is responsible for bringing to a conclusion or an end to one cycle of creation that was started by Brahma and looked after by Vishnu. This being the case, Lord Ram thought it fit to seek Shiva’s permission and blessing before he moves ahead with his mission of bringing to an end of the demon race that was evil and sinful. There were many other demons whom Lord Ram had eliminated or killed earlier, but those were isolated cases and that did not involve the extinction of an entire clan or a whole community of demons as would be done during the forthcoming war at Lanka. So it was absolutely necessary for Lord Ram to seek Lord Shiva’s permission to do so as mass extinction of a race, a clan or a community, or bringing to an end of an era, falls within Shiva’s jurisdiction.

The third reason: Lord Ram is an exceptionally merciful and compassionate Lord God. He was not happy that he would become an instrument of mass death and destruction of the demons, but he couldn’t help because he was also the protector and well-wisher of this creation, responsible for maintaining peace, security, law and order in the world, and as these demons had caused so much untold misery and suffering in the world, tormenting all its creatures, it became obligatory for Lord Vishnu, Lord Ram’s primary form, to step in to end this horror and mayhem. So while compelled to kill and eliminate the demons Lord Ram also wished that their souls found deliverance, emancipation and salvation, instead of being condemned to hell. This only Lord Shiva could do. Lord Shiva utters the holy Name of Lord Ram in the ears of dying creatures so that they find eternal freedom from the cycle of transmigration, and attain emancipation and salvation, i.e. attain ‘Moksha’—this fact is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119.

Had Lord Ram been vengeful and wanted the demons to ‘go to hell’, he would have invoked and worshipped Yama, the god who presides over hell, and definitely not Lord Shiva who gives liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying creature.

The fourth reason: Shiva worships Lord Ram as his favourite deity, and he uses Lord Ram’s holy Name as a Mantra (a divine, spiritual formula) for the purpose

of Dhyan (meditation) and Japa (repetition). In fact, the whole Story of Lord Ram, known as the Ramayana, was originally conceived by Lord Shiva in his heart while meditating. So therefore, Lord Ram wished to pay his obeisance to Lord Shiva and show due respect to him by worshipping him and praying to him to reciprocate the latter's devotion for the former.

The fifth reason: It is a normal practice to first worship one's revered deity and seek the latter's blessings before one launches a project or embarks on a strategic mission, especially the one that was as important as the campaign to eliminate the cruel demons in the war of Lanka, a mission that was full of hazards and uncertainties.

The sixth reason: Ravana worshipped Lord Shiva and was his great devotee. So it was strategically important for Lord Ram to first seek Shiva's blessings and take him into confidence before launching his campaign to vanquish Ravana. It must be remembered that it was Lord Shiva who had showed the gods the way to invoke Lord Vishnu and ask him to get rid of the demons led by Ravana. So now Lord Ram wishes to remind Shiva of that day and seek his help; this would ensure that Shiva did not favour Ravana when the war actually begins even in the case of Ravana attempting to seek Shiva's favour to escape death.

The seventh reason: Ravana worships Lord Shiva, and therefore he would never come to attack Lord Ram and his companions during the time Lord Shiva's worship is in progress. This will ensure that the bridge would be constructed without interference and much of a trouble from the demons.

Now, let us examine the second point. This land was beautiful because the ocean here was calm as compared to other shores where it roars in a frightful way. The reason is that Lord Ram had tamed it and overcome its arrogance.

This place also marked the spot where for the first time in human history someone had built a floating bridge across the deep and churning waters of the ocean. It was no ordinary bridge; it successfully carried the weight of an entire army of monkeys and bears numbering in countless hundreds and thousands. And they weren't quietly strolling across it; they were jumping and dancing and stamping their feet heavily on the bridge all the way across it. This means that the bridge was exceptionally strong and sustainable.

There was ocean on three sides—east, west and south. It was a point on land from where one could see both the sunrise and the sunset in the east and the west respectively, making it a unique place geographically. The ocean lying to the south was the one that was needed to be bridged and crossed, and this bridge extended over the surface of the water as far as the eyes could see. Remember: Lanka was at a distance of 100 Yojan (approximately 800 miles) from this shore, and so the bridge obviously was also of the same length. This effectively divided the ocean into two parts—one that was to the east of this causeway, and one that was to the west of it. This presented a wonderful sight—the hitherto undivided ocean was now virtually partitioned into two! It was a 'beautiful' sight.

A soothing and cool breeze blew in from the three directions, the left, the right and the front, where the ocean was present. This made the atmosphere very pleasant.

This land also marked the place from where the Supreme Being finally launched his mission of eliminating the cruel demons to free the world from their tyranny and horror. But the war that led to the death of these demons was actually a blessing in disguise for them, for their souls were liberated and all the demons found salvation.

This land was the spot that marked the dawn of a new era of peace and tranquility in this world. It also marked the place where hopelessness turned into hope, where gloom gave way to cheer, where despair yielded to success.

Symbolically, this magnificent bridge represented a creature's effort to cross over from his mundane worldly existence mired by grief and worries, by making a little effort on his part and also by relying on the strength of Lord Ram's blessings and grace, to a new world of glory and happiness—because now Lord Ram would not only free the world from the horrors of the demons but would also free Sita from her captivity and distressful existence. In the process, the Lord would also free the souls of the demons and grant them a destiny that they would not ordinarily have imagined they could have ever attained.]

सुनि कपीस बहु दूत पठाए । मुनिबर सकल बोलि लै आए ॥ ५ ॥

लिंग थापि बिधिवत करि पूजा । सिव समान प्रिय मोहि न दूजा ॥ ६ ॥

suni kapīsa bahu dūta paṭhā'ē. munibara sakala bōli lai ā'ē. 5.
liṅga thāpi bidhivata kari pūjā. siva samāna priya mōhi na dūjā. 6.

Hearing Lord Ram's wishes, the king of the monkeys, i.e. Sugriv, sent many messengers who went hastily in all the directions. They brought with them all the great sages and seers they could find to participate in this auspicious ceremony¹. (5)

Then, Lord Ram duly established and consecrated an idol of Lord Shiva, known as the "Lingam", and worshipped it as per established tradition. After completing the worshipping rituals and paying his obeisance to Lord Shiva, Lord Ram declared, 'There is no one who is as dear as Lord Shiva is for me²'. (6)

[Note—¹The fact that a number of sages and seers were called to attend this consecration ceremony at such a short notice shows that they lived not far away. There was not much time in hand as the construction of the bridge was already underway, and no time could be wasted once it was finished.

This means that these sages and seers lived in the kingdom of Kishkindha and its nearby areas. Why were they called? Lord Shiva's "Lingam" had to be duly consecrated and worshipped, and for this purpose learned sages who were well-versed in worship rituals were needed.

A very important point can be inferred here. Ravana, though reviled as being a blood-thirsty demon who was a terror for sages and seers, killing them at will, was not after all as cruel and merciless as he has been painted out to be—for it is obvious that many sages, hermits and seers lived around the area so close to the shore of the ocean from where Lanka was merely 800 miles away. These sages and seers had no fear from Ravana while coming to attend Lord Ram's ceremony though they were fully aware that the Lord was about to launch a campaign against Ravana and was determined to eliminate the demons.

It is also possible that since the invitation sent to them was for attending a consecration ceremony of Lord Shiva's Lingam, they could not refuse even if they had some fear for their safety. But they knew Ravana and his nature well; they knew that Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, and so definitely he would never create any hindrance in worshipping Lord Shiva, and equally surely he would not

harm anyone who was worshipping Lord Shiva or had come expressly for such worship.

²Here and in the verses that follow herein below, Lord Ram hints at the reason why he has worshipped Lord Shiva—it is because he adores and loves Shiva more than any other god.]

सिव द्रोही मम भगत कहावा । सो नर सपनेहुँ मोहि न पावा ॥ ७ ॥
संकर बिमुख भगति चह मोरी । सो नारकी मूढ़ मति थोरी ॥ ८ ॥

siva drōhī mama bhagata kahāvā. sō nara sapanēhum̐ mōhi na pāvā. 7.
saṅkara bimukha bhagati caha mōrī. sō nārakī mūr̥ha mati thōrī. 8.

Anyone who is inimical to Lord Shiva and claims to be my devotee then let it be clear to him that he can never attain me or find me even in his dreams. (7)

A person who is opposed to Lord Shiva and then expects to have Bhakti (devotion) for me is utterly stupid and ignorant. He is committing a grave mistake which would only lead him to hell. [To wit, he will have to suffer spiritually.] (8)

[Note—In these verses Lord Ram stresses the importance of paying obeisance to Lord Shiva. He says that if one wishes to worship Lord Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being, then the first step is to worship Lord Shiva.

It has already been pointed out a little earlier that Lord Shiva is a great devotee of Lord Ram; Shiva continuously chants the holy Name of Lord Ram and uses this Name as his chosen spiritual formula which he employs during meditation. The divine story of Lord Ram as we know it today was first conceived in Shiva's heart while he was once meditating. And now we read here that Lord Ram too is a great devotee of Lord Shiva. This means that both, Lord Ram and Lord Shiva, adore each other.

This is the reason why the holy place where Lord Ram had established Lord Shiva's image is called 'Rameshwaram', meaning 'The Lord of Ram or the Lord whom Ram worships', a reference to Lord Shiva, and 'One for whom Lord Ram is the Lord God', once again a reference to Lord Shiva.

This unique combination of words and ideas incorporated in the deity's name 'Rameshwaram' simply means "Lord Shiva who worships Lord Ram, and who himself is worshipped by Lord Ram". The glory and importance of Rameshwaram as a sacred pilgrimage sight is highlighted in Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 2 herein below.]

दो०. संकरप्रिय मम द्रोही सिव द्रोही मम दास ।
ते नर करहिं कलप भरि घोर नरक महुँ बास ॥ २ ॥
dōhā.

saṅkarapriya mama drōhī siva drōhī mama dāsa.
tē nara karahim̐ kalapa bhari ghōra naraka mahum̐ bāsa. 2.

[Lord Ram reiterated—] Let it therefore be clear: Those for whom Lord Shiva is dear but who are opposed to me, and conversely those who love me and have devotion for me but are opposed to Lord Shiva—both such individuals are destined to live in hell for an entire generation. [To wit, it is absolutely wrong to do so; it is sinful to distinguish between me and Lord Shiva, and to treat either of us insultingly.] (Doha no. 2)

[Note—This verse is directly addressed to Ravana though he is not mentioned by name. Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, but he was inimical to Lord Ram. This was not allowed. So Lord Ram indirectly gives the reason why it would be okay for Ravana to die as he is violating this rule.]

चौ०. जे रामेस्वर दरसनु करिहहिं । ते तनु तजि मम लोक सिधरिहहिं ॥ १ ॥
जो गंगाजलु आनि चढ़ाइहि । सो साजुज्य मुक्ति नर पाइहि ॥ २ ॥
होइ अकाम जो छल तजि सेइहि । भगति मोरि तेहि संकर देइहि ॥ ३ ॥
मम कृत सेतु जो दरसनु करिही । सो बिनु श्रम भवसागर तरिही ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jē rāmēśvara darasanu karihahim. tē tanu taji mama lōka sidharihahim. 1.
jō gaṅgājalu āni carḥā'ihī. sō sājujya mukti nara pā'ihī. 2.
hō'i akāma jō chala taji sē'ihī. bhagati mōri tēhi saṅkara dē'ihī. 3.
mama kṛta sētu jō darasanu karihī. sō binu śrama bhavasāgara tarihī. 4.

[Lord Ram continued—] ‘He who comes here and reverentially beholds this holy sight with its consecrated deity known as “Rameshwar”¹ (and pays his obeisance to Lord Shiva here) shall attain my abode at the time of his death.

[To wit, those who undertake a pilgrimage to Rameshwar and pay their homage to Lord Shiva, such persons are sure to attain my heavenly abode at the time of death—“tē tanu taji mama lōka sidharihahim”] (1)

He who brings the water from the sacred river Ganges and offers it to Lord Shiva’s Lingam here would attain the reward of being one with me at the time of death². [This is called “sājujya mukti”.] (2)

Those who serve (worship) Lord Shiva selflessly and without pretensions, Lord Shiva would grant such persons Bhakti (devotion) for me (i.e. for Lord Ram)³. [To wit, one of the primary methods for having devotion for Lord Ram is to first worship Lord Shiva. Then Lord Shiva would grant the worshipper his desire—which is to have devotion for Lord Ram.] (3)

Verily, those who behold the bridge got constructed by me would be able to cross over this ocean-like mundane world of transmigration, along with all its attendant problems, very easily. [To wit, such persons who come on a pilgrimage to this sacred place, who first worship Lord Shiva’s Lingam consecrated by me here and after that they reverentially view this bridge, they surely would be blessed with the boon of liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death in which their

soul is trapped. They would be able to get over all their worldly problems as easily as one crosses a vast body of water by walking across it on a bridge.]’ (4)

[Note—¹Refer a note appended to Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 2 herein above.

The Lingam of Lord Shiva established and consecrated by Lord Ram on the shores of the ocean is named after Ram. The word ‘Rameshwar’ has two-pronged meaning—one is ‘the Lord who is the Ishwar or God of Lord Ram, the deity who is worshipped and adored by Ram’, and the other meaning is ‘the Lord, i.e. Shiva, who regards Lord Ram as his Ishwar or Lord God’.

This is an extremely important observation—as it removes in one intelligent stroke the schism and dichotomy that has led to the delusion of ‘duality’ between the two facets of the same Divinity. In other words, it lays stress on the fact that there is absolutely no difference between Lord Ram and Lord Shiva—they are both the same Supreme Being performing two different roles, to sustain and protect the creation as Vishnu or Ram, and to bring about its conclusion and punish the sinful as Shiva.

This obvious metaphysical tenet is at the base of the principle of Non-duality or Advaita Vedanta, and is evident also in fact that both Lord Ram and Shiva worship each other.

There is no other God or non-God in creation who is more well-versed in and more convinced of the spiritual philosophy of non-duality, as well as the fact that Lord Ram’s divine name ‘Ram’ is a synonym of the cosmic word-symbol for the supreme Brahm, i.e. ‘OM’, than Lord Shiva. It this reason why Shiva had selected the divine name ‘Ram’ as his spiritual formula—both for his personal usage during meditation and for providing liberation and deliverance to the dying man by muttering the holy word ‘Ram’ into his ears at Kashi or Varanasi. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, 1/19/3; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4.

²In the ‘Sayuja’ form of Mukti, the concerned creature is able to become one with the deity worshipped. In other words it means to merge oneself with the Lord God.

References: Atharva Veda’s Tripadvibhut Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-17; Canto 6, paragraph no. 22; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 6-7, 17, 19, 22. While discussing this specialised form of Mukti, this Upanishad also describes the eclectic concept of Mukti in a comprehensive form in paragraph nos. 4-13 of Canto 5. In the Bhasma Jabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 2, paragraph no. 15, Lord Shiva tells sage Jabal Bhusund that if one offers proper worship to the Shiva Lingam as described in detail in this particular Upanishad, the worshipper is able to obtain Sayujya Mukti.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 104.]

राम बचन सब के जिय भाए । मुनिबर निज निज आश्रम आए ॥ ५ ॥
गिरिजा रघुपति कै यह रीती । संतत करहिं प्रनत पर प्रीती ॥ ६ ॥

rāma bacana saba kē jiya bhā'ē. munibara nija nija āśrama ā'ē. 5.
girijā raghupati kai yaha rītī. santata karahim pranata para prītī. 6.

The words of Lord Ram were liked by one and all. The sages, hermits and seers who were present there (during the consecration ceremony of Lord Shiva's Lingam) were pleased to hear these words of Lord Ram. Once the ceremony was over, all of them returned to their respective hermitages with gladdened hearts. (5)

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this divine story known as Ram Charit Manas, said to his consort Parvati to whom he was narrating it.]

Shiva said—‘Oh Girija (meaning ‘daughter of Giri’, the king of the kingdom of mountains; here referring to Parvati, Shiva's divine consort)! It is a natural habit and an established practice of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) that he always shows affection for those who come to seek refuge at his holy feet (santata karahim pranata para priti)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16.]

बाँधा सेतु नील नल नागर । राम कृपाँ जसु भयउ उजागर ॥ ७ ॥
 बूड़हिँ आनहि बोरहिँ जेई । भए उपल बोहित सम तेई ॥ ८ ॥
 महिमा यह न जलधि कइ बरनी । पाहन गुन न कपिन्ह कइ करनी ॥ ९ ॥

bām̐dhā sētu nīla nala nāgara. rāma kṛpām̐ jasu bhaya'u ujāgara. 7.
 būrahim ānahi bōrahim jē'ī. bha'e upala bōhita sama tē'ī. 8.
 mahimā yaha na jaladhi ka'i baranī. pāhana guna na kapinha ka'i karanī. 9.

Meanwhile, Nala and Neela completed the construction of the legendary bridge. This miraculous feat of theirs, that was however made possible by the grace of Lord Ram, granted the two brothers (Nala and Neela) eternal fame; their glory shone and spread far and wide in the whole world (like the sun's light). (7)

The stones, rocks and boulders that have the characteristic quality of sinking in the water themselves, and drown anything else that is attached to them, even those stones, rocks and boulders miraculously and magically floated on the surface of the ocean like boats usually do! (8)

Verily indeed, those who are in the know and are enlightened about facts do not give credit to the ocean for successful construction of this floating bridge, nor do they ascribe this success and the achievement of this marvelous feat to the construction skills of Nala and Neela, or to any especial quality of the stones, rocks and boulders used for the construction that they could float on water. [Then who should be given credit for this miraculous event? The answer is given in the next Doha no. 3 herein below.] (9)

दो०. श्री रघुबीर प्रताप ते सिंधु तरे पाषान ।
 ते मतिमंद जे राम तजि भजहिँ जाइ प्रभु आन ॥ ३ ॥

dōhā.

śrī raghubīra pratāpa tē sindhu tarē pāṣāna.
tē matimanda jē rāma taji bhajahiṁ jā'i prabhu āna. 3.

In all sooth and without gainsay there is no doubt that those stones, rocks and boulders floated on the surface of the ocean due to the grace of Lord Ram; there is no other way to explain this unusual phenomenon.

Verily indeed, he who does not worship Lord Ram (the Lord whose grace and mere wishes could make lifeless stones float magically on water against all established norms and laws of Nature), and instead goes to worship some other deity, is a dumb-witted and utterly foolish fellow. (Doha no. 3)

[Note—To wit, the stones floated on the surface of the turbulent waters of the ocean due to the grace and blessings of Lord Ram; they floated because the Lord wished them to do so. This proves the supremacy of Lord Ram over all other forces of creation—for the Lord can make possible that which is impossible. This being the case, why would a sensible person not worship Lord Ram and seek his blessings for his own welfare? Say, why would any intelligent person go to someone else to seek fulfillment of his wishes when all that he wants can be granted by Lord Ram very easily?]

चौ०. बाँधि सेतु अति सुदृढ़ बनावा । देखि कृपानिधि के मन भावा ॥ १ ॥
चली सेन कछु बरनि न जाई । गर्जहिं मर्कट भट समुदाई ॥ २ ॥
सेतुबंध ढिग चढ़ि रघुराई । चितव कृपाल सिंधु बहुताई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bāṁdhi sētu ati sudṛṛha banāvā. dēkhi kṛpānidhi kē mana bhāvā. 1.
calī sēna kachu barani na jāī. garjahiṁ markṭa bhaṭa samudāī. 2.
sētubandha ḍhiga caḍhi raghurāī. citava kṛpāla sindhu bahutāī. 3.

The bridge was finally completed; all precautions were taken to make it exceptionally strong and secure¹.

When Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace, saw this fantastic bridge, a wonderful creation of outstanding ingenuity, skill and creativity, he appreciated it very much. Verily, the bridge pleased the Lord's heart and mind (kṛpānidhi kē mana bhāvā). (1)

The army of monkeys and bears marched enthusiastically on this bridge, presenting a sight so wonderful and fascinating that it cannot be described in words. All the valiant warriors, individually as well as in groups, were roaring and yelling loudly. (2)

Then Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; “raghurāī”) set his foot on this wondrous bridge that was exceptionally strong and secure. He looked around him and saw the wide expanse of the ocean spreading majestically on all the sides (to his right and left, to the front and to the rear)². (3)

[Note—¹How long did it take Nala and Neela to finish the bridge? Well, according to (a) Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 22, verse nos. 64-68, and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-6, the entire bridge, spanning a length of 100 Yojans (approx. 800 miles) was completed in five days.

How long and wide was this bridge? Well, it was 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles) long, and 10 Yojans (80 miles) wide—apropos: Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 22, verse no. 72.

On the 1st day of the construction, 14 Yojans length of the bridge was laid; on the 2nd day another 20 Yojans were added; on the 3rd day a further span of 21 Yojans was completed; on the 4th day, further 22 Yojans were finished; and on the 5th and the final day, the remaining part of the bridge covering 23 Yojans was put into place. After completion this bridge stretched for 800 long miles, its one end was at the northern shore of the ocean that touched the mainland, and its other end was on the further end of the ocean that touched the shore of the island of Lanka at its northern tip.

However, in Devi Puran Mahabhogwat Ramayan, it is said that the bridge was completed in a record time of '2 Prahars', which means roughly 6 hours. [1 Prahara = 3 hours.] {Refer: Devi Puran Mahabhogwat Ramayan, Canto 40, verse nos. 6-7.}

The existence of this bridge has been established by satellite images taken by the Indian satellite IRS-1A which in 1962 had taken photographs of the remnants of a stone bridge. It appeared as an underground streak from Dhanushkoti in India to Talai Manner in Sri Lanka. This was corroborated by U.S. astronauts aboard Gemini XI satellite launched on 14/9/1966.

One wonders 'what happened to this bridge later on'? It is said in the story of the Ramayana that Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya with his wife Sita and younger brother Laxman, along with many of his friends from Kishkindha as well as Vibhishan who had all helped the Lord in his Lanka campaign, by an air-plane called 'Pushpak'. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 119; and Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4.}

This means he went back home by the path of the sky, and not overland. So this bridge was not used for the Lord's return journey. What then was its fate? Well, the fate of the unique bridge is narrated in Padma Puran, Shristi Khand, Chapter 38, verse 28-32 as follows: When the airplane was above the bridge, Vibhishan requested Lord Ram to demolish it. The Lord first struck the bridge with the tip of his formidable bow, rupturing the bridge somewhere from the center. Hence, the 100 Yojan bridge collapsed into two segments. Then the Lord broke each of these two segments into three smaller parts; then each of these parts further into still smaller units measuring roughly 10 Yojans each. To make it sink completely below the surface of the water, and render it useless for all times to come, each of these 10-Yojan units were further broken down into smaller parts measuring 1 Yojan in length. So finally, Lord Ram broke the bridge into 100 units, each fraction measuring 1 Yojan (approx. 8 miles) in length.

Why did Vibhishan wish to get the bridge demolished by Lord Ram himself? In all probability he feared for the future of safety of Lanka; he feared an invasion in the future from the mainland. He had witnessed the war and watched how the army of Kishkindha, consisting of ferocious, strong and fearless monkeys and bears, had completely ravaged and recklessly destroyed what was once a golden city of Lanka, a prosperous, thriving and almost impenetrable citadel of the demons that rivaled heaven in its beauty and magnificence. The warriors of Kishkindha were the victors;

they were the conquerors who regarded the remnants of the demon race as vanquished and vile. So Vibhishan feared that in the future there was a probability that once he managed to make Lanka prosperous and beautified once again, these same warriors of Kishkindha, who are now his friends and are restrained because of Lord Ram, would turn hostile in due time; they will be tempted to tease him every now and then, coming to Lanka and running amok in the reconstructed city, uprooting trees in parks and occupying buildings, and may be even going to the extent of extracting tributes from him to let him live in peace. What would he do then? Lord Ram would not be there always to protect him.

In case he decided to break the bridge on his own, then that would be a dangerous step. Why? Because the army of Kishkindha wouldn't let him do so, arguing that he had no right over it as it was constructed by them on the express orders of Lord Ram. They would tell Vibhishan: "Oh, stop! We have built this bridge. It was on the orders of Lord Ram. So first go and get the Lord's permission, and then only, mind you, can you remove a single stone from it; not before that."

So Vibhishan thought that it would be very wise and prudent to get it demolished by the Lord himself while he is here. He was sure that the Lord would not go against his wish, for the Lord was wise and intelligent enough to guess what was in Vibhishan's mind. And Vibhishan was correct in his assumption, as the Lord willingly obliged him and broke the bridge without asking 'why'.

²Only a person who has an experience of standing on a long suspension bridge across a wide river that has rapidly flowing currents and frothy waters can understand how Lord Ram must have felt on this bridge. The thrill is indescribable. To the left and the right, as far as the eyes could see, there was nothing but water. When the Lord moved ahead on this bridge, say for a mile or two, the mainland was much behind him, almost lost to sight. What the Lord saw was the bridge spreading like a ribbon across the surface of the water of the ocean, with water on its two sides and underneath it. The bridge swayed gently with the movement of the water of the ocean, majestically heaving slightly upwards and downwards as well as to the left and the right from its median plane; it was wobbling on the surface of the ocean like a lifebuoy, a raft, or a balloon. It was virtually like being suspended on water; or like being on a swing, swaying to the left and the right.]

देखन कहूँ प्रभु करुना कंदा । प्रगट भए सब जलचर बृंदा ॥ ४ ॥
मकर नक्र नाना झष ब्याला । सत जोजन तन परम बिसाला ॥ ५ ॥
अइसेउ एक तिन्हहि जे खाहीं । एकन्ह कें डर तेपि डेराहीं ॥ ६ ॥
प्रभुहि बिलोकहिं टरहिं न टारे । मन हरषित सब भए सुखारे ॥ ७ ॥

dēkhana kahum³ prabhu karunā kandā. pragaṭa bha'e saba jalacara bṛndā. 4.
makara nakra nānā jhaṣa byālā. sata jōjana tana parama bisālā. 5.
a'isē'u ēka tinhahi jē khāhīm. ēkanha kēm ḍara tēpi ḍērāhīm. 6.
prabhuhi bilōkahim ṭarahim na ṭārē. mana haraṣita saba bha'e sukhārē. 7.

All the marine creatures that lived in the ocean around the bridge came on the surface of the water¹ to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram who is a treasury of mercy, compassion and kindness (prabhu karunā kandā).

There were many kinds of alligators, crocodiles, fish and sea-serpents, of all shapes and sizes, of different families and classes, who gathered on the surface of the water. Some were small, but others were of gigantic proportions with bodies extending even up to a hundred Yojans in length, width or height. (5)

Each one of these creatures was ferocious in its own right and large enough to be able to devour other creatures, but there were many more like them that were far more ferocious and larger in size who could terrorize and devour the former very easily. The variety of such marine animals was so wide and large that those who were terrifying themselves were fearful for their lives from others². (6)

All these creatures watched Lord Ram with awe and wonder; they were so amazed at the divine sight of the Lord that they were stunned and refused to move. Their heart and mind felt, and they were very glad that they had this opportunity³. (7)

[Note—¹The Bridge obstructed the flow of the water of the ocean. It was like a modern day dam or a dyke, albeit built not on land but in the middle of the ocean, effectively blocking its normal flow. This caused a build-up of marine animals such as fish and others that normally swam freely in the water of the ocean; their path was now choked by the bridge. So one by one they piled up along the two sides of this great bridge; as the number of animals increased there was pushing and shoving, first gently and then angrily as each agitated creature growled and snarled, trying to elbow out others in order to get ahead in the crowd milling around the bridge's two sides. In the chaos that followed, smaller marine animals such as fish etc. got crushed; some were drowned and others were angrily eaten by their larger neighbours, say whales and sharks, or even crocodiles who bit ferociously at any other creature that blocked their way and gobbled it.

²To wit, the marine creatures were all exceptionally ferocious and dangerous. It appeared that there was no end to the large variety of creatures present in the bosom of the ocean who surfaced to look at the sight of the wonderful bridge that had blocked their way, and also watch the magnificent sight of Lord Ram, surrounded by his army, walking majestically across this bridge as it swayed on the surface of the ocean.

³It ought to be remembered that 'Ram Charit Manas' is a telling of the Story of Lord Ram, which is known universally as the Ramayana, with a high devotional quotient in it. Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, so his presence is naturally appealing and pleasant to the creature's soul, known as the creature's Atma. The individual Atma of a creature is an image of the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma that is pure Consciousness and also known as the Supreme Being. Hence, a natural affinity exists between the creature's own Atma, which in effect is the creature's true 'self', and Lord Ram who personifies the universal Atma. Therefore, when a creature sees Lord Ram he feels a natural affection for the Lord; for the Atma of a creature there is no one dearer than Lord Ram.

Like the case of two siblings having a natural bond between them arising out their being of the same stock of blood, resulting in creating a sense of natural affection for each other and an untold familiarity that when they meet each other for the first time in their lives after ages of separation they find that some intangible force

seems to pull them together, creating a bond between the two, the creature too is naturally related to Lord Ram, and whenever the creature feels the presence of Lord Ram nearby he experiences natural affection for the Lord as if he has met his kith and kin after a long time.

So therefore, when these marine creatures saw Lord Ram for the first time in their lives, their Atma got naturally attracted to the Lord; the creatures felt exhilarated as if they have met their long-time friend and a lost parent after passing through the many phases of cycle of birth and death.

And this good news spread quickly and widely in the community of marine creatures. So even those who had yet not come made all haste to arrive. The result was that the crowd of excited marine creatures around the bridge got thicker and wilder with each passing moment, with each creature trying to squeeze himself ahead of the others to be closer to the bridge so as to get a more close-up view of their beloved Lord Ram.]

तिन्ह की ओट न देखिअ बारी । मगन भए हरि रूप निहारी ॥ ८ ॥

चला कटकु प्रभु आयसु पाई । को कहि सक कपि दल बिपुलाई ॥ ९ ॥

tinha kī ōṭa na dēkhi'a bārī. magana bha'e hari rūpa nihārī. 8.

calā kaṭaku prabhu āyasu pā'ī. kō kahi saka kapi dala bipulā'ī. 9.

The marine creatures were so densely packed around the sides of the bridge that the water of the ocean could not be seen. Verily indeed, the creatures were mesmerized by the charming sight of Lord Hari (Lord Ram) so much so that they did not want to move away. (8)

Meanwhile, on the orders of Lord Ram, the huge and formidable army of monkeys and bears marched ahead on the bridge. No one can say what the numbers of the warriors were, for they were countless. (9)

दो०. सेतुबंध भइ भीर अति कपि नभ पंथ उड़ाहिं ।

अपर जलचरन्हि ऊपर चढ़ि चढ़ि पारहि जाहिं ॥ ४ ॥

dōhā.

sētubandha bha'i bhīra ati kapi nabha pantha uṛāhiṁ.

apara jalacaranhi ūpara caḍhi caḍhi pārahi jāhiṁ. 4.

There was such a large crowd of warriors on the bridge that it seemed to be jam-packed with them. Finding insufficient space on the bridge, some of these warriors went ahead through the path of the sky (i.e. they jumped for long distances over others, or probably flew across the sky much like Hanuman had done earlier), while others walked (jumped, hopped and skipped) across over to the other side on the back of the marine creatures who had gathered together in a tight pack on either side of the bridge. (Doha no. 4)

चौ०. अस कौतुक बिलोकि द्वौ भाई । बिहँसि चले कृपाल रघुराई ॥ १ ॥
सेन सहित उतरे रघुबीरा । कहि न जाइ कपि जूथप भीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kautuka bilōki dvau bhā'ī. bihamṣi calē kṛpāla raghurā'ī. 1.
sēna sahita utarē raghubīrā. kahi na jā'i kapi jūthapa bhīrā. 2.

The two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, watched with fascination this wonderful spectacle. They smiled at this sight, and marched ahead (with their army). (1)

By-and-by, Lord Ram reached the other end of the bridge and set foot on the shore of Lanka along with his army¹. No one can say how large this army was². (2)

[Note—¹How long did the army take to cross the bridge and land on the shores of Lanka? Well, according to (a) Skanda Puran, Brahm Khand, Canto 30, and (b) Padma Puran, Patal Khand, Canto 36—the Lord and his army crossed the bridge in “three days”.

And what was the formation of this army when it landed at Lanka? Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 24, verse nos. 14-18 describes it as follows: “Lord Ram and Laxman would lead from the front; Nala and Angad were to follow them from behind with their troops; to their right should be Rishava and to their left should be Durghash Gandhamaadan with their monkey troops; Jamvant and Sushen should take control of the remaining troops that follow from behind by being at the center, and the rear should be under the command of Sugriv and his troops.”

²Refer: Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 4 herein above.]

सिंधु पार प्रभु डेरा कीन्हा । सकल कपिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
खाहु जाइ फल मूल सुहाए । सुनत भालु कपि जहँ तहँ धाए ॥ ४ ॥

sindhu pāra prabhu ḍērā kīnhā. sakala kapinha kahum'āyasu dīnhā. 3.
khāhu jā'i phala mūla suhā'ē. sunata bhālu kapi jaham'taham'dhā'ē. 4.

The Lord pitched his camp on the other side of the ocean (on the soil of Lanka). Then the Lord instructed all the monkeys --- (3)

--- ‘Go and eat to your heart’s content as many sweet fruits and edible roots and stems as you wish’. Hearing this instruction (and getting Lord Ram’s permission), all the monkeys and bears ran in all the directions wherever they wished¹. (4)

[Note—¹The warriors were very hungry as they had not got anything to eat while crossing the ocean. So naturally as soon as they got Lord Ram’s permission they ran in all the directions in search of fruits, stems and roots.

They feared nothing; they were not scared of meeting demons. These verses also show that the place where Lord Ram landed in Lanka with his army was deserted; they did not meet any demon guard or lookout, or any resistance. In all probability any demon who may have been there earlier ran away out of fear of his

life as soon as he saw the army set foot on land. The common demons were already demoralized and terrified of the prospect of having to face the wrath of the monkey warriors after the horrifying experience they have had with Hanuman who had killed many of them, even Ravana's own son Akshaya Kumar, and had burnt Lanka to a dark hull. So, Lord Ram and his army found the field clear upon arrival!

The next verse shows that this place was lively and verdant, lush with greenery, having a lot of edible roots and stems as well as fruit-bearing trees.

Earlier, when Hanuman had arrived in Lanka in search of Sita, he too had landed at this same place because we have read that he too saw a wonderful forest with animals and birds as well as fine fruit-bearing green trees—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 3.]

सब तरु फरे राम हित लागी । रितु अरु कुरितु काल गति त्यागी ॥ ५ ॥

खाहिं मधुर फल बिटप हलावहिं । लंका सन्मुख सिखर चलावहिं ॥ ६ ॥

saba taru pharē rāma hita lāgī. ritu aru kuritu kāla gati tyāgī. 5.

khāhiṁ madhura phala biṭapa halāvahiṁ. laṅkā sanmukha sikhara calāvahiṁ. 6.

All the trees had been in full blossom, whether or not it was the season and the time of the year for them to bear sweet fruits or edible stems and roots, for the sake of the convenience of Lord Ram and his army¹. (5)

The hordes of monkey and bear warriors went wild while eating sweet-and-succulent fruits from trees, shaking the trees (uprooting some of them and breaking the branches of others) and picking up rocks of all shapes and sizes from the adjoining hills and mountains and hurling them in the direction of the fort (or citadel) of Lanka.

[The excited monkeys and bear warriors vented their anger at the demons by pelting stones and rocks in the direction of their city. Perhaps they wanted to instigate or provoke the demons to retaliate so they would get a chance to pounce upon them.] (6)

[Note—¹The members of the Plant kingdom decided to do their bit to serve the Supreme Being who had come visiting them in the form of Lord Ram. They thought that it was their moment of glory and honour that they would be able to serve the Lord, that the gracious Lord had been kind enough to give them an opportunity to serve him. So they must not miss this chance because by serving Lord Ram they would be freed from the sin of growing up in the land of the demons and serving their interests all their lives till now.

Here 'Prakriti', or Mother Nature, had stepped in to serve her own Lord known as the 'Viraat Purush', the cosmic form of the supreme Consciousness that is also known as 'Brahm', and is deemed to be the one who had created this world in conjunction with Prakriti. A similar thing had happened earlier too while Lord Ram was on his way to the forest when Nature had done its best to provide as much comfort to the Lord by giving him the shade of clouds to protect him from the heat of the sun, and making the earth soft below his tired legs—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

Then when Lord Ram reached Chitrakoot mountain and decided to stay there for some time, all facets of Nature became pleasant to please the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.

Later on during the Lord's sojourn in Panchavati, the part of the dense forest from where Sita was abducted by Ravana, Mother Nature once again went out of her way to serve Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14.

Once again we read how Nature was at its vibrantly colourful best in order to give comfort to and please Lord Ram during his stay on Mt. Prabarshan in Kishkindha prior to the time the messengers were dispatched in search of Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 12—to—Doha no. 17.]

जहँ कहूँ फिरत निसाचर पावहिं । घेरि सकल बहु नाच नचावहिं ॥ ७ ॥
दसनन्हि काटि नासिका काना । कहि प्रभु सुजसु देहिं तब जाना ॥ ८ ॥

jaham̐ kahum̐ phirata nisācara pāvahim̐. ghēri sakala bahu nāca nacāvahim̐.
7.
dasananhi kātī nāsikā kānā. kahi prabhu sujasu dēhim̐ taba jānā. 8.

If they chanced to find any demon roaming around, they caught hold of him, surrounded him from all sides and then teased him by making him dance to their tune, poking fun at the helpless captive, mocking him and humiliating him in various ways.
(7)

They bit the demon's ears or nose with their sharp teeth while telling him about the glory of Lord Ram, and only then (when the monkeys and bears had enough fun from their captive and had thoroughly bashed him) would they let the demon go¹. (8)

[Note—¹We have observed that the army of Lord Ram landed on the shores of Lanka without any resistance. All the demons who may have guarded the front facing the ocean ran away in fear as they saw the colossal army of ferocious monkeys and bears aggressively heading towards the shore of Lanka over the ocean. The majority of these demon sentries took to the safety of the fort, but some may have strayed, deciding to stay back in order to do some reconnaissance work.

The monkeys and bears were itching for a fight, but while they rampaged through the forested area around the fort of Lanka they were dismayed to find no trace of demon forces on which to vent their ire. But however they found some isolated demon here and there, so they immediately pounced upon this poor and helpless fellow and made a good time teasing and ragging him in different ways. They made the captured demon dance, do sit-ups and many other things to mock him; they snarled at him, pinched and poked at him, and unable to suppress their anger they even bit the demon in his ears and nose, leaving the poor fellow bleeding profusely and gravely wounded. Then they let him go so that when he went back to the city the rest of the demons would get a stern warning—that the brave warriors of Lord Ram have finally arrived, and they are eager for war.]

जिन्ह कर नासा कान निपाता । तिन्ह रावनहि कही सब बाता ॥ ९ ॥
 सुनत श्रवन बारिधि बंधाना । दस मुख बोलि उठा अकुलाना ॥ १० ॥

jinha kara nāsā kāna nipātā. tinha rāvanahi kahī saba bātā. 9.
 sunata śravana bāridhi bandhānā. dasa mukha bōli uṭhā akulānā. 10.

These demons who had got their noses and ears bitten off ran back into the city of Lanka, and reported all the developments to their king Ravana. (9)

As soon as Ravana heard that the virtually un-crossable and indomitable ocean had been finally tamed and tied with a bridge, he was exceedingly amazed and confounded. He was so agitated and exasperated beyond measure that he could not suppress his dread and blurted out his utter astonishment at this alarming development by speaking all at once with his ten mouths¹. (10)

[Note—¹Normally Ravana would speak with one of his ten mouths. But on this occasion he was so utterly shaken by surprise and became so extremely dreadful and alarmed of the fact that his arch enemy, Lord Ram, had actually landed in Lanka that all his wits went for a toss and all his mouths opened at once, as if to exclaim: “Awe, oh gosh; what am I hearing? Is it really possible that the mighty ocean known for its stubbornness and independence has been actually tamed and tied by a bridge? Is it true or am I having delusions? Am I not hearing properly, or have these messengers gone mad? Oh come on, you fools; don’t joke with me. Is what you say true? Mind you, I shall get you roasted alive if it turns out to be wrong information. I just can’t believe it.”]

दो०. बाँध्यो बननिधि नीरनिधि जलधि सिंधु बारीस ।
 सत्य तोयनिधि कंपति उदधि पयोधि नदीस ॥ ५ ॥

dōhā.

bām̐dhyō bananidhi nīranidhi jaladhi sindhu bārīsa.
 satya tōyanidhi kampati udadhi payōdhi nadīsa. 5.

‘Is it really true that someone can actually bind and tie the fathomless abode of water, of the waves and the billows that is known by various names such as the ocean and the sea which is also the lord of the clouds that produce rain, that which is full of heaving and swirling tides, that which is full of brine and sour liquid, that which is deep, measureless and endless, and that which is also the lord of the rivers?’¹ (Doha no. 5)*

[Note—We have read in the preceding verse that Ravana could not suppress his emotions and spoke with all his ten heads at once. Each head used one epithet to describe the ocean, and they are the following: (1) bananidhi, (2) nīranidhi, (3) jaladhi, (4) sindhu, (5) bārīsa, (6) tōyanidhi, (7) kampati, (8) udadhi, (9) payōdhi, and (10) nadīsa. All these terms are synonyms for the ocean because it is a vast habitat of marine life, is an endless reservoir of water, it has no end as all its different divisions are seamlessly joined together, it has huge waves and high tides, is always

on the move, is turbulent, is the origin of rain-bearing clouds, and is where all the rivers end or empty themselves.

The way Ravana expresses his amazement and disbelief shows that never before in the history of the world the ocean had ever been bridged and tamed. It was therefore a miraculous feat, never achieved hitherto, that took Ravana by surprise and left him stunned.

When told by the demons who had run to him to report after being released by the monkeys and bears as we have just read above, that a bridge had been constructed over the mighty ocean and Lord Ram's army has landed on the shore of Lanka, Ravana was dumb-founded and taken aback. Till now he was rest assured that it is absolutely impossible that someone can cross the ocean by making a bridge over its surface. This proves that his own spies and look-outs whom he had assigned the job of keeping an eye on the frontiers had betrayed him, or perhaps they were too terrified of him to come and tell him some unpleasant news which he did not want to hear because they all feared for their own lives, not wishing to annoy Ravana and invite his wrath.

Ravana had been feeling secure in Lanka so far because the island-city and its fort were surrounded on all the four sides by the ocean which effectively formed a deep and exceptionally wide moat around them, making Lanka inaccessible from all sides. That security has now been breached and compromised. Ravana was not prepared for this sudden rupturing of his defenses. So he was exceedingly alarmed and upset, not knowing how to cope with this new and un-imagined challenge; it was a danger for which the demons were not prepared.

*If we carefully analyse the Story of the Ramayan and ponder over the question as to why Ravana was ultimately defeated and killed we find that there are four crucial points which cannot escape our attention as being the primary reasons for Ravana's undoing. These are the following:

(a) Ravana was surrounded by many close aides and subordinates on whom he had great faith, but who were disgruntled and disenchanted with him. Some had openly expressed their displeasure at his attitude, his way of thinking and doing things, while others may have remained quiet out of fear of their own safety but were nevertheless unhappy with him. In the first category come Mandodari, Ravana's wife, Vibhishan, his youngest brother, Kumbhakaran, another younger brother of his, Shuk (or Shuka), his trusted spy and messenger, Malyawan, an old demon who was very close to him, his maternal grandfather and one of his senior ministers, and so on. In the second category come Lankini, the female demon tasked with the security of the gates of the fort of Lanka, Trijata, the old demoness tasked to guard Sita in her captivity, and may be many more of whom we have no account.

Mandodari had tried to persuade Ravana on four different occasions to abandon his confrontationist attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with him (refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; and (iv) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35-b—to Doha no. 37).

Vibhishan was kicked out by Ravana when he had attempted to dissuade the latter from pursuing a hostile attitude towards Lord Ram, the reason why Vibhishan decided to go and join Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai

line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41).

Malyawan had endorsed Vibhishan's advice, but he too was shouted down by Ravana (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40).

Shuk was sent by Ravana behind Vibhishan to spy on him, and when he came back to report he very strongly rebuked Ravana and pleaded with him to stop his madness and make peace with Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 57).

Kumbhakaran too had sternly chided Ravana when he was asked to go and fight Lord Ram during the heat of battle (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 63).

Then we have the instances of the two female demons named Lankini and Trijata who weren't happy at all with Ravana, and had predicted his demise. For (a) Lankini, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 5; and for (b) Trijata, refer to refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 11; and Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100).

(b) The second prominent reason of Ravana's fall was lack of an efficient and skilled network of spies. Having a good and competent network of spies and informers who are diligent and dedicated and loyal to their masters and their country are absolutely vital and a most important feature for success in politics and statecraft. Ravana's spies failed him. There are two glaring examples of this failure: (a) When the gods and mother earth had gathered to pray to Lord Vishnu to protect them against Ravana and his demon horde, and Vishnu promised them he would come down himself as Lord Ram to fulfil their needs, Ravana did not get a wind of this meeting. Had he been informed then it is most certain that he would have gone there and chased away the gods and grabbed mother earth like he had done with Sita. (b) The second glaring example of his failed intelligence apparatus is that a huge bridge was being built right next door to his kingdom, literally right under his nose, and he had no inkling of it as he was kept in the dark. This is very clear when he was taken aback with astonishment and expressed his dismay when finally informed that a bridge was in place and Lord Ram's army has landed (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 10 that precede it). Obviously, the bridge was not built surreptitiously or in a clandestine manner without any sound emanating. Why was Ravana not informed?

(c) The third most obvious reason for his fall was his own nature. He was egoist, arrogant, stubborn and haughty to the extreme. He was over-confident of himself, and over-estimated his own invincibility, valour, strength, abilities and powers. He was transformed so blind and deaf in his self-pride and ego that he failed to see the reality and hear sane voices.

It is to be noted here that Ravana was not weak or lacking in courage, valour, strength and abilities as he himself has asserted so many times, but he misgauged the actual measure of these virtues in him when they were compared with those of his opponent, who in this case was Lord Ram. When put on a scale to measure and

compare these qualities between Lord Ram and Ravana, the scale tilted heavily in favour of the Lord, which unfortunately Ravana, in his egoist haughtiness, could not come to terms with.

(d) And the fourth and perhaps the main reason why Ravana would not listen to anyone is this:

Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, had assumed a human form as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons led by their king Ravana of the demon kingdom of Lanka. The Gods and Mother Earth had prayed to Lord Vishnu to protect them from Ravana’s merciless reign of terror and mayhem. In order to fulfill his promise made to them, Lord Ram was on his mission to Lanka from his capital city of Ayodhya. During his journey through the forests, he, along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, took a break and rested for some time at a place endowed with nature’s bounty of exceptional beauty; it was called Panchvati. Sage Agastya had advised the Lord to abide here for some time, and during his retreat he must devise a device by which the next phase of his mission could be realized—which was to find out a way that would give the Lord an honourable excuse to go to Lanka and get rid of Ravana.

Lord Ram pondered over the subject and decided that the only way to get the ball rolling was to use his powerful force known as ‘Maya’ (which is the Lord’s magical cosmic powers that create an overriding sense of delusion and conjures up a world of illusions so real that even the wisest of sages are taken for a ride) and have Sita abducted by Ravana. To keep the momentum going and ensure success in his mission, the Lord decided that he would employ this Maya of his to the full, and in such a way that no matter what happens Ravana would not see the reality and listen to no one who might advise him to give Sita back to the Lord and end hostility.]

चौ०. निज बिकलता बिचारि बहोरी । बिहँसि गयउ गृह करि भय भोरी ॥ १ ॥

मंदोदरीं सुन्यो प्रभु आयो । कौतुकहीं पाथोधि बँधायो ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nija bikalatā bicāri bahōrī. biham̐si gaya'u gṛha kari bhaya bhōrī. 1.
mandōdarīm sun'yō prabhu āyō. kautukahīm pāthōdhi bam̐dhāyō. 2.

[We have read earlier, at the end of Chapter 10, section 10.1.2, that Ravana was utterly confounded and extremely worried when he came to know of Lord Ram landing on the soil of Lanka with his huge and formidable army of brave and fearless monkey-and-bear warriors. This news took him by surprise as he had not dreamt about it even in his wildest of dreams that it was ever possible for anyone to cross the mighty ocean.

As his secret fear of annihilation and complete destruction reared its ghostly and dreaded head inside his heart, leaving Ravana shaken to the core, he decided to retire from the court to take a break to recover from this initial shock. So he went to his royal palace to regain his composure. There he was confronted by his wife Mandodari who was equally shaken and worried. She had taken a decision that she would try her level best to make her husband see reason and come to terms with ground realities, instead of dreaming of living in a fool’s paradise where everything was honey and sweet. All was not lost till this point of time, and now there was still a

chance of controlling the damage without much further loss. Though time was running out but still it was not too late.

Therefore, when Ravana entered his royal chamber to recover his wits and get some time to reflect, Mandodari approached him with an urgent appeal to abandon a confrontational attitude with Lord Ram as there was no match between the Lord and her husband Ravana. To engage in a destructive war that loomed on the horizon was not at all justified on the part of her husband, especially when the fault was not of Lord Ram but entirely of Ravana himself. She advised her husband to return Sita to her husband, Lord Ram, as this simple action of his would not only save the entire demon clan from annihilation but would give him immense good fame as well.

But unfortunately, the fiat of Fate and the writ of Destiny wished something different for the demon race, and so Ravana, under the influence of these two powerful forces of creation, was so much deluded and made so stubborn that he refused to relent and budge from his position.]

When Ravana felt that he was feeling very restless, he dismissed the court, smiled as if to dispel his worries (and hide his embarrassment), and then retired to his palace. (1)

Meanwhile, Mandodari (Ravana's wife) heard the news¹ that Lord Ram has finally arrived by tying or bridging the ocean as it was a mere sport for him. [To wit, Lord Ram had no difficulty in getting a bridge across the ocean constructed. It was almost like a sporting activity for him, requiring no great effort.] (2)

[Note—¹How did Mandodari hear the news? Well, the queens had their own loyal spies and confidantes who would keep her updated about the goings-on in the kingdom. Mandodari too had her own network of faithful spies and messengers who would keep her informed of all the developments in and around Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36.]

कर गहि पतिहि भवन निज आनी । बोली परम मनोहर बानी ॥ ३ ॥

चरन नाइ सिरु अंचलु रोपा । सुनहु बचन पिय परिहरि कोपा ॥ ४ ॥

kara gahi patihi bhavana nija ānī. bōlī parama manōhara bānī. 3.
carana nā'i siru aṅcalu rōpā. sunahu bacana piya parihari kōpā. 4.

She received her husband at the gate of the palace, and holding his hands she brought him inside her own palace, speaking to him sweetly and in a polite way. (3)

Once inside, she respectfully bowed her head at his feet, and then spreading the end of her garment before him in a symbolic gesture of submission and as a token of her expecting him to fulfill her wishes, she pleaded, 'My dear husband! Please listen to my words without getting angry at me. [My Lord, abandon your anger and listen to what I have to say. It is for your own good, as well as mine.] (4)

नाथ बयरु कीजे ताही सों । बुधि बल सकिअ जीति जाही सों ॥ ५ ॥

तुम्हहि रघुपतिहि अंतर कैसा । खलु खद्योत दिनकरहि जैसा ॥ ६ ॥

nātha bayaru kijē tāhī sōm. budhi bala saki'a jīti jāhī sōm. 5.

tumhahi raghupatihi antara kaisā. khalu khadyōta dinakarahi jaisā. 6.

Oh Lord, one should be hostile towards and make an enemy with only such a person with whom one is very sure to win by the virtue of one's superior intellect as well as far better strength and abilities¹. (5)

Verily, the difference between you and Raghupati (Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu line of kings of Ayodhya) is akin to the difference between a glow-worm and the sun². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, it is an established maxim that one should be sure of his own strength and abilities, of one's own strengths and weaknesses before creating animosity with another person. Otherwise, it is a stupid thing for one to create hostility with someone who may later on prove to be a hard nut to crack and more than a match for the former. A careless action of dare devilry often leads to an embarrassing situation and loss of face, if not outright defeat and loss of whatever prestige and dignity that one possesses.

Two virtues are mentioned by Mandodari here—'intellect or intelligence' and 'strength and power'. These two qualities are needed to vanquish one's opponent and win a war. An intelligent and wise commander who has a strong and powerful army can easily out-manoeuvre the enemy and defeat him even if the latter is superior in terms of number of soldiers.

These qualities—of intelligence and wisdom on the one hand, and strength, power, skill and ability on the other hand—are essential to achieve success in an endeavour. Sursa, the mother of the serpents, who was sent by the gods to test Hanuman on these parameters while he was on his way to Lanka to search for Sita, also declared that since Hanuman did have these virtues he would definitely succeed in his mission—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 2.

Later on when Hanuman met Sita and wished to eat fruits from the trees in the Ashok garden because he was feeling very hungry, Sita too let him do so because she decided he is highly intelligent and strong enough to cope with any eventuality and protect himself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 17.

²Here, Mandodari compares Lord Ram to the bright sun and her husband Ravana to the glow-worm. Just like the dim light of the glow-worm fades in comparison to the brilliant light of the sun, all the strength, powers, glories and virtues of Ravana taken together are dimmed when weighed against those of Lord Ram.

It ought to be noted here that the same analogy of a glow-worm vis-à-vis the sun to compare Ravana with Lord Ram was used by Sita when she rebuked the demon king for his attempt to force her to submission—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 9. It should also be noted that at that time Ravana had become furious with Sita, but when Mandodari now chides him with the same example he remained restrained. It is because he loved Mandodari dearly and knew that what she was saying was out of her concern for his own safety, while in the case of Sita it was a rebuke from a captive and an enemy's wife, which was unacceptable.

Another reason is that here Ravana and Mandodari are alone, while when he was talking to Sita in the Ashok grove there were so many demons and demonesses in attendance, a situation which made him furious because he felt that he was being insulted publicly in front of his own subordinates.]

अतिबल मधु कैटभ जेहिं मारे । महाबीर दितिसुत संघारे ॥ ७ ॥

जेहिं बलि बाँधि सहसभुज मारा । सोइ अवतरेउ हरन महि भारा ॥ ८ ॥

atibala madhu kaitabha jēhim mārē. mahābīra ditisuta saṅghārē. 7.

jēhim bali bāṁdhi sahasabhuja mārā. sō'i avatārē'u harana mahi bhārā. 8.

He (Lord Ram in his primary form as Lord Vishnu, the 2nd of the Trinity Gods and the protector and sustainer of creation; the cosmic form of the Supreme Being) is the one who had slayed the most powerful and strong demons named Madhu and Kaitav¹, as well as the great warriors who were the sons of Diti (i.e. the two demon brothers Hiranyakashipu² and Hiranyaksha³). (7)

He who had tied the legendary king of demons named Bali⁴, and had slayed Sahastrabahu⁵, he is the Lord who has now manifested himself as Lord Ram.

[To wit, my dear husband, be wary of Lord Ram. He is the same Lord who had killed so many powerful demons as listed here, demons who had considered themselves virtually invincible and un-conquerable during their time. They were all like you, may be stronger and more powerful. But they stood no chance against Lord Vishnu. So mind you—there is an alarm bell ringing and you ought to wake up before it's too late for you.] (8)

[Note—¹Madhu and Kaitav—According to the legendary story as narrated in Markandey Puran, the Vedas had been stolen by two demons named Madhu and Kaitav who had hidden them in the eastern ocean. Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of Hayagriva to kill them and restore the Vedas.

The legend about the birth of these two demons Madhu and Kaitav is that at the time Brahma the creator emerged atop a thousand-petal lotus that sprouted from the navel of Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush, two drops of water symbolising the two Gunas (qualities) of Raja and Tama (the medium and the lowest type of qualities) were present on one of the petals on which Brahma sat. Madhu was born from the drop of Raja Guna, and Kaitav from the drop of water representing Tama Guna.

Once they went up to the heaven and saw the Vedas in all their glorious form placed alongside Brahma who was engaged in the process of creation. The duo immediately stole the Vedas and hid them under the water of the eastern ocean. Brahma was confounded and requested Lord Vishnu to retrieve them as the Vedas were the former's eyes as they contained all the knowledge needed for all the aspects of creation. So Vishnu appeared as a deity with a head of a horse—i.e. as Hayagriva. The heaven was his head, the rays of the Sun were his glistening hairs, the sky and the underworld were his ears, the earth was his forehead, the river Ganges and Saraswati were the two halves of his chest, the oceans were his thighs, the Sun and the Moon were his eyes, dusk was his nostril, OM was his ornament, electric was his tongue, the

Pittars (Spirits of dead ancestors) were his teeth, the Brahma Loka was his lip, and Kalratri (the night of the doomsday) was his neck.

The Lord entered the ocean and went to the ocean bed, the nether world called the 'Patal Loka'. There, he began to neigh melodiously, singing the hymns of the Sam Veda. The two demons were so enchanted by this singing that they came out to hear it. Lord Hayagriva got an opportunity and he immediately took the Vedas and gave them to Brahma. After their restoration, he went back to the ocean and lived there for some time.

When the demons reached the place from where they had heard the sweet singing emanating, they found no one. So they got suspicious and rushed back to where they had concealed the Vedas to find them missing. Then they began frantically to search for the Vedas as well as the miscreant who removed the scriptures from the hiding place. They reached the surface of the ocean and found Lord Vishnu peacefully reclined on the bedstead of the celestial serpent named Sheshnath. They assumed that certainly the Lord was the one who had taken away the Vedas. They shouted and caused so much raucous that Lord Vishnu woke up from his cosmic sleep, and then there ensued a battle between the Lord and the demons which lasted for five thousand years.

Pleased by their valour and ardour, Vishnu asked them to request for a grant of a boon. The haughty demons retorted and sneered at the Lord, asking the latter to ask for a boon instead. The Lord asked that they be killed at his hands. [Markandey Puran, 81/74.] Taken aback, the demons said that they were also entitled for a boon as promised by the Lord himself. The Lord granted them permission to ask, and they requested that they be killed at a place where the earth was not submerged in water. [Markandey Puran, 81/76.] Vishnu immediately spread his thighs on the surface of the ocean, and deluded by the Lord's Maya the demons thought that dry earth has emerged from the ocean. Aside of this, they also found in this happening a chance of their own salvation and so willingly put their heads on it. Vishnu invoked his Sudarshan Chakra (the sharp weapon of Vishnu which is like a circular saw) to chop off their heads. This episode is described in detail in the Markandey Puran, Chapter 81.

Perhaps this episode describes how the continents and islands came into being during the process of creation.

A slight variant of the above narration is available in the Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto no. 203. According to it, the demons Madhu and Kaitav went to the Kshir Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk where Lord Vishnu was reclining on the coiled body of Seshnath, some time after Brahma, the creator of the physical world and the Vedas, was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from Lord Vishnu's navel. These two demons began to terrorize Brahma. The scared Brahma shook the stem of the lotus violently, and this stirred up Lord Vishnu from his sleep. The Lord saw the two great demons and was very impressed by them and their valour. Lord Vishnu asked the two demons to request for a boon which will be granted to them. The two demons were very haughty, and they sneered at Vishnu, saying that the latter should ask for a boon instead. They will grant Vishnu anything he wants.

Vishnu was extremely annoyed and taken aback at their temerity and arrogance. So he said that he wished to kill them—this is the boon he wants to be granted. The two demons replied that though they do not like giving this boon as this means their death, but they are true to their words, so Lord Vishnu could go ahead and kill them. But since Vishnu had asked them for a boon first, they also had a right to be granted what they wished. The first boon they wanted to be granted to them was that

must die at a place where there is no water, and the second boon was that they wished to become sons of the Lord. So Lord Vishnu spread his thighs on which he placed the two demons and cut off their heads with his circular weapon known as the Sudarshan Chakra.

According to the version in *Devi Bhagwat*, 1/4/9, these two demons were killed at the intervention of goddess Mahakaali, the divine Mother and the cosmic force that brings an end to this creation. She was invoked by Brahma when the demons began terrorizing him. She woke Vishnu from his deep sleep of meditation, and when even Vishnu couldn't kill these demons after a vicious battle, the goddess Mahakali used her powers of delusions to help Vishnu slay them.

There is another demon by the name of Madhu. He was himself the son of demoness Lolaa, and the father of the demon Lavanaasur. This Madhu was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and had obtained a powerful Trident from the Lord with the condition that it would not be used to attack the gods or harm (injure and kill) anybody in this world. He built a city named Madhupura and ruled from there. His queen was called Khumbhinasi.

When his son Lavanaasur began transgressing the laws of Dharma (righteous conduct), he became extremely disgusted so much so that he went away to do Tapa (austerities and penances). After his going away, Lavanaasur became very cruel and tyrannical. Ultimately, he was killed by Shatrughan, the younger brother of Lord Ram.

²Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of 'Narsingh or Nirsingh' (half-lion and half-man) to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped and had devotion for Lord Vishnu whom the demon loathed. After having killed the demon, Nrsingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrsingh. [Refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 8.] Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrsingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrsingh in order to subdue the latter.

This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm

would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no characteristic features, attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The ‘lion’ part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched authority, stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete and unchallenged sway over the entire domain of creation just like a lion has over the forest and its inhabitant wild animals. This term is symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned and powerful Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad varieties of living beings, called the Jivas, just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the ‘man’ part symbolizes the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man is of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists with all its variations in this creation, whether in its primary form represented by the wild and primitive animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by the man, with all the other stages of creation included in between these two.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalaad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Nrisingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism, power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

Tulsidas has narrated this incident in his book “Kavitawali”, Uttar Kand, verse no. 128 which says—

“The demon Hiranyakashipu drew his sword to kill Prahalad (his son), but though the former had no mercy in his heart, the latter did not run away seeing his father who resembled the terrible God of death in a personified form. And when he challenged Prahalad saying, ‘Tell me where your Ram is?’ The son replied, ‘Everywhere!’ At this, the father asked him, ‘Is he present in this stone pillar as well?’ Then Prahalad replied, ‘Yes, sure!’.

Hearing his earnest conviction and urgent call, Lord Narsingh manifested immediately, destroyed Prahalad’s enemy (his father), and became ferociously angry. Then, it was only after Prahalad prayed to him that he calmed down.

³Hiranyaksha—He was slayed by Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as the Boar. It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation

from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

⁴The demon king Bali— The story of king Bali appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 8/15-23. It relates to the Vaaman (dwarf mendicant) incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. Bali was a grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrsingh (half men and half lion) earlier.

King Bali was very righteous and powerful; he chased away Indra, the promiscuous and lustful king of Gods, from the throne of heaven, and conquered it. He performed a thousand Ashwamedha Yagya (horse sacrifice) during the course of which he had conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, of his heavenly powers. Aditi, the mother of Gods, was peeved, and she requested her husband, sage Kashyap, to find a way out. Kashyap advised her to pray to Lord Vishnu. Aditi did severe penance for twelve days at the end of which Vishnu appeared before her and asked how he could help her. When Aditi told him the problem, Vishnu promised that he will take birth as her son in the form of a 'Vaaman' (a dwarf Brahmin) and retrieve the earth and the kingdom of heaven from Bali's dominion.

Once he heard that king Bali was performing a great fire sacrifice, something Bali used to do routinely, and during which he had declared that he will give anything asked for, again something for which he was renowned. This religious sacrifice was being conducted on the banks of river Narmada. Seizing this opportunity, Vishnu in the form of a Vaaman approached Bali who welcomed him and paid his due respects. Then Bali asked Vaaman to ask for some gift or donation as this was the traditional practice during such great religious sacrifices. Vaaman was waiting for this chance. First he made Bali repeat his vows in public, and then asked for land measuring his three steps.

Bali was dumbfounded—he wondered at the inconsequential dimension of the land covered by three tiny steps of this dwarf! Bali requested Vishnu to ask for something more, but Vishnu was adamant. Bali's priest, sage Shukracharya, knew that this dwarf was no one else but Vishnu, and so he tried to persuade Bali to abstain from making such commitment off-hand, because he will lose his entire kingdom. But Bali refused, saying that being the grandson of Prahalad, he cannot rescind on his words that he will give this Brahmin dwarf whatever he asks, even if it means sufferance.

Shukracharya was annoyed at this disobedience, but Vishnu was extremely pleased, and the Lord decided that after fulfilling the promise made to the Gods he will instantly reward Bali in ample terms, and will himself serve him! What a wonderful grace Vishnu shows.

So it happened that Vishnu, in the form of Vaaman, assumed a colossal form of cosmic proportions. The Lord measured the entire earth that Bali ruled in his first step. In the second step Vishnu measured the whole heaven. Nothing was left for the third step—so Bali offered his head! Vishnu was extremely pleased, and being the Lord of the world, he decided that since Bali has offered his own self to him like a faithful devotee, he will fully reward him. Hence, Vishnu blessed Bali that he will go down in history as the greatest donor and righteous of all times, that he will become Indra, the king of Gods, and rule over the heavens during the celestial era known as Saawarni Manvantar, that till that time he shall become the king of the nether world where demons would live, and to add icing to the cake the Lord declared that he

himself will become his gatekeeper, and anybody who dared oppose him would be punished by the Lord himself!

⁵Sahasbahu— The story of ‘Sahastra-baahu’ in brief is as follows—There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’. He was the son of king Kritvirya whose kingdom was known as Anup; its capital city was known as Maahismati and it was situated on the southern bank of river Narmada.

In his early life he was a very righteous and conscientious person, a man of upright thoughts and noble conduct. After the death of his father when the court ministers wished to anoint him on the throne of the kingdom, he refused, saying: ‘Kingdom leads a king to hell if he cannot live upto the expectations of his subjects and rule according to the principles of Dharma (righteousness and probity). The main source of income of a king is ‘tax collected from his subjects’, but if this tax is collected in an improper way, and if it is not utilized for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom in accordance with the principles of Dharma which say that the main use of state revenue is to ensure that traders are given all facilities and protection for carrying out legitimate trade, are not looted by thieves, the subjects of the kingdom are given due protection and their interests are always kept ahead of everything else, and so on and so forth. So unless I acquire such powers and abilities by doing Tapa (penance), I will not accept the throne.’

When Sahastrabahu said this, the great sage Garg advised him that if he indeed wishes to do Tapa and acquire mytical powers to rule the vast kingdom in accordance to Dharma then he should go and serve Lord Dattatreya, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Dattatreya lived in a cave of Mt. SahyaParvat and did Tapa there (Markandeya Puran, Canto 18). So, Sahastrabahu went to Lord Dattatreya and began serving him diligently for a long period of ten thousand years.

According to Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12, when Dattatreya was pleased with his service and austerities, he granted him four boons: (i) First, the king asked for one thousand arms. (ii) Second, he wished that no one in his kingdom would even dare to think in an unrighteous and sinful way. (iii) Third, he wanted to conquer the whole earth and rule over it. (iv) Fourth, that if he has to die then it must be in the battle-field at the hands of a warrior who is superior to him in every way.

According to Markandey Puran, Canto 18, verse nos. 14-18, the king was granted ten boons as follows: (i) The powers and authority to rule over his subjects without acquiring sins. (ii) The ability to know the thoughts of others. (iii) No one should be able to face in the battle-field (i.e. he should become invincible). (iv) During a war he should have a thousand arms so as to fight his opponent with all of them at once. [This is also mentioned in Harivansha Puran, Canto 33, verse no. 14.] (v) He should have unhindered access to all places in the sky, water, earth, mountains and the nether world. (vi) If he has to die then it should be at the hands of someone stronger than him. (vii) If by chance he goes astray and falls on the wrong path, then he must have a chance to get good advice and company of saintly persons (i.e. he must be given an opportunity to mend his ways). (viii) He must have illustrious persons as his guests so that he can serve them and get their blessings. (ix) His wealth should never diminish even after liberal charities and giving of alms regularly; there should be no shortage of wealth in his kingdom. (x) The virtue of Bhakti (having devotion for Lord God) should be firm and perpetual in him.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto 115, verse no. 12, it is said that by the grace of Dattatreya the king acquired an air-plane made of gold; that he ruled over the entire

earth; and that no one could stop his chariot. He was a great Emperor who conquered the whole world and made liberal charities. He is also regarded as a great scholar of Tantra Shastra.

He was so powerful and mighty that when he bathed in the ocean and thrashed it with his thousand arms, he could turn the tide backwards. He would splash the water so heavily that marine creatures were tossed into the air like ninepins. [Brahm-Vaivarta Puran, Ganesh Khand, Canto 23-27.]

But the Laws of Creation are such that every good thing has to come to an end one day; nothing is eternal and permanent in this mortal gross world. This also applied to Sahastrabahu. As time passed, he became extremely haughty and cruel. He started subjugating even the Gods so as to remove all challenges to his authority and power. It is said that he ruled for eighty-five thousand years before he was killed by sage Parashuram.

Once he was asked by the Fire God for alms, and the noble king could not refuse. The Fire God used this grant to burn everything and cause havoc everywhere, because he was certain that Sahastrabahu would not stop him. During this burning spree, the Fire destroyed the hermitage of sage Aapava (who was later on known as sage Vasistha according to Brahm Puran during its description of the race of Yayaati). The sage cursed king Sahastrabahu that his arms, relying upon whose strength the Fire God had destroyed his hermitage and was wreaking havoc on earth, would be cut by sage Parashuram. [Refer: Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 49, verse nos. 35-45; and Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12.]

One day, he was wandering along the shore of the ocean and out of his pride and haughtiness he covered it with thousands of arrows. The Ocean assumed a form and appeared before him to plead that he stop showering arrows into the water as all the marine creatures that live in the water would die. Sahastrabahu accepted the prayer but asked the Ocean to tell him about someone who could face him in battle, as he was itching for a face-off with anyone who could claim to be stronger than him as he wished to conquer the opponent and become an unchallenged warrior in this world. The Ocean told him to go sage Jamdagni whose son Parashuram would be fit opponent for him and would welcome him in battle. [Refer: Mahabharat, Ashwamegh Parva, Canto 29.]

Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. [This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Ashwamegha Parva, Canto 29.]

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

The story of Sahastrabahu and how Ravana, the king of the demon race who ruled in Lanka, was humiliated by him, is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-57; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.

Briefly it is as follows: Sahastrabahu was the son of Kritvirya and the king of Mahishmati situated on the banks of river Narmada. By the blessings of sage Dattatreya he could get a thousand arms when he so desired. One day when he was enjoying himself with his ladies and mistresses in the river, Ravana had too gone there to offer worship to Lord Shiva. Ravana's attendants had collected flowers for offering to Lord Shiva. In the meantime, Sahastrabahu, who was showing off his majesty to impress the women, had used his thousand arms to block the flow of water in the river, which therefore flooded the banks and flowed upstream. The flowers that Ravana's attendants had collected for worship were washed away, which gravely annoyed Ravana as it disrupted his worship. On learning the cause of this flood, Ravana immediately went to challenge Sahastrabahu and started a fierce battle with his soldiers. Upon learning that Ravana has destroyed the entire army, Sahastrabahu himself came to face him. A severe battle ensued. As soon as the chief commander of the demon army, named Prahasta, fell, the rest of the demons fled; and then followed a one-to-one duel between Ravana and Sahastrabahu. These two mighty warriors used massive war-maces to hit each other. Finally, Sahastrabahu hit Ravana so hard that he tottered and swooned, and was so dazed that he sat down to recover himself. Seizing the moment, Sahastrabahu captured Ravana and held him tight in his thousand arms, using these arms like ropes to ensnare him so firmly that Ravana could not wriggle out. After this, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana to his capital city and imprisoned him like an ordinary prisoner of war. Later on, sage Pulastya went to plead with Sahastrabahu, and he not only succeeded in getting Ravana released but also in forging a friendship between the two. This version is according to Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33.]

तासु बिरोध न कीजिअ नाथा । काल करम जिव जाकें हाथा ॥ ९ ॥

tāsu birōdha na kiji'a nāthā. kāla karama jiva jākēm hāthā. 9.

Oh Lord. It is not wise to oppose him whose hands command the destiny of the world by way of regulating the factors of time and death, the deeds done by all, and the fate of all living beings.

[To wit, Lord Ram is the Supreme Lord under whose command lie Kaal (time, death), Karma (deeds) and Jiva (the living being)¹.] (9)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 25 where we read that Marich too has advised Ravana the same thing; and

once again in (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27 where Angad, Lord Ram's emissary, tells Ravana a similar thing.

'Kaal' or time is a factor that determines the lifespan of all things, animate and inanimate. 'Kaal' is also the name of the god of death who devours everything in creation.

'Karma' or the deed done by a living being is a factor that determines his fate.

'Jiva' or the living being, the creature, is under the control of both the Kaal and Karma, i.e. his lifespan is fixed by the factor of time, and his fate is determined by the deeds done by him.

And the Supreme Being controls all of them. Lord Ram is this Supreme Being.]

दो०. रामहि सौँपि जानकी नाइ कमल पद माथ ।

सुत कहँ राज समर्पि बन जाइ भजिअ रघुनाथ ॥ ६ ॥

dōhā.

rāmahi saumpi jānakī nā'i kamala pada mātha.

suta kahum' rāja samarpi bana jā'i bhaji'a raghunātha. 6.

I advise you to give Janki (Sita) back to Lord Ram¹, and then after bowing reverentially at his lotus-like holy feet you should hand over the reins of the kingdom to your son (Meghnad) and head to the forest to (meditate and) worship Lord Raghunath (the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram). (Doha no. 6)

[Note—¹Earlier, the same advice was given to Ravana by Vibhishan, Malyawant and Shuk—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no 39 (a); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 40; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 57.

In both these cases, Ravana had become exceedingly wrathful. But now in the case of Mandodari, though he did not like her advice, yet he did not react so vehemently as he had done with Vibhishan and Malyawant.]

चौ०. नाथ दीनदयाल रघुराई । बाघउ सनमुख गाँ न खाई ॥ १ ॥

चाहिअ करन सो सब करि बीते । तुम्ह सुर असुर चराचर जीते ॥ २ ॥

संत कहहिँ असि नीति दसानन । चौथेंपन जाइहि नृप कानन ॥ ३ ॥

तासु भजनु कीजिअ तहँ भर्ता । जो कर्ता पालक संहर्ता ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

nātha dīnadayāla raghurā'ī. bāgha'u sanamukha ga'ēm' na khā'ī. 1.

cāhi'a karana sō saba kari bītē. tumha sura asura carācara jītē. 2.

santa kahahim' asi nīti dasānana. cauthēmpaṇa jā'ihi nṛpa kānana. 3.

tāsu bhajanu kiji'a taham' bhartā. jō kartā pālaka sanhartā. 4.

My Lord; Raghurai (Lord Ram) is exceedingly kind, gracious, compassionate and merciful towards those who are humble, downtrodden and devoid of any resources (dīnadayāla).

The Lord has such stupendous mystical powers and majesty that if a tiger goes near him it will not be able to devour the Lord¹. (1)

You have done whatever you had wished to do and accomplish in your life. You have vanquished the gods and the demons; you have conquered the entire creation that consists of animate creatures and inanimate things. [So therefore, what more is left for you to desire? All your wishes of acquiring fame and glory have already been fulfilled.] (2)

Oh Ravana (“dasānana”; the ten-headed one)! Saints have laid down a principle that during the last quarter of a king’s life (“cauthēmpana”; the latter part of an ordinary person’s life when one crosses the age of 75 years), he ought to go to the forest. (3)

There (in the forest), he (the king) should worship the Lord God who the creator, the sustainer and the protector, as well as the concluder of this creation².

[To wit, in ripe old age a wise king should hand over the reins of his kingdom to his chosen and competent heir, and proceed to the forest by detaching himself from all worldly affairs. Once in the forest, he should do meditation and penances, undertake penitence for past sins, and generally prepare his soul for exiting this mundane gross world to attain final peace and rest. This phase of life has two divisions—(a) Vaanprastha Ashram, and (b) Sanyas Ashram.]³ (4)

[Note—¹This part of the verse has another interpretation though. It can also be read as follows: “Even a tiger, which is by nature a most ferocious animal, would not like to devour any creature if the latter goes and humbly submits itself before it, seeking protection and mercy.”

What Mandodari intends to say is this: If her husband Ravana heeds her advice and goes to make peace with Lord Ram, then she is absolutely sure that though he had committed such a grave error and a sinful deed as abducting Sita, the wife of the Lord, yet the Lord will certainly forgive him because it is his nature to forgive the sinful and fallen creature if they are ready to repent, undertake penitence, and make a determination to change their bad nature.

She cites the example of a tiger which feels reluctant to kill another creature if the latter pleads before the former to spare its life. Well, it is believed that if a person is suddenly confronted by a tiger and instead of trying to run away or looking terrified he looks straight in the eye of a tiger fearlessly, without once shifting his gaze, then the tiger would stop in its track and gradually withdraw. It attacks only when its prey turns away and tries to flee.

There is another variation to this example. It is also believed that if a person suddenly confronts a tiger and falls to the ground to pretend to be dead, then the tiger would not kill him; the animal would come, smell the body, and thinking it to be a corpse would go away. The tiger hunts and kills its prey alive; it never feeds on dead bodies.

Here, Mandodari is simply citing the odd example of the tiger sparing the life of another creature to emphasize the fact if an otherwise cruel animal as a tiger would not like to kill someone who is bold enough to face it, or as she would like to say “has voluntarily submitted himself before it by lying prostrate on the ground”, as it would

rather prefer to spare his life, then how can Lord Ram, who is by his inherent nature exemplarily merciful, kind and compassionate can ever think of harming someone who goes to him to surrender and seek his protection and grace.

So therefore, Ravana must not have any reservations in going to Lord Ram to make peace with him. He should approach Lord Ram with humility and prostrate himself before the Lord as a sign of surrender. If he does so, then he ought not to fear of being caught off guard and be captured by Lord Ram as his enemy; no such thing will happen for sure. But Ravana must be bold and courageous enough to go and face the Lord in spite of the huge bundle of sins he carries on his head; he must also throw away his inflated ego and be prepared to prostrate before the Lord.

²To wit, Mandodari advises her husband to follow tradition and hand over the reins of the demon kingdom to their son Meghnad, and then renounce all worldly attachment and head for the forest to prepare for final exit from this gross mundane world by doing meditation and repenting for his sins so that when the soul leaves this mortal body it can find its peace and rest.

³The life of a man was divided into four quarters by ancient sages, forefathers and patriarchs of the society. These four quarters are the following—Brahmcharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas. Each quarter was of approximately 20-25 years.

The first quarter is when a man was supposed to study and learn the skills that are needed for the affairs of an adult life. This was 'Brahmcharya Ashram'. The word literally means a celibate and one who exercises self-restraint. This was essential for study and inculcating skills which require focus of mind and heart. During this time, the man is young and is supposed to observe austerities while he studies and acquires knowledge to equip him to face the world when he grows up.

The second quarter is 'Grihastha Ashram'. It is when the student enters the household phase of life. He marries, raises a family and carries on with his profession or vocation to increase wealth and progeny.

When a person becomes ripe in age, his working capacity decreases and he must prepare to pass on the baton to the next generation, to his heirs when they are ready to step in his shoes, and when he has done his bit for society. This is the 'Vaanprastha Ashram'—the third phase of life when a person prepares to hand the responsibilities of his worldly affairs to his heirs and mentally prepares himself to lead a calm and detached life so that he can get ready for the final phase of old age.

Though it literally means 'heading for the forest', but not necessarily it be so. Its primary function is to withdraw from playing an active role in the affairs of the world and give one's mind and body rest and peace after the toil of the previous years. In ancient times though, it actually meant going to the forest and spending time in a serene place in some hermitage. But in modern times it is neither feasible nor advisable. The best avenue is to withdraw from active role and serve more as an advisor and guide for the next generation in a dispassionate manner.

The final and fourth quarter is called 'Sanyas Ashram' which clearly means absolute withdrawal from the world and its affairs. This is the time when the man is of about say 70 or more years of age. So he needs complete peace and should prepare to make an exit from the world without a fuss. He is expected to create such a situation that no one misses or wails for him nor anything suffers due to his absence. Thus, he dies peacefully and self-contentedly.

During the ‘Sanyas Ashram’ a person is expected to completely renounce the world and its entanglements, and instead spend the remaining part of his life in spiritual pursuit and searching ways for his spiritual liberation and deliverance.]

सोइ रघुबीर प्रनत अनुरागी । भजहु नाथ ममता सब त्यागी ॥ ५ ॥
मुनिबर जतनु करहिं जेहि लागी । भूप राजु तजि होहिं बिरागी ॥ ६ ॥

sō'i raghubīra pranata anurāgī. bhajahu nātha mamatā saba tyāgī. 5.
munibara jatanu karahim jēhi lāgī. bhūpa rāju taji hōhim birāgī. 6.

[And who is this “Lord God” whom one ought to worship in the forest? Mandodari answers this question:-] That Lord God is none other than Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave king in the family line of Raghu) who has great affection for those who prostrate before him (as a token of surrender and submission).

So oh Lord; I beg of you that you should worship and adore him by abandoning all your worldly attachments and turning away from them. (5)

He is the same Lord to attain whom great and illustrious sages and hermits undertake strenuous exercises of meditation and penances, and it is for him attaining him that great and famous kings of illustrious lineage renounce their homes and kingdoms to become mendicants. (6)

सोइ कोसलाधीस रघुराया । आयउ करन तोहि पर दाया ॥ ७ ॥
जौं पिय मानहु मोर सिखावन । सुजसु होइ तिहुँ पुर अति पावन ॥ ८ ॥

sō'i kōsalādhīsa raghurāyā. āya'u karana tōhi para dāyā. 7.
jauri piya mānahu mōra sikhāvana. sujasu hō'i tihum' pura ati pāvana. 8.

It is the same Supreme Lord who has manifested himself as the ‘Lord of Kaushal’ (i.e. as the King of Ayodhya, a kingdom of which the capital city had the same name), and he is known as ‘Raghuraya’ (literally ‘a great king of the Raghu dynasty).

Indeed it is ‘he’ who has come to show his grace and mercy upon you. (7)

Oh my dear husband, if you pay heed to and accept my advice (which, as your beloved wife, I am giving you for your own good and welfare), then be sure that your glory and goodness would spread and be eternally established in all the three divisions of this creation (i.e. in the heaven, on the earth, and in the nether world).¹ (8)

[Note—¹Mandodari told her husband Ravana that he has a golden opportunity to attain eternal freedom from sins and their horrendous consequences, and attain eternal peace and bliss for his soul as well as ensure his salvation and emancipation without the least trouble because the Supreme Lord who can bless a creature with these boons has been so gracious and kind enough to have taken the trouble of coming to Ravana’s own doorstep offering them to him. Now Ravana will be spared the trouble of having to undertake the difficult and most strenuous path by which a person can normally free himself of sins and attain emancipation and salvation for his soul by

renouncing the world during the last quarter or phase of his life, and spend his time exclusively in doing penances, austerities, meditation, contemplation and prayers, as well as in worshipping the Supreme Being. The scriptures has prescribed this path for all human beings, whether he be a king or a sage.

Mandodari tells her husband that he is so exceedingly lucky and fortunate that the Supreme Being who is so difficult to access, to attain whom great sages, seers, hermits and ascetics do hard penances and austerities, for whom even great kings and emperors renounce their prosperous kingdoms and empires full of charmed life of pleasure and comfort, and head to the forest instead to do meditation and contemplation so that when they die their soul can attain eternal peace and rest, for whose sake the scriptures prescribe that a person should go on pilgrimage and do penances to clean his inner-self of all sins so that at the time of leaving his body the person's soul, his 'Atma', can attain deliverance and emancipation—the same Lord has been so merciful and compassionate and kind and graceful that he has decided to spare Ravana all these great troubles by coming himself to his doorstep to offer him a chance for repentance and redemption.

Hence, Mandodari says that Ravana would do the wisest thing in his life if he grabs this opportunity and goes to welcome Lord Ram, a manifested form of the Supreme Being, who is standing at his gate, waiting for Ravana to open the gates of his palace and meet his revered guest at the threshold. Be sure, she tells her husband, that he would be affectionately received by Lord Ram; he ought naught to have any doubt and misgivings on this count; he ought naught to fear for his safety at all.

If he accepts her advice then he will reap a rich harvest of both fame and glory in this world as long as he lives, as well as of eternal peace and rest for himself and his soul when his life comes to an end.]

दो०. अस कहि नयन नीर भरि गहि पद कंपित गात ।

नाथ भजहु रघुनाथहि अचल होइ अहिवात ॥ ७ ॥

dōhā.

asa kahi nayana nīra bhari gahi pada kampaṭa gāta.
nātha bhajahu raghunāthahi acala hō'i ahivāta. 7.

As Mandodari said these things, her eyes were filled with tears and her body trembled.

Unable to restrain herself, she made a final appeal to Ravana, pleading with him as follows: 'Oh Lord! I plead with you that you must worship Lord Ram so that my union with you as your wife would last forever.'¹ (Doha no. 7)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 15-b.

Mandodari has clearly hinted here that if Ravana does not pay heed to her good advice, then in the ensuing war he is certain to be killed. She loved her husband so much that while expressing her views she trembled and wept at the very thought of the prospect of his death.

On the other hand of the scale, if he does pay attention to her then his future would be safe and secure. While alive he would rule over his kingdom in peace and freed from the guilt of having abducted another person's wife, and when he finally dies, which all living beings must, his soul would be liberated from his body of a

demon and delivered from this world of transmigration to attain eternity. What more would anyone want? This glorious future is being offered to Ravana on a platter, so why should, and why would, he refuse it if any trace of sanity is left in him?

Mandodari knew her husband's nature well, so she was very fearful he would not listen to her advice because it did not fit in well with what he has decided to do. That is why, fearing for doom and destruction, she wept and trembled.]

चौ०. तब रावन मयसुता उठाई । कहै लाग खल निज प्रभुताई ॥ १ ॥
सुनु तैं प्रिया बृथा भय माना । जग जोधा को मोहि समाना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

taba rāvana mayasutā uṭhāī. kahai lāga khala nija prabhutāī. 1.
sunu taiṁ priyā br̥thā bhaya mānā. jaga jōdhā kō mōhi samānā. 2.

Then Ravana picked up Mandodari (who was the daughter of the demon Maye; “mayasutā”) who was lying on the ground at his feet. That evil fellow scoffed at her, and began boasting about himself and his abilities as follows— (1)

‘Listen my dear wife. You are unnecessarily worried and feeling so excessively affright. Tell me: is there any other warrior comparable to me in this whole world; so what makes you so scared about my safety and security?

[To wit, don’t you know that there is no one in this whole world who can match me in courage, strength, powers, valour and martial skills? So why on earth do you worry and feel so terrified about my safety, I don’t understand.] (2)

बरुन कुबेर पवन जम काला । भुज बल जितेउँ सकल दिगपाला ॥ ३ ॥
देव दनुज नर सब बस मोरें । कवन हेतु उपजा भय तोरें ॥ ४ ॥

baruna kubēra pavana jama kālā. bhuja bala jitē'um̐ sakala digapālā. 3.
dēva danuja nara saba basa mōrēm̐. kavana hētu upajā bhaya tōrēm̐. 4.

[Now, Ravana lists his achievements and military successes in an attempt to reassure Mandodari and dispel her fears.]

I have conquered all the Digpals (junior gods who are assigned different roles in this creation and act as custodians of the world in their respective domains)—such as Varun (the god of water), Kuber (the treasurer of the gods), Pawan (the wind god), Yam (the god of hell), Kaal (the god of death and the one who presides over a living beings lifespan)—well, I have vanquished all of them by the strength of my arms. [Don’t you know about it?] (3)

Well, all the Gods and the Danujs (demons; non-gods) as well as the Nars (human beings) are under my control (don’t you know that too?)¹.

So therefore, tell me what makes you so scared; why are you so sore affright about my safety (and my ability to face my enemy, Lord Ram)?’ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it where Ravana asserts the same thing before Angad who was sent by Lord Ram as his emissary to see if some way could be found to avoid the bloody war.]

नाना बिधि तेहि कहेसि बुझाई । सभाँ बहोरि बैठ सो जाई ॥ ५ ॥
मंदोदरीं हृदयँ अस जाना । काल बस्य उपजा अभिमाना ॥ ६ ॥

nānā bidhi tēhi kahēsi bujhā'ī. sabhām̐ bahōri baiṭha sō jā'ī. 5.
mandōdarīm̐ hr̥dayam̐ asa jānā. kāla basya upajā abhimānā. 6.

Ravana tried to dispel Mandodari's fears and tried to comfort her in different ways, and then he went back to sit in his royal court¹. (5)

Meanwhile, Mandodari realized that her husband was highly deluded and mightily distracted in his mind as he was, by the fiat of Providence, in the throes of death, and that is why he has become so haughty and stubborn as well as out of his wits². (6)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that Ravana was in his royal court where he had received the shocking information about the bridge being built and Lord Ram landing on the shores of Lanka with his formidable army. Then he had left the assembly briefly and went to his palace to recover from this initial shock. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}]

Ravana comforted his wife Mandodari and asked her to stop worrying about imaginary things. He seemed very confident about his own abilities and invincibility; he reassured her that everything would be alright, and there was no cause for the panic reaction she seems to portray.

“Look dear”, said he to her, “I very much appreciate your concern for me, but at the same time I don't understand what makes you so agitated and worried. Tell me, aren't you aware of my unparallel strength, powers, valour and achievements; aren't you aware that I have conquered the whole world, and even the so-called gods and digpals are terrified even by my name. They run away when they hear I am in a foul mood; they scamper for cover and run helter-skelter when I go to their places. What is this human prince called 'Ram' before my might? Why are you so confounded and shaken? Surely you must be under the influence of some evil spirit that has instilled so much fear in your noble and otherwise fearless heart. Look my dear; this sort of behaviour does not behoove of the wife of Ravana. You must be shameful of your attitude! So get up and cheer up. There is nothing at all to worry.”

²She was certain that since 'death' is fast approaching her husband, his mind and its sense of wisdom and rationality have been clouded by the dark and negative forces of haughtiness and stubbornness. He seems to have lost his prudence, and is behaving arrogantly and irrationally. He is driven so insane by 'death', the mighty force of creation that leaves no one immune to its rule and spares no one from its grasp, that he is being drawn towards it involuntarily like a leaf being sucked in by a violently swirling whirlwind. She realized that the fiat of fate and the dictate of destiny has

prevailed over her husband's mind so much so that he is driven more by his false pride of invincibility and strength than coming to terms with truth and acting with prudence in accordance with the ground realities.]

सभाँ आइ मंत्रिन्ह तेहिं बूझा । करब कवन बिधि रिपु सैं जूझा ॥ ७ ॥

कहहिं सचिव सुनु निसिचर नाहा । बार बार प्रभु पूछहु काहा ॥ ८ ॥

कहहु कवन भय करिअ बिचारा । नर कपि भालु अहार हमारा ॥ ९ ॥

sabhām'ā'i mantrin̄ha tēhiṁ būjhā. karaba kavana bidhi ripu saim̄ jūjhā. 7.

kahahiṁ saciva sunu nīsicara nāhā. bāra bāra prabhu pūchahu kāhā. 8.

kahahu kavana bhaya kari'a bicārā. nara kapi bhālu ahāra hamārā. 9.

Ravana went to his royal court where all his advisors and courtiers had assembled. He asked them how the war is to be fought; what strategy is to be adopted and how the army is to be deployed¹. (7)

All the ministers answered unanimously, in one voice, 'Oh the king of the demons (nīsicara nāhā)! Listen: Why are you (so worried or confused that you are) repeatedly asking the same thing again?² (8)

To speak the truth, pray think and tell us what is there to be so scared for by us—because we are accustomed to devouring both the human beings and the monkeys; they are like fodder for us. [Is anyone afraid of his own food? So what is there to worry? We are hungry, and we shall devour the enemy like one munches one's meal.] (9)

[Note—¹We are by now acquainted with Ravana's character that he was not ready to heed any advice; he would not listen to anybody. So then what was the need to consult his advisors regarding the war? Well, there are three apparent reasons:

One is that he wished to ascertain who amongst them was totally committed and devoted to his cause, and who was in two minds.

Second, when the news of Lord Ram building the bridge and landing in Lanka had arrived a little while ago, he couldn't hide his astonishment and alarm (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5). Then, his wife Mandodari had left him more uncertain of the future by her own entreaty asking him to abandon his hostile attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with him (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8). Both these things had left him confused and in a dilemma. Normally he would make his own decisions, but now his self-confidence was so much shaken and he was so confounded that he wasn't able to think coherently and cogently on his own. Therefore, he wished to take in the view of others so as to formulate a proper strategy for the impending war.

Third, he wished to impress upon his commanders and ministers that he has full faith in them, that he trusts them, that he gives their opinions great value and importance, that this war is to be fought jointly by all the demons, and that he is confident that they will be his faithful allies.

²Earlier you had asked us about our opinion when the news arrived that the army of Lord Ram has assembled on the other side of the ocean, and was preparing to cross it. At that time too we had told you that there is nothing to worry—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-9 that precede Doha no. 37.

To wit, why are you so worried that you do not know what our answer would be? Don't you know that we have faced such situations many times in the past, when we had launched attack on the gods or when some other enemy had attacked us? Have we ever felt afraid in the face of battle; have we ever had second thoughts about fighting our enemy boldly and bravely till he is completely vanquished? So what's new now that has made you doubt what our answer would be?]

दो०. सब के बचन श्रवन सुनि कह प्रहस्त कर जोरि ।
नीति बिरोध न करिअ प्रभु मंत्रिन्ह मति अति थोरि ॥ ८ ॥

dōhā.

saba kē bacana śravana suni kaha prahasta kara jōri.
nīti birōdha na kari'a prabhu mantrin'ha mati ati thōri. 8.

When Prahast heard what others had said, he stood up with his joined palms as a sign of prayerful submission before Ravana (because he did not agree with the advice given by the courtiers). He said, 'Oh Lord, you should not do anything that is not proper and against the laws of propriety. Your ministers are all ill-witted and they have a low intellect. (Doha no. 8)

[Note—Prahast was Ravana's son—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10.]

चौ०. कहहिं सचिव सठ ठकुरसोहाती । नाथ न पूर आव एहि भाँती ॥ १ ॥
बारिधि नाघि एक कपि आवा । तासु चरित मन महुँ सबु गावा ॥ २ ॥
छुधा न रही तुम्हहि तब काहू । जारत नगरु कस न धरि खाहू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kahahim saciva saṭha ṭhakurasōhātī. nātha na pūra āva ēhi bhāmṭī. 1.
bāridhi nāghi ēka kapi āvā. tāsu carita mana mahum' sabu gāvā. 2.
chudhā na rahī tumhahi taba kāhū. jārata nagaru kasa na dhari khāhū. 3.

They are unable to grasp the gravity of the situation, and are speaking things which you wish to hear, like true sycophants and flatterers usually do, not which is good for you. But my Lord beware, such hollow talk will not be of any help to you when you have to face hard ground realities. (1)

One single monkey had come here by crossing the mighty ocean. His deeds were so marvellous and astounding that everyone here remembers them secretly in his heart, and even speak of them in private (as they are terrified to talk of it openly)¹. (2)

Why, weren't anyone of you hungry then that you couldn't grab and devour him (Hanuman) when he was burning Lanka²? (3)

[Note—¹To wit, what Hanuman had done here in Lanka is talk of the town; everyone speaks of it in a hushed tone and in private discussions because they are scared you might hear them speak of a subject that they fear you will not like to hear about. But that does not mean that anyone has forgotten about what Hanuman had done to Lanka.

²You all boast of not worrying about the monkeys and humans as they are staple food of demons (as said in Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 8 herein above). Well then, if this is the case then was no one hungry to catch hold of Hanuman and eat him up to help save our city from being burnt to ashes? Why do you boast now and put yourselves to shame?]

सुनत नीक आगें दुख पावा । सचिवन अस मत प्रभुहि सुनावा ॥ ४ ॥
जेहिं बारीस बँधायउ हेल्ला । उतरेउ सेन समेत सुबेला ॥ ५ ॥
सो भनु मनुज खाब हम भाई । बचन कहहिं सब गाल फुलाई ॥ ६ ॥

sunata nīka āgēr̥ṁ dukha pāvā. sacivana asa mata prabhuhi sunāvā. 4.
jēhīṁ bārīsa bam̐dhāya'u hēlā. utarē'u sēna samēta subēlā. 5.
sō bhanu manuja khāba hama bhāī. bacana kahahīṁ saba gāla phulāī. 6.

These flattering ministers have given your lordship an advice that seems so reassuring and pleasant to hear at its face value, but which would give you nothing but trouble and grief later on in the long run. (4)

He (i.e. Lord Ram) has been able to tame the mighty ocean as if it was a mere sport for him, and now he has landed on Mt. Subel with his large and formidable army. (5)

It is such an irony that now your ministers boast with a loud mouth by saying that they will eat this gentleman along with his army!¹ (6)

[Note—¹Well, will you tell me what were they doing while the bridge was being constructed, what were they doing when the enemy's army was crossing it, what were they doing when Lord Ram and his army landed on the shores of Lanka, and why could none of the demons could stop the march of the army from the shore and up Mt. Subel? Even a blind man can see through this airy talk and loud bluster that is hollow from the inside.]

तात बचन मम सुनु अति आदर । जनि मन गुनहु मोहि करि कादर ॥ ७ ॥
प्रिय बानी जे सुनहिं जे कहहीं । ऐसे नर निकाय जग अहहीं ॥ ८ ॥
बचन परम हित सुनत कठोरे । सुनहिं जे कहहिं ते नर प्रभु थोरे ॥ ९ ॥

tāta bacana mama sunu ati ādara. jani mana gunahu mōhi kari kādara. 7.
 priya bānī jē sunahim̐ jē kahahim̐. aisē nara nikāya jaga ahahim̐. 8.
 bacana parama hita sunata kaṭhōrē. sunahim̐ jē kahahim̐ tē nara prabhu
 thōrē. 9.

My dear father (tāta)! Pay close attention to my words (advice), and don't think me to a coward or scared of anything. (7)

There are lots and lots of people who speak what is pleasant for the other person to hear, and similarly there is no dearth of people who like to hear only sweet things being told to them, things that they like to hear. (8)

But there are not many people who would like to speak or hear things that would seem unpleasant to hear or speak of, but are actually the hard truth and good for all.

[To wit, truth is often a bitter pill to ingest, but it is like a good medicine for everyone. Things that may initially seem harsh to hear may actually be good in the long run for both the speaker and the hearer. Truly, there are not many people who would gather courage to speak the truth, and similarly there are not many people who would calmly hear things that are unpleasant to hear but are meant for their own good in the long run.] (9)

प्रथम बसीठ पठउ सुनु नीती । सीता देइ करहु पुनि प्रीती ॥ १० ॥

prathama basīṭha paṭha'u sunu nīti. sītā dē'i karahu puni prīti. 10.

Now, listen to what is the proper thing for you to do: first send an emissary (to Lord Ram, conveying your desire to make peace), then send Sita back to the Lord, and finally make a treaty of peace, harmony and friendship with him. (10)

दो०. नारि पाइ फिरि जाहिं जौं तौ न बढाइअ रारि ।

नाहिं त सन्मुख समर महि तात करिअ हठि मारि ॥ ९ ॥

dōhā.

nāri pā'i phiri jāhim̐ jaum̐ tau na baṛhā'i'a rāri.

nāhim̐ ta sanmukha samara mahi tāta kari'a haṭhi māri. 9.

If he (Lord Ram) returns after getting his wife back then it would be good for all and the end of the matter. If on the other hand he becomes ambitious and wants to conquer Lanka then you must face him boldly and gallantly in the battle-field, thrashing him without the slightest remorse and breaking his army to smithereens (because then you will be fully justified to do so). (Doha no. 9)

[Note—Any neutral observer would agree with Prahas't's advice; what he told Ravana is the most appropriate thing to do. The reason is discussed in a note appended to verse no. 1 herein below.]

चौ०. यह मत जौं मानहु प्रभु मोरा । उभय प्रकार सुजसु जग तोरा ॥ १ ॥
 सुत सन कह दसकंठ रिसाई । असि मति सठ केहिं तोहि सिखाई ॥ २ ॥
 अबहीं ते उर संसय होई । बेनुमूल सुत भयहु घमोई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

yaha mata jauri mānahu prabhu mōrā. ubhaya prakāra sujasu jaga tōrā. 1.
 suta sana kaha dasakaṇṭha risāī. asi mati saṭha kēhiṁ tōhi sikhāī. 2.
 abahīṁ tē ura sansaya hōī. bēnumūla suta bhayahu ghamōī. 3.

Oh my Lord; if you agree to this advice of mine then you will have glory and good fame in either of two situations¹.

[To wit, you will be appreciated in the world for your goodwill gesture of returning your enemy's wife and proposing peace to avoid a bloody war, and in case Lord Ram refuses your proposals then it will be good for you, for then the whole blame would fall squarely on the shoulders of your enemy, and you will be absolved of any misadventure that culminated in a destructive war. In the second scenario however, you will be justified to fight and crush your enemy mercilessly, beating the blue out of him, which you and your ministers boast of doing.]' (1)

The ten-necked (and therefore ten-headed) Ravana (dasakaṇṭha) became very angry at his son and sternly rebuked him, saying, 'Oh you stupid rascal; who has taught you to think this way? (2)

You have started having doubts in the very beginning, when there is no action on the ground as yet. My son, you appear to be like a prickly plant that grows at the root of a bamboo tree (that destroys the entire cluster of bamboos).

[To wit, you have brought shame and a blot on the valour and glory of the entire demon race, and more specifically on my family by speaking like a scared coward who is terrified of facing an enemy in the battle-field, and therefore tries to cook up some excuse to avoid a battle to save his skin. Woe to you; shame to you. You have blackened my face with such a cowardly and reprehensible approach towards an enemy who has invaded our land, something I had never ever expected from my own son.]² (3)

[Note—¹What does Prahast mean that Ravana would gain good fame and acquire glory if he follows the advice given by him in Doha no. 9 herein above?

The answer is this: Since at present Ravana is at fault because he has abducted a chaste and loyal wife of another person who has the full right to free her from the clutches of her abductor by trying his best, which incidentally involves fighting a war since the lady's kidnapper refuses to relent and give her back to her husband, the blame for the ignominy, the bloodshed and the devastation that the war is sure to invite will lie squarely on Ravana's shoulders.

If on the other hand he returns Sita back to her husband Lord Ram, and takes the initiative of making peace by sending an emissary with a message of this intent, and then even after this his so-called enemy remains aggressive and hostile by declaring that he would invade Lanka and kill all the demons, then in this situation Ravana would be justified to defend himself and his race against an invader. In this case, the blame for fighting the war unnecessarily and its attendant horrors which

could have been easily avoided would go to Lord Ram, and the world would denounce him instead of condemning Ravana. It's as plain and simple as that.

But unfortunately Ravana did not listen to his son Prahast. Instead of appreciating Prahast's wisdom and prudence, Ravana lost his temper and lambasted him for showing cowardice in the face of the enemy, and for being a shameful blot on the demon race and on the family of its king.

²Ravana's angry outburst at Prahast is in sharp contrast with the calm and docile way he reacted when Mandodari, his wife, too tried to persuade him to end confrontation with Lord Ram on four occasions, the last being just a while ago (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8).

Probably Prahast's advice was ill-timed as it came when his father was already under immense emotional stress after what Mandodari had said to him just a little while before. Prahast's words therefore provoked him, and made him feel cornered and guilty; this unleashed his suppressed anger which he had somehow managed to keep contained before Mandodari.

As we have already observed earlier in the context of Mandodari, one of the primary reasons why Ravana did not show his anger at her while displaying utter contempt at all others who had tried to advice him on the same line as she did, is that while Mandodari's talking was in private, all the others had spoken in public. Ravana took this public pointing out of his faults as an affront to his majesty and authority, and surely this would annoy any king worth his name, for no king would approve that his own courtiers and family members criticise him or chastise him in front of others, in full public view.]

सुनि पितु गिरा परुष अति घोरा । चला भवन कहि बचन कठोरा ॥ ४ ॥
हित मत तोहि न लागत कैसें । काल बिबस कहूँ भेषज जैसें ॥ ५ ॥

sunī pitu girā paruṣa ati ghōrā. calā bhavana kahi bacana kṛthōrā. 4.
hita mata tōhi na lāgata kaisēm. kāla bibasa kahum̐ bhēṣaja jaisēm. 5.

When he (Prahast) heard his father speak so harshly to him, he felt exasperated himself and decided to go home. But before that, he retorted at his father in a sharp tone --- (4)

‘An advice that is for your own good is not liked by you just as a person who is in the throes of death cannot be cured even by the best of medicines.

[To wit, just like medicines fail to cure a person who is destined to die, all good advice seems to fail to have any effect on you. It is futile to try to show you the right path because you are doomed to die. So do whatever you wish to do; I have nothing more to say.]’ (5)

संध्या समय जानि दससीसा । भवन चलेउ निरखत भुज बीसा ॥ ६ ॥
लंका सिखर उपर आगारा । अति बिचित्र तहँ होइ अखारा ॥ ७ ॥
बैठ जाइ तेहि मंदिर रावन । लागे किंनर गुन गन गावन ॥ ८ ॥

बाजहिं ताल पखाउज बीना । नृत्य करहिं अपछरा प्रबीना ॥ ९ ॥

sandhyā samaya jāni dasasīsā. bhavana calē'u nirakhata bhuja bīsā. 6.
laṅkā sikhara upara āgārā. ati bicitra taham' hō'i akhārā. 7.
baiṭha jā'i tēhiṁ mandira rāvana. lāgē kinnara guna gana gāvana. 8.
bājahim tāla pakhā'uja bīnā. nṛtya karahim apacharā prabīnā. 9.

Observing that it was almost evening, Ravana retired to his palace, and on his way back he fondly and haughtily gazed at his twenty mighty arms¹. (6)

On the top of the summit of Lanka, there was a very fascinating and charming hall where regular programmes of dancing and singing competitions were used to be held. (7)

It was in this citadel that Ravana went to sit and enjoy the musical extravaganza. Soon, the Kinnars (court dancers and singers) began singing songs in his honour. (8)

Musical instruments such as cymbals, tabors and Indian lutes were played, and beautiful nymphs known as Apsaras, who were experts in dancing, began exhibiting their skills in this art². (9)

[Note—¹After all the chiding and rebuke by Prahast and Mandodari presently, and earlier by Vibhishan, Ravana was feeling very depressed, and he needed some kind of subtle psychological support for his sagging morale, something to bolster his courage and encourage him. So he now looked up and down his mighty arms, which he flexed and twisted and shook to remind himself that these were the same arms that had enabled him to conquer the world repeatedly. This was like insurance for him—that even if no one comes to help him, he alone was competent to take his enemy head-on, thanks to the might of his twenty arms.

²We come across such Apsaras and exhibition of their dancing skills elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—for instance, refer to: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 126. The context here is different however, for it was at the time when Kaam, the god of passion, was trying to disturb Lord Shiva's meditation.

The Apsaras are female dancers and singers, while the Kinnars are their male counterparts.]

दो०. सुनासीर सत सरिस सो संतत करइ बिलास ।

परम प्रबल रिपु सीस पर तद्यपि सोच न त्रास ॥ १० ॥

dōhā.

sunāsīra sata sarisa sō santata kara'i bilāsa.
parama prabala ripu sīsa para tadyapi sōca na trāsa. 10.

Ravana used to indulge in sensual pleasures and luxuries that were equivalent to those that can be enjoyed by hundreds of Indras together¹.

It is such an irony that he had a formidably powerful enemy knocking right at his doorstep, yet he was neither worried nor afraid of this development. (Doha no. 10)

[Note—¹ Indra is the king of gods; he is described in ancient mythological literature as someone who was very indulgent in sensual pleasures. From a metaphysical perspective, Indra represents the sense organs of a creature. These sense organs have a natural habit of getting attracted to their respective objects in this material world, and they will always like to enjoy them, they are invariably tempted by them. For instance, the ‘tongue’ would always like to taste delicious food, even if that food is harmful for the body. Likewise, the ‘skin’ would like to touch things that seem pleasant to it and give sensual pleasure to the creature, even if such contact may lead to some grave consequences later on and land the creature in trouble.

The idea here is that Ravana was an exceptionally lustful and passionate individual who liked to wallow in luxury and remain engrossed in enjoying sensual pleasures. He was driven blind by his pervert nature so much so that he could not see the dark clouds of doom looming in the horizon. His over-confidence and a false sense of invincibility made him so haughty and arrogant that he thought that no harm can ever come to him, and that life is meant to be spent in enjoying sensual pleasures and worldly luxuries as much as is possible.

He firmly believed that as the King of Demons it was his birth-right to enjoy the privileges that come with the crown of Lanka and the fruits of kingship of the demon race. So therefore he was within his rights in enjoying these privileges and fruits; there was nothing wrong in enjoying sensual pleasures and luxuries.

Tentatively, however, he showed signs of alarm when his attention was drawn to the fact that a huge army of immense strength was next door, but this scary scene of an impending bloody war that may lead not only to the ruin of his entire kingdom but also to his own death had only a temporary effect on him, because he soon forgot all about it and reverted back to his old pervert ways.]

चौ०. इहाँ सुबेल सैल रघुबीरा । उतरे सेन सहित अति भीरा ॥ १ ॥
 सिखर एक उतंग अति देखी । परम रज्ज सम सुभ्र बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥
 तहँ तरु किसलय सुमन सुहाए । लछिमन रचि निज हाथ डसाए ॥ ३ ॥
 ता पर रुचिर मृदुल मृगछाला । तेहिं आसन आसीन कृपाला ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ihām' subēla saila raghubīrā. utarē sēna sahita ati bhīrā. 1.
 sikhara ēka utaṅga ati dēkhī. parama ramya sama subhra bisēṣī. 2.
 taham' taru kisalaya sumana suhā'ē. lachimana raci nija hātha ḍasā'ē. 3.
 tā para rucira mṛdula mṛgachālā. tēhiṁ āsana āsīna kṛpālā. 4.

[This verse tells us the exact place where Lord Ram and his army landed on the shore of Lanka. It continues from Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 5 herein above where we have already read that the Lord crossed the ocean and landed on the soil of Lanka. But where did he actually land? This question is now answered:-]

Meanwhile, Lord Ram landed on Mt. Subel¹ along with his huge army that formed a big crowd around the place. (1)

Lord Ram looked at the mountain (or the large hill) and saw that its high summit was clean, very pleasant, and in the form of a flat piece of land (or a plateau). (2)

On this high ground, Laxman himself spread soft and newly plucked green leaves and flower petals [3], upon which he laid out a deer skin, and the merciful Lord Ram sat down on it [4]. (3-4)

[Note—¹Mt. Subel was in the north of the island of Lanka. It was a little away from the shore. It was very high and gave a magnificent view of the city. So when the monkey and bear warriors had eaten their fill and Lord Ram had rested a while near the shore of the ocean after landing, he decided to move to a higher ground so as to have a vantage point where he would pitch his camp during the war. Mt. Subel presented a viable option as it was right in front and easily accessible; it also afforded a clear view of the fort of Lanka. Perhaps it was from here that Hanuman too had viewed Lanka when he came here in his search of Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8 and 10 that precede Doha no. 3.}

प्रभु कृत सीस कपीस उछंगा । बाम दहिन दिसि चाप निषंगा ॥ ५ ॥
दुहुँ कर कमल सुधारत बाना । कह लंकेस मंत्र लगि काना ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu kṛta sīsa kapīsa uchaṅgā. bāma dahina disi cāpa niṣaṅgā. 5.
duhum̐ kara kamala sudhārata bānā. kaha laṅkēsa mantra lagi kānā. 6.

[Lord Ram wished to relax a bit, so he lied down on the soft bed made by Laxman by spreading tender leaves and flowers on the ground as described in the previous verse.]

Sugriv, the commander of the monkey army and the Lord's trusted friend, offered his lap to the Lord to rest his head upon like he would have done on a pillow. The Lord's bow was lying to his left, and his quiver was to his right. (5)

Lord Ram held an arrow in his hands and was moving them casually on it. At that time, Vibhishan (the future king of Lanka; "laṅkēsa") whispered something secretly in the ears of the Lord¹. (6)

[Note—¹Vibhishan and Lord Ram were discussing something about the future course of action; perhaps it was about how to penetrate the virtually impregnable fort of Lanka. In the whole army, it was only Vibhishan who knew all the secrets of Lanka as he was its prince before joining Lord Ram's camp. They were talking in a hushed tone so that no one could listen what they were talking about. It was necessary to maintain top secrecy for in times of war no one can be certain who would betray whom. Vibhishan feared the most because if there was some spy of Ravana mingling with the monkeys and bears after assuming their form then he will dig his own grave and push others into it even before the war commenced.

Both Sugriv and Vibhishan were princes of their respective kingdoms—so they sat near Lord Ram's head. Angad and Hanuman were the Lord's favourite and devoted followers who were very eager to serve the Lord personally—so they

messed his tired legs, one each. And Laxman, the Lord's younger brother, sat a respectable distance to keep vigil.]

बड़भागी अंगद हनुमाना । चरन कमल चापत बिधि नाना ॥ ७ ॥

प्रभु पाछें लछिमन बीरासन । कटि निषंग कर बान सरासन ॥ ८ ॥

barābhāgī aṅgada hanumānā. carana kamala cāpata bidhi nānā. 7.
prabhu pāchēm lachimana bīrāsana. kaṭi niṣaṅga kara bāna sarāsana. 8.

While Lord Ram thus reclined, Hanuman and Angad felt themselves exceedingly lucky and blessed because they got a chance to press and message the Lord's legs in many different ways (to make the Lord as comfortable as possible, and to alleviate his tiredness). (7)

Laxman was sitting in a posture called “bīrāsana”¹ with a bow and an arrow ready in his hands, and a quiver tied to his waist². (8)

[Note—¹The “bīrāsana” is a sitting pose that is normally adopted by a warrior because it keeps him alert and ready to jump to take action at short notice.

²Laxman was sitting in this way to keep a strict watch over the proceedings. Should any danger appear and Lord Ram was in harm's way, Laxman was ready to leap up to defend the Lord and take appropriate action. Earlier also in the story of the Ramayana it is narrated that on any occasion when Lord Ram and Sita slept during the course of their long journey to the forest, Laxman would sit at a distance with his bow and arrow at the ready to keep guard over the Lord and Sita for the whole night to ensure no harm comes to them. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90.}]

दो०. एहि बिधि कृपा रूप गुन धाम रामु आसीन ।

धन्य ते नर एहि ध्यान जे रहत सदा लयलीन ॥ ११ (क) ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi kṛpā rūpa guna dhāma rāmu āsīna.
dhan'ya tē nara ēhīm dhyāna jē rahata sadā layalīna. 11 (a).

Lord Ram, who is a treasury of grace, kindness, beauty and excellent virtues, rested in the way described herein before.

Verily, he who is able to meditate upon this magnificent view of the Lord and remain submerged in the thoughts of it, is surely and without gainsay very fortunate and blessed. (Doha no. 11-a)

पूरब दिसा बिलोकि प्रभु देखा उदित मयंक ।

कहत सबहि देखहु ससिहि मृगपति सरिस असंक ॥ ११ (ख) ॥

pūraba disā bilōki prabhu dēkhā uḍita mayāṅka.
kahata sabahi dēkhahu sasihi mṛgapati sarisa asaṅka. 11 (b).

When night fell, Lord Ram looked in the eastern direction and saw the full moon rising. He addressed his companions and said, ‘Look all of you at the moon. How bold it is, like a lion (is amongst other animals: mṛgapati sarisa asaṅka)! (Doha no. 11-b)

[Note—Why Lord Ram compares the full moon with a lion is explained below. Briefly he means that just like a lion is not scared of any animal, large or small, in the forest, the moon isn’t bothered about other heavenly bodies, may they be small distant stars or nearby large planets such as Jupiter and Saturn. The moon dulls them and makes them lustreless with its brilliant light that spreads across the firmament as well as on the earth below.]

चौ०. पूरब दिसि गिरिगुहा निवासी । परम प्रताप तेज बल रासी ॥ १ ॥
मत्त नाग तम कुंभ बिदारी । ससि केसरी गगन बन चारी ॥ २ ॥
बिथुरे नभ मुकुताहल तारा । निसि सुंदरी केर सिंगारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

pūraba disi giriguhā nivāsī. parama pratāpa tēja bala rāsī. 1.
matta nāga tama kumbha bidārī. sasi kēsārī gagana bana cārī. 2.
bithurē nabha mukutāhala tārā. nisi sundarī kēra siṅgārā. 3.

This moon, which is like a lion, dwells in a mountain cave symbolized by the eastern direction just below the horizon¹. This metaphoric lion (i.e. the moon) has immense glory; it possesses grandeur and brilliance, and it is an embodiment of strength. (1)

This lion-like moon moves ahead boldly in the sky after rupturing the thick veil of darkness just like the case of a brave lion who jumps on the back of a wild elephant that may obstruct his path, and then fearlessly tears apart the top of the head of its victim to vanquish it². (2)

The stars that are scattered in the sky are like so many beautiful pearls that adorn the body of a lady represented by the night³. (3)

[Note—¹When the moon rises from below the horizon in the east as night falls it looks as if a lion is coming out from the mouth of a dark mountain cave where it had retired for the day.

²When the full moon rises in the sky it tears apart the veil of darkness by its brilliant light just like a lion that moves towards its prey and tears apart its body. The lion is so strong and powerful that it can win over the strongest animal in the forest, such as an elephant. Likewise, the light of the moon dulls even the brightest star in the dark night, showing that it too is bold and powerful.

³In these verses, the ‘night’ is a dark-skinned beauty (a lady); the ‘stars’ are the pearls that are worn by this lady to decorate herself; the ‘full moon’ is her face; and the ‘sky or the firmament’ is her body-wrapping apparel.

It is to be noted that the moon, no matter how much it shines, still has a dark hue to it as compared to the dazzling bright disc of the sun. Since the lady here is represented by the ‘night’, which is dark, her face is aptly compared to the ‘full moon’ because its disc also has a shade of dark inspite of its silvery light. This is in contrast to a fair-skinned lady whose face would be aptly compared to the ‘sun’.]

कह प्रभु ससि महुँ मेचकताई । कहहु काह निज निज मति भाई ॥ ४ ॥

कह सुग्रीव सुनहु रघुराई । ससि महुँ प्रगट भूमि कै झाँई ॥ ५ ॥

kaha prabhu sasi mahum' mēcakatā'ī. kahahu kāha nija nija mati bhā'ī. 4.

kaha sugrīva sunahu raghurā'ī. sasi mahum' pragaṭa bhūmi kai jhām'ī. 5.

Then the Lord turned to his companions and wished to know what they thought of the moon. So he said, ‘My brothers (bhā'ī)¹, tell me what each of you think in this matter (concerning the moon).’ (4)

[The first one to give his opinion was Sugriv, the king of the monkeys.] Sugriv said, ‘Oh Lord Ram (raghurā'ī), listen. The moon appears to be a bit dark because the shadow of the earth falls on its surface². (5)

[Note—¹The term ‘brother’ is endearing; it brings closeness between the speaker and the listener. By using this word of affection Lord Ram wishes to convey that he treats all his companions as his dear brothers. Such small gestures on the part of Lord Ram went a long way in forging a close bond between the Lord and the rest of his advisors and troops who developed personal rapport with the Lord which was based on affection and mutual respect that in turn ensured their loyalty, devotion and commitment towards the Lord and his cause. They became emotionally attached to Lord Ram; they became faithful to him and were ready to cheerfully lay down their lives for him.

This is in sharp contrast with Ravana's attitude and his dealings with his ministers. He treated himself as their ‘king’, not as one of them. On the other hand Lord Ram treated all his ministers as if they were his ‘brothers’, as a close ‘friend’ (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 51).

²Sugriv was the king of Kishkindha. Therefore he must have had knowledge of basic science. His reply, that the shadow of the earth fall on the surface of the moon to make it look a bit dark instead of brilliant white, is quite in line with science. The moon has its origin in the earth, because in some ancient time a part of the earth was scooped out by a colliding heavenly body, such as a meteor or an asteroid. Though from a distance the moon appears to shine like silver, but when one gets close enough one discovers that its surface is as ordinary and rough and dark as that of the earth; it's full of craters; and it's surface has a coarse soil, and is littered with pebbles and stones and rocks of varying dimensions much like the surface of earth.

Besides this, Sugriv's mind may have been preoccupied with land and expansion of his empire. So it is like: he always thought of 'earth'; the earth came to his mind first even when talking of the moon.]

मारेउ राहु ससिहि कह कोई । उर महँ परी स्यामता सोई ॥ ६ ॥
 कोउ कह जब बिधि रति मुख कीन्हा । सार भाग ससि कर हरि लीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥
 छिद्र सो प्रगट इंदु उर माहीं । तेहि मग देखिअ नभ परिछाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

mārē'u rāhu sasihi kaha kō'ī. ura maham' parī syāmatā sō'ī. 6.
 kō'u kaha jaba bidhi rati mukha kīnhā. sāra bhāga sasi kara hari līnhā. 7.
 chidra sō pragaṭa indu ura māhīm. tēhi maga dēkhi'a nabha parichāhīm. 8.

Someone gave his opinion saying that the black spots seen on the surface of the moon has been caused by the wound inflicted upon it by Rahu (the severed head of a demon who is said to devour the moon during lunar eclipses) who had attached it¹. (6)

Someone else² proposed that when the creator was moulding the face of Rati, the beautiful consort of Kaamdeo (the patron god of beauty and passion), he could not find a suitable material to use for Rati's face, so he decided to scoop up some of the core matter from the charming face of the moon and use it to craft her face. The area from which this beautifying matter was scooped up by Brahma left dark spots on the surface of the moon. (7)

Since some matter was removed by Brahma from the heart or the core area of the moon, it became less dense there, and therefore one can faintly see the blue sky beyond it through this hole. This gives the visual impression that the moon's otherwise brilliantly illuminated surface is dark here and there. (8)

[Note—¹Rahu is the severed head of a demon who is believed to be responsible for causing the lunar eclipse. According to mythological accounts, a demon had surreptitiously entered the row of gods and sat between the moon god and the sun god when Amrit, the nectar of eternity that was obtained during the churning of the ocean, was being distributed between the gods and the demons. As soon as these two gods realised who he was, they raised an alarm. Lord Vishnu cut off the impostor demon's head, but it was too late as by that time some drops of the Amrit had already dropped into the mouth of this demon, making him immune to death. So the demon insisted that the creator Brahma must provide him some food that he can eat on a regular basis to survive. On being asked his choice he said that he should be allowed to eat the sun and the moon gods. It was granted. Henceforth therefore, this demon devours the moon and the sun occasionally, causing the eclipses. The moon enters through its mouth and escapes through the hole at the lower end from where the head was severed from the body of the demon.

The severed head of the demon is called 'Rahu', and the cut-off torso is called 'Ketu' which is seen as the comet in the night sky.

The beginning of the lunar or the solar eclipse starts when Rahu begins approaching its victim, causing the disc of the two celestial bodies gradually becoming darker. The actual eclipse is when these two celestial entities enter the mouth of Rahu, when they escape through the hole at the lower end of Rahu's severed

head it marks the end of the eclipse. The darkness of the disc of the moon and the sun soon fades away, indicating that Rahu had gone away.

But it is believed that during this brief period Rahu manages to bite its victim and suck some of its blood. The wound thus created results in the dark spots seen on the surface of both the moon and the sun.

²Though it is not clear from these two verses who these other two persons were, but most probably there were Angad and Vibhishan respectively. The reason is that four persons were very close confidantes of Lord Ram, and remained by his side most of the time—they were Sugriv (the king of the monkeys), Angad (the crown prince of the monkeys), Vibhishan (Ravana's brother who had joined Lord Ram) and Hanuman (who had gone to Lanka and brought back Sita's news).

Sugriv had already expressed his opinion in verse no. 5 herein above. The next turn was that of Angad in order of seniority, so his idea is expressed in verse no. 6. His observations reflect his state of mind aptly because his father Baali was killed by an arrow in a battle with Sugriv. The wound on his father's heart must have been fresh in Angad's mind when he tried to find a reason for the darkness on the moon's surface, for it reminded him of that dark patch of blood on the chest of his father.

The third in order of seniority was obviously Vibhishan, so verse nos. 7-8 can be attributed to him. He was kicked out of Lanka where he was forced to leave his wife Sarma. He remembered her fondly, and the moon reminded him of her beautiful face.

The last companion was Hanuman. He was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and this will soon be reflected when he expresses his opinion in Doha no. 12-a herein below.]

प्रभु कह गरल बंधु ससि केरा । अति प्रिय निज उर दीन्ह बसेरा ॥ ९ ॥
बिष संजुत कर निकर पसारी । जारत बिरहवत नर नारी ॥ १० ॥

prabhu kaha garala bandhu sasi kērā. ati priya nija ura dīnha basērā. 9.
biṣa sañjuta kara nikara pasārī. jārata birahavanta nara nārī. 10.

Lord Ram now made his own observation (almost on the line of his friends). He said that 'poison (garala)' is a dear brother of the 'moon' (bandhu sasi kērā ati priya). 'Poison' is so dear to the 'moon' that the latter has given it a place close to its own heart¹. (9)

The moon burns and scorches (i.e. torments) men and women who are separated from their beloved ones by spreading its rays laced with this poison upon them. [To wit, the rays of the moon prove to be like a spray of poison that further aggravates the grief of a person who is already suffering the agony of separation from his or her beloved.]² (10)

[Note—¹The poison known as Halala emerged from the ocean at the time of its churning by the gods and the demons. It is also believed that the moon too owes its origin to the ocean, because when a large chunk of earth was scooped out and thrown into the sky to form the moon, the cavity thus created was filled with water, thereby forming the ocean.

Hence, the ‘poison’ and the ‘moon’ both have the ocean as their father.

²Those who are suffering from grief at separation from their beloved ones, look up to the moon for some relief, and then sigh. The rays of the moon, which are normally soothing and comforting for others, makes those who are suffering from the grief of separation feel more sorrowful and much tormented as it reminds them of their separated beloved ones whom they are not certain to meet and see again. This is equivalent to spraying hot liquid on a wound, or is like spraying poison on an injury.

Lord Ram is suffering from grief due to separation from his beloved wife Sita. So like his companions Sugriv, Angad and Vibhihsan he too makes an observation that reflects his worldly state of mind and feelings. It is very apt for the Lord to speak in a language that fits with the line of thinking of his friends; the Lord wishes to convey to them that he is no different from them.

Let us remember one thing here—Lord Ram has always took the precaution to see that his commanders would feel that the Lord is very down-to-earth and practical, making them feel at home with him, treating him as one who is like them, and not a Lord who is inaccessible and distant. In this context see Chaupai line no. 4 herein above where he addresses his companions as ‘brothers’.

So why is the moon tormenting Lord Ram by partnering with poison? Well, the Lord had threatened their father, the Ocean, when the latter had blocked his way. This annoyed the moon, and it decided to torment the Lord by lacing its rays with poison symbolizing the sorrows, the agony and the grief that torments a person who is separated from his beloved one—in this case it is Lord Ram who is suffering from separation with Sita.]

दो०. कह हनुमंत सुनहु प्रभु ससि तुम्हार प्रिय दास ।
तव मूरति बिधु उर बसति सोइ स्यामता अभास ॥ १२ (क) ॥
पवन तनय के बचन सुनि बिहँसे रामु सुजान ।
दच्छिन दिसि अवलोकि प्रभु बोले कृपानिधान ॥ १२ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

kaha hanumanta sunahu prabhu sasi tumhāra priya dāsa.
tava mūrati bidhu ura basati sō'i syāmatā abhāsa. 12 (a).

[PAUSE 7 FOR A NINE-DAY RECITATION]

pavana tanaya kē bacana suni bihamśē rāmu sujāna.
dacchina disi avalōki prabhu bōlē kṛpānidhāna. 12 (b).

Then came the turn of Hanuman who said, ‘Listen my Lord! The moon is one of your dear servants (a faithful servitor; a loyal follower; an ardent devotee—“sasi tumhāra priya dāsa”)¹. [So it will not be proper to say that his is tormenting you by spraying rays laced with poison upon you.]

Your image is sacredly enshrined in the moon’s heart (because he loves you and is devoted to you), and this causes the shade of darkness that is seen on its surface.

[It is also possible that the moon is sad because you are sad. A true servant feels the same way his lord feels; if the lord is happy the servant will be happy, and if the lord is unhappy the servant too would feel unhappy. That is why the moon is dark as it feels sorry for you.]’ (Doha no. 12-a)

[PAUSE 7 FOR A NINE-DAY RECITATION]

When the gentleman Lord Ram heard these wise and enlightened (and surely witty) words of the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) he smiled.²

The Lord, who is a treasury of grace and kindness, then looked in the south direction and said³ --- (Doha no. 12-b)

[Note—¹Why does Hanuman call the moon a servant or a devotee of Lord Ram? The answer is this: A monkey named Sushen is regarded as a manifestation of the moon god, and this Sushen is the father-in-law of Sugriv, who himself is Lord Ram’s close companion and confidante. So therefore, the moon god cannot be inimical to the Lord.

Another reason is that the crescent moon finds its abode in the lock of matted hairs on Lord Shiva’s head, and Shiva worships you. So how can the moon become your enemy; by no stretch of imagination this is ever possible.

This interpretation of Hanuman proves that he was a devotee of Lord Ram of the highest level. While others took a worldly view of why the moon has dark spots, Hanuman had an enlightened view of it.

²Lord Ram smiled at the smart and witty answer of Hanuman. It lent a completely different meaning to the whole discussion regarding the moon. The Lord marvelled at Hanuman’s wisdom and level of enlightenment and presence of mind; it helped to further firm up the Lord’s personal high opinion regarding Hanuman. Every little event added up to bring Hanuman more and more close to the Lord; each small thing that happened proved that amongst all the monkeys and bears and demons no one could match Hanuman in any field.

It is the reason why Lord Ram decided to retain only Hanuman in his service after returning from Lanka and being crowned as the King of Ayodhya.

³The Lord changed the subject. He now looked in the direction of the city of Lanka which was in the southern direction from Mt. Subel. There were more urgent things to discuss; the war was looming in the horizon and a strategy had to be devised soon. The talk of the moon was like an idle pastime; the mind had to be focussed on more important things now.]

चौ०. देखु बिभीषन दच्छिन आसा । घन घमंड दामिनी बिलासा ॥ १ ॥

मधुर मधुर गरजइ घन घोरा । होइ बृष्टि जनि उपल कठोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhu bibhīṣana dacchina āsā. ghana ghamanḍa dāminī bilāsā. 1.

madhura madhura garaja'i ghana ghōrā. hō'i bṛṣṭi jani upala kaṭhōrā. 2.

Addressing Vibhishan, Lord Ram said, ‘Vibhishan, look in the south direction. It appears that huge banks of dark clouds are emerging in the yonder sky. There are

streaks of lightening glistening through these clouds, lending a special charm to them. (1)

The soft sound of these clouds rumbling and thundering in the distance is clearly audible. Would it rain, or is it possible that there would be a shower of hail coming down upon us?¹ (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram's army was under the open sky; there were no modern day tents to house the soldiers. So the possibility of an approaching thunderstorm worried the Lord. He consulted Vibhishan as he had lived all his life in Lanka, and therefore he would be in a better position to tell how the weather behaves in this far away alien land to which neither Lord Ram nor any of the others were in the least familiar with. Advance precautions had to be taken and preparations made before the fury of Nature befell upon the huge army. Should it begin to rain now when the war is to be fought the next day or in the days following, a lot of advance planning is required. A rainy day is quite a different proposition than a sunny day in the battle-field.

So, the prospects of rain or a hailstorm worried Lord Ram.]

कहत बिभीषन सुनहु कृपाला । होइ न तड़ित न बारिद माला ॥ ३ ॥
लंका सिखर उपर आगारा । तहँ दसकंधर देख अखारा ॥ ४ ॥

kahata bibhīṣana sunahu kṛpālā. hō'i na taḍita na bārida mālā. 3.
laṅkā sikhara upara āgārā. taḥam̐ dasakandhara dēkha akhārā. 4.

Vibhishan replied, 'Listen of merciful and gracious Lord (sunahu kṛpālā)! This sight is neither of a bank of cloud nor of lightening. (3)

On the summit of Lanka there is a huge citadel (or a hall) where Ravana (the ten-shouldered and ten-headed one—"dasakandhara") sits to watch competitions of dancing and singing, as well as other kinds of sports¹. (4)

[Note—¹This is the first instance among many others that will come during the unfolding of the war that Vibhishan had given the secrets of Lanka and Ravana to Lord Ram.

Amongst the most prominent ones are the following:

When Ravana was performing a fire sacrifice that would have made him invincible in the battle-field if completed successfully, Vibhishan had told Lord Ram about it. On getting this vital piece of intelligence, a small detachment of monkey troops was sent in Lanka. They destroyed Ravana's fire sacrifice, paving the ground for his final defeat. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 85 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

Even the death of Ravana was due to Vibhishan as he was the one who had divulged the secret of Ravana's life to Lord Ram, after which the Lord shot an arrow that culminated in Ravana's death. Prior to that, all efforts to kill Ravana had failed. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 101-b—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 103.}

Vibhishan has always been regarded with contempt for his betrayal of his own race and family. His name has become a synonym for betrayal, treason, disloyalty and

selfishness, for he had been instrumental in the destruction of his own race just to take revenge for his chiding by his elder brother Ravana who had been so kind and understanding towards him that he had let Vibhishan pursue his religious path of worship and devotion inspite of living right in the center of Lanka and in the middle of the demon race that was totally opposed to such practices. Ravana had even overlooked that Vibhishan has marked the name of Lord Hari on his front gate, and used to chant Lord Ram's name the first thing in the morning—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 6.

But when Vibhishan realised that the future was not in the favour of his brother Ravana, he had no regrets in abandoning him and joining the camp of the arch enemy of his brother—i.e. Lord Ram. It is not denying the fact that Vibhishan secretly wished to save his own skin and was eying the future crown of Lanka when he joined Lord Ram—for he knew that if he stayed back in Lanka he would be forced to fight along with the rest of the demons, and sure enough he would be killed like the rest of them. So he was waiting for an opportunity, and as soon as he got one he escaped. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 41.}]

छत्र मेघडंबर सिर धारी । सोइ जनु जलद घटा अति कारी ॥ ५ ॥
मंदोदरी श्रवन ताटंका । सोइ प्रभु जनु दामिनी दमंका ॥ ६ ॥

chatra mēghaḍambara sira dhārī. sō'i janu jalada ghaṭā ati kārī. 5.
mandōdarī śravana tāṭaṅkā. sō'i prabhu janu dāminī damaṅkā. 6.

He (Ravana) has a large ceremonial umbrella spread over his head as a symbol of royalty, and this umbrella gives the impression of a huge bank of dark clouds when viewed at a distance from here. (5)

Mandodari has dazzling earrings dangling from her ears, and oh Lord, the brilliant flash of light that radiate from them as she moves her head appear to be like streaks of lightening in the clouds when they are viewed against the dark background of the ceremonial umbrella. [This is because both Ravana and Mandodari are attending the festivities, sitting close to each other, and the ceremonial umbrella is spread over their heads.] (6)

बाजहिं ताल मृदंग अनूपा । सोइ रव मधुर सुनहु सुरभूपा ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभु मुसुकान समुझि अभिमाना । चाप चढ़ाइ बान संधाना ॥ ८ ॥

bājahim tāla mṛdaṅga anūpā. sō'i rava madhura sunahu surabhūpā. 7.
prabhu musukāna samujhi abhimānā. cāpa caṛhā'i bāna sandhānā. 8.

And the soft sound that appears to be the rumbling of distant clouds from here is actually the sound of clashing cymbals and the playing of the tabors, the musical instruments that are being used there.' (7)

When Lord Ram heard this, he smiled¹ because, overtly, the Lord interpreted the sight as indicating that Ravana was very haughty and arrogant, and was effectively mocking at the Lord by indulging in open festivities to show that he has no fear of either Lord Ram or his army, and he cares not a wee bit about the danger posed by them. [But what was the other, the more subtle reason for Lord Ram's smile? See note no. 1 below]

So, to literally teach Ravana a lesson, the Lord stringed his bow and mounted an arrow on it². (8)

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram 'smile'? One reason is given in the verse itself: The Lord smiled in a sarcastic and contemptuous way at Ravana because the latter was so haughty and proud that he took the news of the Lord's arrival too lightly, and he wasn't at all worried about the bloody war that loomed on the horizon of Lanka. This is not the proper attitude and a wise way for any king to behave in the face of an enemy. So the Lord wished to send Ravana a clear message about the fate that stares at his face by shooting an arrow that would dismantle the ceremonial umbrella of authority over his head, as well as fell his ten crowns along with the earrings of his wife Mandodari.

But there was another reason for Lord Ram's smile, and it is this: By specifically asking Vibhishan the reason for the appearance of dark clouds etc. in the southern direction where Lanka was located, Lord Ram wanted to ascertain what was in his mind. The Lord wished to check Vibhishan's fidelity; he wanted to know whether Vibhishan was willing to divulge the secrets of Lanka, whether or not he would help Lord Ram and his army at crucial moments of the impending war. The Lord expressed his satisfaction at Vibhishan's reply by 'smiling' because the latter's answer proved that he was truly against Ravana and loyal to Lord Ram.

It was Vibhishan's first test of loyalty and integrity, and the Lord smiled because he had passed this test; now Vibhishan could be relied upon. If Vibhishan was not truly committed to serving the Lord he could have said so many other things to deflect Lord Ram's attention from the real cause of the sound and sight heard and seen in the southern direction. To wit, if Vibhishan had secretly wished that his brother Ravana was not put in harm's way he could have given a hundred other reasons to Lord Ram for the sight that was seen instead of pinpointing what caused it, and thereby putting his brother in the Lord's radar.

²A similar sight is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 42-44.]

दो०. छत्र मुकुट ताटंक तब हते एकहीं बान ।
 सब कें देखत महि परे मरमु न कोऊ जान ॥ १३ (क) ॥
 अस कौतुक करि राम सर प्रबिसेउ आइ निषंग ।
 रावन सभा ससंक सब देखि महा रसभंग ॥ १३ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

chatra mukuṭa tāṭaṅka taba hatē ēkahīm bāna.
 saba kēm dēkhata mahi parē maramu na kō'ū jāna. 13 (a).
 asa kautuka kari rāma sara prabisē'u ā'i niṣaṅga.

rāvana sabhā sasaṅka saba dēkhi mahā rasabhaṅga. 13 (b).

The Lord took aim and shot this arrow. The arrow struck and fell to the ground the ceremonial umbrella and the crowns over the head of Ravana, as well as the earrings of Mandodari, one after another in quick succession, giving the impression that they fell simultaneously. It was done so suddenly, unexpectedly and in such a magical way that no one present could understand what had actually happened and for what reason¹. (Doha no. 13-a)

After accomplishing this unimaginable miraculous deed, the arrow returned to enter the quiver of Lord Ram².

Meanwhile, in Ravana's assembly there was total chaos. Everyone was shocked and taken aback at the sudden occurrence of this bad omen; they became sore affright and alarmed when the festivities were disrupted so abruptly. (Doha no. 13-b)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had two aims in mind—one of course is obvious: it was to warn Ravana that he is underestimating his enemy, that his enemy, Lord Ram, possesses certain skills of warfare that even Ravana isn't aware of, and that let him be warned that a bitter and scary fight stared him in the face and therefore it is not good for him to be careless now lest he would blame the Lord later on that he wasn't warned.

The second aim is subtle: Lord Ram wanted to warn Vibhishan not to play fools with him. The way the arrow was shot almost casually from a great distance, the way it hit and fell its target at one go, and, more importantly, the way it returned to Lord Ram's quiver, must have left Vibhishan gaping in utter amazement, with an open mouth and eyes transfixed in sheer astonishment at the miraculous spectacle.

If Vibhishan may have had any doubts about Lord Ram's abilities and supernatural powers, because of the Lord acting and behaving almost like any other human being, then all such doubts evaporated in a fleeting moment. Vibhishan would now fear Lord Ram, and in case he had some secret thought of betraying the Lord and taking the side of his own brother if the tide of war went in the favour of Ravana, then now onwards he would be so scared for his own life that he would perish this thought. This scenario was quite possible because if Vibhishan could betray his own family and blood-relations with whom he had spent his entire life to join their enemy, and then help this enemy to vanquish his own kith and kin and conquer his own city, then it is not impossible to think that he wouldn't have changed sides again if this suited his selfish interests. But now he was so scared out of his wits that he wouldn't dare to do it!

²The way the arrow was shot, the way it struck and fell its targets that were not in a straight line, and then successfully came back to enter the quiver of Lord Ram shows that the science and technology used in weapons and their use were highly evolved during that period.

Lord Ram had shown this special skill once before too—it was when Sugriva had wished to test the Lord's abilities and prowess by asking him to fell seven tall palm trees with a single arrow, which the Lord did effortlessly. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 7.}

चौ०. कंप न भूमि न मरुत बिसेषा । अङ्ग सङ्ग कछु नयन न देखा ॥ १ ॥

सोचहिं सब निज हृदय मझारी । असगुन भयउ भयंकर भारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kampa na bhūmi na maruta bisēṣā. astra sastra kachu nayana na dēkhā. 1.
sōcahiṁ saba nija hṛdaya majhārī. asaguna bhaya'u bhayaṅkara bhārī. 2.

The earth hadn't shook (i.e. there was no earthquake), nor was there a strong wind or storm, and neither did anyone see any kind of weapon or missile¹. (1)

Everyone present was extremely alarmed, thinking inside their hearts that some very bad omen has occurred. (2)

[Note—¹The reason is that everyone was engaged in watching the performance of the many dances and listening to the different kinds of music. The arrow shot by Lord Ram came and left in a jiffy; it was done so suddenly and unexpectedly that only when the crowns and the ceremonial umbrella on Ravana's head as well as Mandodari's earrings fell to the ground with a loud thud that anyone could notice that something had happened. But by that time the arrow was gone.]

दसमुख देखि सभा भय पाई । बिहसि बचन कह जुगुति बनाई ॥ ३ ॥

सिरउ गिरे संतत सुभ जाही । मुकुट परे कस असगुन ताही ॥ ४ ॥

सयन करहु निज निज गृह जाई । गवने भवन सकल सिर नाई ॥ ५ ॥

dasamukha dēkhi sabhā bhaya pāī. bihasi bacana kaha juguti banāī. 3.
sira'u girē santata subha jāhī. mukuṭa parē kasa asaguna tāhī. 4.
sayana karahu nija nija gr̥ha jāī. gavanē bhavana sakala sira nāī. 5.

When the ten-headed Ravana saw that the assembly was overcome with an overwhelming air of excessive fear, he smiled wryly and tried to make light of the situation by giving a humorous twist to the development¹. (3)

He said, 'Tell me, he whose heads have fallen so many times but proved to be a boon for him, how can the mere falling of a crown cause any harm or ill to him?² (4)

Take a break now and go to your respective homes to sleep (and rest) peacefully.³

All the assembled courtiers bowed their heads before him, took their leave and went home. (5)

[Note—¹It had so happened that Lord Ram had shot an arrow from his camp, and this arrow struck Ravana crown which fell to the ground. It was a very bad omen. So all the courtiers were struck with terror and alarmed about the future. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14}.

²Ravana refers to the time when he had offered his heads to Lord Shiva as a personal sacrifice. This voluntary cutting of his own head and offering them as a sacrifice to the Lord proved to be a boon for him for it pleased Lord Shiva so much that he

granted Ravana many boons, including immunity from death by severance of the head, lordship of all the gods, demons and creatures, as well as invincibility and matchless glory. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 25.}

So he argued that the crown is merely a decoration of his head, a sort of head-gear. How does it matter if it falls by some accident as long as the heads are protected by Lord Shiva's immortal boon? Hence, there is nothing to worry at all.

³Look, worrying unnecessarily for imaginary things is a waste of energy and time. I think you all are under some evil spell and suffering from some delusions that seems to have had the better of your senses and undermined your natural courage and dare devilry for which the demon race is so famed. What has happened to you all? It is better for all of us to take a break and sleep over the matter overnight. Tomorrow morning we'll all have a fresh start and feel rejuvenated. Go, sleep soundly and peacefully. No hell's breaking upon us right now. All of you need mental rest, so go home, relax and sleep, forgetting about imaginary fears.]

मंदोदरी सोच उर बसेऊ । जब ते श्रवनपूर महि खसेऊ ॥ ६ ॥
 सजल नयन कह जुग कर जोरी । सुनहु प्रानपति बिनती मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
 कंत राम बिरोध परिहरहू । जानि मनुज जनि हठ मन धरहू ॥ ८ ॥

mandōdarī sōca ura basē'ū. jaba tē śravanapūra mahi khasē'ū. 6.
 sajala nayana kaha juga kara jōrī. sunahu prānapati binatī mōrī.
 kanta rāma birōdha pariharahū. jāni manuja jani haṭha mana dharahū. 4.

[Meanwhile, after dismissing the courtiers with these words of reassurance, Ravana himself got up and retired for the night to his palace where he found Mandodari once again in a state of utter fear. She had experienced some bad omen and was extremely upset about its implications. So for the second time straight she confronted Ravana as he entered the palace, begging him to see sense and overcome his egoist arrogance.]

Ever since the ear-ring of Mandodari had fallen to the ground¹, she was mentally very worried and extremely upset. (6)

When she saw Ravana she joined her hands in supplication and begged before him with tears in her eyes, pleading as follows: 'Listen my beloved husband who is the lord of my life and very dear to me (prānapati). Pray, please pay attention to my prayers; I sincerely and earnestly plead before you. (7)

My dear husband (kanta)! Please abandon your animosity with and a belligerence attitude towards Lord Ram in the erroneous belief that he is an ordinary human prince². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had shot an arrow from his camp as a signal to warn Ravana that he has arrived. It was the first arrow shot by the Lord in Lanka. This arrow had struck and fell three things—(i) The ceremonial umbrella over his heads that symbolized his authority and majesty as the king of the demon race, and of a king of; (ii) Ravana's

crowns; and (iii) Mandodari's ear-ring. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 (a).}

²Refer also to Vibhishan's advice in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 5 that precede Doha no. 39 which is the same as that of Mandodari's.

No one in this creation can protect someone who is opposed to Lord Ram—Mandodari knows it as she has this information from her own network of spies that all those who had opposed the Lord had bit the dust.

There were many precedents—for instance, when the demons Marich and Subahu attacked sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice which Lord Ram stood guard to protect, the whole army accompanying these demons was demolished along with Subahu. Marich was spared then, but he was killed later on when he tried to cheat Lord Ram disguised as a golden deer. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-14 that precede Doha no. 27.}

When the demon forces of Khar and Dushan attacked Lord Ram, they too were all eliminated quickly. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20.}

Indra's son Jayant also faced this piquant situation when no one in the heaven was ready to give him shelter when he annoyed Lord Ram by pricking Sita's legs with his beak, leading to blood oozing out of the wound and Lord Ram deciding to punish him by plucking a blade of grass and shooting it at Jayant as an improvised arrow. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 2.}

Marich, Vibhishan and Shuk too had advised Ravana the same thing as Mandodari does now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25 (Marich); (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39 (Vibhishan); (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 56 and Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 57 (Shuk).

Hanuman too had a similar advice for Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22—to Doha no. 23.

A little later we shall read Angad's interaction with Ravana where the former also tried to persuade the latter on similar lines as Mandodari's: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 20 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

दो०. बिस्वरूप रघुबंस मनि करहु बचन बिस्वासु।

लोक कल्पना बेद कर अंग अंग प्रति जासु ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

bisvarūpa raghubansa mani karahu bacana bisvāsu.

lōka kalpanā bēda kara aṅga aṅga prati jāsu. 14.

My Lord! Believe my words that real form of the who is like a gem in the family of king Raghu ("raghubansa mani"; Lord Ram) is cosmic in nature inasmuch as the whole creation, the entire universe, is nothing but a manifestation of the Lord, and the

Lord pervades uniformly in this creation as its essence (known as cosmic Consciousness).

Verily indeed, the Vedas (primary and most ancient of the scriptures) have envisioned that each pore of the cosmic body of the Lord is a universe in its own right. (Doha no. 14)

[Note—Mandodari says “Believe me my lord when I say that the gem of the Raghu dynasty, Lord Ram, is a manifested form of the invisible cosmic form of the Supreme Being of whom this entire world is an image. In other words, the original form of Lord Ram is known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the cosmic Male who has revealed himself in the form of this vast and myriad world, pervading intrinsically everywhere in it, present in every pore of it. In fact, this world is a gross visible form of subtle and invisible form of Lord Ram who is none but the Supreme Being known as Brahm or as the ‘Viraat Purush’.

The Vedas conceive that each limb and part of the body of this cosmic all-inclusive form of the Lord is the habitat of one or the other world that are known to exist in this creation. To wit, there are different worlds that exist at different levels in creation at different points of time. All of them are lodged at some point on the cosmic body of the Lord like so many tiny pearls stitched and embroidered on a huge length of cloth as long and wide as the firmament.”

The cosmic all-pervading form of Lord Ram who is the Supreme Being, the cosmic form that is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, has also been described at various places in ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of sage Veda Vyas. Some of the instances relevant to our present reading are: (i) Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 31-45: prayer by Kabandha; (ii) Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 25-29: assertion by Vibhishan; (iii) Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 63-69: as affirmed by sage Agastya.]

चौ०. पद पाताल सीस अज धामा । अपर लोक अँग अँग बिश्रामा ॥ १ ॥

भृकुटि बिलास भयंकर काला । नयन दिवाकर कच घन माला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pada pātāla sīsa aja dhāmā. apara lōka amṅga amṅga biśrāmā. 1.
bhṛkuṭi bilāsa bhayaṅkara kālā. nayana divākara kaca ghana mālā. 2.

This feet of the cosmic form of Lord Ram are represented by the ‘Patal’ (the nether world or the subterranean world; the lower world), and the Lord’s head consists of the heavens where Brahma, the creator, lives.

The rest of the world that lies between these to extremes (i.e. between the foot and the head of the cosmic form of Lord Ram, a form also known as the Viraat Purush) is located or distributed in all other parts of the Lord’s cosmic body. (1)

The formidable power of ‘Kaal’ (death; the powerful forces of time that bring about epochal changes in this world, including destruction) is represented by the movement of the Lord’s eyebrows.

His eyes are represented by the Sun, and the dense dark clouds are his thick lock of black hairs. (2)

जासु घ्नान अस्विनीकुमारा । निसि अरु दिवस निमेष अपारा ॥ ३ ॥
श्रवन दिसा दस बेद बखानी । मारुत स्वास निगम निज बानी ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu ghrāna asvinīkumārā. nisi aru divasa nimēṣa apārā. 3.
śravana disā dasa bēda bakhānī. māruta svāsa nigama nija bānī. 4.

The twin gods known as ‘Aswini-kumars’ (who are the physicians of the gods) are the Lord’s two nostrils.

The day and the night are representatives of the blinking of the eyes of the Lord, with the day representing the open eyes, and the night standing for the closed eye. (3)

The Vedas have declared (asserted) that the Lord’s ears is represented by the ten directions or quarters of this world¹.

His breath is the wind, the Vedas (primary scriptures; the treasury of knowledge) are the Lord’s words. (4)

[Note—¹The ten directions or quarters of the world are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

अधर लोभ जम दसन कराला । माया हास बाहु दिगपाला ॥ ५ ॥
आनन अनल अंबुपति जीहा । उत्पति पालन प्रलय समीहा ॥ ६ ॥

adhara lōbha jama dasana karālā. māyā hāsa bāhu digapālā. 5.
ānana anala ambupati jīhā. utapati pālana pralaya samīhā. 6.

‘Lobha’ (greed) represents the Lord’s lips; the ferocious ‘Yam’ (god of death) represents his sharp teeth; ‘Maya’ (delusions) stands for the Lord’s laughter or smile (because the Lord laughs at the way the world begins to hallucinate under its influence); and the ‘Digpals’¹ (the powerful semi-gods who support the world and prevent it from collapsing) are representatives of the Lord’s strong arms (that sustain and protect the entire creation). (5)

The Lord’s tongue is represented by ‘Anal’ (fire)², and the tongue represents ‘Ambupati’ (the patron god of water)³.

Creation, sustenance and conclusion or destruction of this creation are his mere acts done effortlessly and in a causal manner; they are like his natural gestures⁴. (6)

[Note—¹The Digpals:— There are believed to be eight Digpals as follows:-

Indra who is the king of Gods and who has a thousand eyes on his body, and is therefore called ‘Sahastraaksha’, Agni or the Fire God, Yam or the God of Dharma (i.e. the God responsible to ensure that the great tenets of righteousness and proper conduct are observed by the creatures, and to punish those who violate these laws), Nirritiya (also known as Nairritya/Nirriti), Varun or the Water God, Anil or the Wind God, Indu or the Moon God (often replaced by Kuber who is the treasurer of Gods), Ishan or Lord Shiva, Brahma the creator, and Anant who is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer

and protector of creation (or Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its hoods in a symbolic gesture to indicate that Lord Vishnu is responsible for taking care of this creation).

The eight Diggals are the divine forces of creation in a personified form of various Gods who are assigned the task of taking care of the entire creation. They are the following—(i) Indra who is the king of Gods and responsible for production of rain as well as to control all other Gods who are said to be represented by the various independent forces of Nature; (ii) Agni is the personified form of the fire element responsible for providing heat, energy, light, vitality, strength, vigour and vibrancy to creation; (iii) Yam is the personified form of death as well as assigned the duty to uphold the laws of Dharma (or the auspicious virtues of righteousness, nobility, propriety, probity etc.), and to punish those who violate it; (iv) Nirriti or Nairitya who is the God responsible for the actual death and punishment of the sinful and unholy creatures in creation; (v) Varun is the personified form of the most essential ambrosia of life known as the water element that provides nourishment and lubrication to this creation, and is regarded as the basic element that harbours life in all its forms in its bosom; (vi) Anil is the personified form of the life-giving air or wind element which is also called Pran—literally meaning ‘life’ which is a proof of its importance and significance vis-à-vis this creation; (vii) Kuber is the treasurer of Gods and responsible to provide all the necessities of life to the inhabitants of this world; the Moon God is the custodian of the Amrit, the ambrosia of life and eternity which is a priceless asset for the creation; (viii) Ishan is Lord Shiva who is also known as Mahadev, the Great Lord, as well as the one who is responsible for maintain balance in this creation by controlling death, and hence is called the ‘concluder’; (ix) Brahma is the creator of the physical world as well as the body of knowledge known as the Vedas, and therefore assumes the role of a grand old patriarch of the family known as the world; and (x) Anant or Lord Vishnu who is so-called because he is eternal, infinite and endless, has infinite responsibilities, and is assigned the multi-prong duty of taking good care of the world in all respects. He is also called Anant as he is none but the eternal Brahm himself in the form of the Viraat Purush, the all-pervading, all-encompassing and almighty Lord of creation. In fact, even Brahma and Shiva are said to be born from this Viraat Purush. [Refer Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 38.]

These Diggals are responsible for the eight directions where they are worshipped as follows—

- (1) Indra (the king of Gods) is the custodian or guardian of the east direction.
- (2) Agni (the fire-God) is the custodian or guardian of the south-east direction.
- (3) Yama (the death-God) is the custodian or guardian of the south direction.
- (4) Nirriti or Nairitya is the custodian or guardian of the south-west direction.
- (5) Varun (the Water God) is the custodian or guardian of the west direction.
- (6) Vayu (the Wind God) is the custodian or guardian of the north-west direction.
- (7) Kuber (the treasurer of Gods) is the custodian or guardian of the north direction.
- (8) Ish (Lord Shiva; the chief amongst the Gods) is the custodian or guardian of the north-east direction.

²This is why we use the phrase “the tongue of fire” with leaping flames. It also refers to a person’s “fiery words” or a “heated argument” which can scorch or irritate others as much as a raging fire can do by its heat.

³That is why the tongue is always moist. It is a medical necessity because all food that we eat is moistened and softened by the saliva which is water-based. Besides this physical softening to make the food easy on the stomach, the enzymes that start the chemical process of digestion in the tongue itself work only when they are diluted with water. This is the reason why hastily eaten food that is gulped down directly into the throat without being properly chewed in the mouth and made into a semi-fluid form with the help of the water contents of the saliva secreted by the tongue that helps the food to be mixed with digestive enzymes that would help the stomach to further the process of digestion and extraction of the nutrients present in the food lies like a load in the abdomen and ruins health.

⁴The Lord can effect such great changes such as creating this world from virtually nothing, then sustaining it on such a huge and grand scale, and finally winding it up like one closing a book, needs no special effort or exertion to be done by the Supreme Lord. He merely gestures or wishes that it be so, and it happens to his liking.]

रोम राजि अष्टादस भारा । अस्थि सैल सरिता नस जारा ॥ ७ ॥

उदर उदधि अधगो जातना । जगमय प्रभु का बहु कलपना ॥ ८ ॥

rōma rāji aṣṭādasa bhārā. asthi saila saritā nasa jārā. 7.

udara udadhi adhagō jātānā. jagamaya prabhu kā bahu kalapanā. 8.

The eighteen principle species of the vegetable (botanical) kingdom, each having countless members of different types, are like the hairs on the body of the Viraat (the cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is infinite in dimension).

The lofty mountains are its bones, and the many rivers and countless streams are the network of veins, arterioles and capillaries of this cosmic body. (7)

The measureless ocean is its stomach and abdomen, while the organs present in the lower part of this cosmic body (i.e. the excretory and genital organs) are represented by the hell (which is hot and tormenting; is an eternal inferno where everything is hot and burning).

In brief, this entire creation (universe) is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord (here referring to Lord Ram in his primary form as the Viraat Purush), and therefore it is futile to attempt to describe it or go into the details of this form and its mind-boggling revealed variations in the form of a creation that has no end, a creation in which no two units are alike though all of them have the same origin as they are all revelation of the same Supreme Lord.' (8)

दो०. अहंकार सिव बुद्धि अज मन ससि चित महान ।

मनुज बास सचराचर रूप राम भगवान ॥ १५ (क) ॥

अस बिचारि सुनु प्रानपति प्रभु सन बयरु बिहाइ ।

प्रीति करहु रघुबीर पद मम अहिवात न जाइ ॥ १५ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

ahaṅkāra siva bud'dhi aja mana sasi citta mahāna.
 manuja bāsa sacarācara rūpa rāma bhagavāna. 15 (a).
 asa bicāri sunu prānapati prabhu sana bayaru bihā'i.
 prīti karahu raghubīra pada mama ahivāta na jā'i. 15 (b).

‘Ahankar’ (the element of pride) symbolizes Shiva (the concluder), ‘Buddhi’ (intellect; the faculty of reasoning and understanding) stands for Brahma (the creator), the ‘Mana’ (mind and heart) represents ‘Chandrama’ (the Moon God), and ‘Chitta¹’ is the greatest of them all (citta mahāna) (as it represents Lord Vishnu).

Verily indeed and in all sooth, it is the Supreme Lord God, whose cosmic form includes all the animate as well as the inanimate aspects of this vast universe, who himself has assumed the form of a human being known by the name of ‘Ram’. (Doha no. 15-a)

In the view of this, and keeping all these facts in mind, oh my beloved husband, you should abandon all animosity with the Lord (Sri Ram).

Inculcate devotion and have affection in the holy feet of Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) so that my good fortune as being your wife does not desert me (or, my union with you as your wife can last forever)². (Doha no. 15-b)

[Note—¹The word ‘Chitta’ stands for the sub-conscious mind. It is that faculty that works behind the scene to control the way a person thinks, behaves and acts. It is that aspect of the consciousness that governs a person’s personality and the quality of his inner self by storing all information that a creature receives by the medium of his sense organs of perception, and then using this information as a background upon which the creature relies to take decisions. It is a sort of a library of all information and experiences. Often times it is the sub-conscious mind that plays a crucial role in helping the creature to come at a conclusion and make a certain decision in a given situation where he has to make a choice from a given set of information. This we often refer to as relying on one’s ‘experience’.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 7.]

चौ०. बिहँसा नारि बचन सुनि काना । अहो मोह महिमा बलवाना ॥ १ ॥
 नारि सुभाउ सत्य सब कहहीं । अवगुन आठ सदा उर रहहीं ॥ २ ॥
 साहस अनृत चपलता माया । भय अबिबेक असौच अदाया ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

bihamśā nāri bacana suni kānā. ahō mōha mahimā balavānā. 1.
 nāri subhā'u satya saba kahahīm. avaguna āṭha sadā ura rahahīm. 2.
 sāhasa anṛta capalatā māyā. bhaya abibēka asauca adāyā. 3.

When Ravana heard the words of his wife Mandodari, he laughed aloud in derision, and exclaimed, ‘Ah! How great and powerful is the power of infatuation and attachment that comes with true love¹! (1)

Forsooth, all great poets have rightly observed that a woman by nature always has eight faults or shortcomings in her character. (2)

These eight faults or shortcomings are the following: Recklessness and rashness (*sāhasa*); falsehood and deceit (*anṛta*); fickleness and transigency (*capalatā*); being prone to delusions and hallucinations (*māyā*); unwarranted fear and apprehensions (*bhaya*); ignorance and lack of knack in dealing with the practical problems of the world (*abibēka*); impurity of thought and lack of cleanliness of mind (*asauca*); and selfishness and lack of mercy (*adāyā*)². (3)

[Note—¹Here Ravana acknowledges that his wife loves him very dearly, and that is why she is so greatly worried at the prospect of harm coming to him, and mortally upset about his safety and security. Why, he had fought so many countless wars but never ever had she expressed such fear and anxiety for his safety, so therefore there is aught naught any reason now for her consternations.

However, it ought to be noted that in her zeal to protect her husband Ravana and to express her grave apprehensions, Mandodari has dared to cross the boundary of decency, modesty, propriety and probity by openly praising another person, who happens to be her husband's arch enemy, right in front of him without bothering about its serious repercussions and grave consequences. She could be severely censored and jailed for open disloyalty and immodesty as well as for gross impropriety and misconduct by lavishing praise upon another man right before her husband; she could be thrown into a dungeon with charges of treason and sedition.

But true love is so great a moving force that the lover is not worried about his or her safety in order to safeguard the welfare of the beloved. Hence, Mandodari was ready to face all accusations if somehow her entreaties could persuade Ravana to abandon his aggressive nature and hostile attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with the Lord so that not only his life is spared but the doom of the entire demon race could be averted.

²Ravana has listed eight shortcomings in the character of a woman. Let us examine how they hold true for Mandodari.

(i) Even though she knows her husband's stubborn nature that once he decides to do something he would listen to nothing that is contrary to his decision, yet she tries four times to make him change his mind. She also knows how wrathful he becomes if contradicted, and how mercilessly he takes revenge. Yet she has the temerity to face him boldly and praise his enemy right before him. Is this not short of dare devilry? Her anxiety and restlessness could have boomeranged upon her and cost her very dear if Ravana had chosen to throw her into prison and be tortured for speaking against him.

She also knows that he would never give Sita back to Lord Ram and make peace with him, yet she repeatedly asks him to do so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 36; (b) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 6; (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no 8 that precedes Doha no. 14, and Doha no. 15-b; and (d) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 3 that precede Doha no. 36 and Doha no. 37.

(ii) Ravana accuses her of speaking a lie and creating a smokescreen of delusions and falsehood that seems to portray Lord Ram as being more powerful than her husband Ravana.

(iii) She is of a fickle mind and uncertain of what to do and how to persuade her husband to change his mind—for she sometimes weeps, then at other times falls down at his feet, and then tries to scare him by painting a picture of his enemy Ram as someone who is the Supreme Being himself, whereas from all apparent signs he seems to be an ordinary prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya, for Lord Ram acts and behaves like one, showing no supernatural prowess or super-human powers. He ran like an ordinary man behind the golden deer; he lamented for his lost wife, began searching for her here and there in the wilderness, then prayed to the Ocean to let him cross it, and so many other developments that show he is an ordinary but courageous prince, and definitely not the Supreme Being that Mandodari makes him out to be before Ravana. This is the reason why “Ravana laughed derisively when Mandodari tried to tell him that Lord Ram was not an ordinary man but the Viraat Purush”.

(iv) And this is also the reason why Ravana accuses her of ignorance and utter lack of knowledge of the affairs of the world. She has become scared because for some reason, say lack of alertness on the part of the demons, a monkey (Hanuman) has managed to successfully cross the ocean and surreptitiously enter Lanka, and later burning it when he managed to escape from captivity, but that does not mean that the same thing would be repeated in a war when the demon army is fully prepared and armed to the teeth to face any challenge.

(v) This is also why Ravana believes her to be deluded and hallucinating—as if doomsday is right around the corner. Has she forgotten about his might and prowess with which he had so easily subdued all the combined strength of the gods of heaven? They ran helter-skelter to save themselves as soon as they heard that Ravana is coming to attack them. So what is such an issue with a human being that has so much shaken Mandodari if it is not an imaginary ghost of doom and death that has scared the wits out of her?

(vi) Why is she so terrified of monkeys and bears of Kishkindha, and the two human princes Lord Ram and his brother Laxman who were thrown out of their own kingdom by their father (king Dasrath) and step mother (Kaikeyi), and who could not muster courage to claim their rights then? What will they do now regarding Sita; if they have the right over her, then let them claim her.

“When they couldn’t claim their right to the throne of Ayodhya, I wonder”, Ravana told Mandodari, “about their ability to exercise their right over Sita. Let them go ahead and retrieve her. But why are you so overcome with consternation and anxiety, this I can’t understand.”

(vii) Ravana also says that a woman is selfish and has no mercy. Well, he taunts Mandodari by this remark. Where was her concern, he seems to ask, about the sufferings of a woman captive when he had captured so many women-folk of the human race as well as of the gods, and brought them as trophies to Lanka. What is so special about Sita that worries Mandodari so much; Sita is already so weak and miserable that she does not stand any chance of recovery if he decides to cut-off her meagre ration of food and water if he becomes annoyed at Mandodari’s stance of siding with his prisoner. When all the gods together could not gather courage to free their women folk from him, what will two princes do?

Mandodari is accused of being ‘selfish’ because now she is so worried about Sita as she fears that Sita’s husband Lord Ram is very powerful and he is a danger for the safety of her own husband Ravana, but earlier she was not at all concerned about other women in Ravana’s captivity as she was confident that their respective husbands were no threat to her own husband Ravana. It is clearly a case of selfishness and self-centred expression of concern for the miseries of a prisoner.

(viii) Ravana calls Mandodari ‘impure and un-clean in mind’ because she praises his opponent. It is surely not a proper conduct and a modest behaviour for a wife to criticise her own husband and praise another woman’s husband, which in the present case Mandodari does by finding fault with her husband Ravana and glorifying Sita’s husband Lord Ram. This behaviour is not acceptable even in modern times, and may result in a sharp spat between a husband and a wife, the former accusing the latter of infidelity, and it may be even culminate in a divorce.]

रिपु कर रूप सकल तैं गावा । अति बिसाल भय मोहि सुनावा ॥ ४ ॥
 सो सब प्रिया सहज बस मोरें । समुझि परा प्रसाद अब तोरें ॥ ५ ॥
 जानिउँ प्रिया तोरि चतुराई । एहि बिधि कहहु मोरि प्रभुताई ॥ ६ ॥

ripu kara rūpa sakala taim gāvā. ati bisāla bhaya mōhi sunāvā. 4.
 sō saba priyā sahaja basa mōrēm. samujhi parā prasāda aba tōrēm. 5.
 jāni'umṛ priyā tōri caturāī. ēhi bidhi kahahu mōri prabhutāī. 6.

You have tried to frighten me by describing the cosmic and all-pervading form of my enemy (i.e. Lord Ram’s ‘Viraat’ form, to tell me that he has supernatural powers that are possessed by the Supreme Being).

[To wit, you wish to scare me by saying that my opponent is exceptionally powerful and strong so that I buckle and surrender to him for fear of my life.] (4)

But me dear, all such forms (i.e. all the gods who represent one or the other form of the Supreme Being whose cosmic form you have invoked) are well under my control¹.

I am grateful to you that now I have realised what the reality is, and I also thank you very much indeed to remind me of my own immensity of powers and valour in this respect (so that I can face my enemy with renewed courage, vigour and enthusiasm)². (5-6)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-13 that precede it; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 37; (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 8.

²To wit, you love me so much that at a time when I need some encouragement and a reminder of my own immensity of strength and power, you have been witty enough to step in and remind me about my abilities and majesty by invoking the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, because all the gods of heaven whom I have subdued by the strength of my arms are in reality manifestations of this Supreme Being who has assumed the forms of these many gods to carry out the different functions of creation. So therefore, you actually mean to tell me that in a way I have conquered the Supreme Being himself by vanquishing these gods.

So thank you very much indeed for this veiled encouragement! Well, when I could so easily conquer so many varied manifestations of the Supreme Being as represented by the individual and the combined might of so many gods of heaven, then say why should I worry for a single form that Supreme Being might have taken as Lord Ram? Cheer up; there’s nothing to worry!

I do appreciate your ingenuity that you have employed this ruse to remind me of my own strength.]

तव बतकही गूढ मृगलोचनि । समुझत सुखद सुनत भय मोचनि ॥ ७ ॥
मंदोदरि मन महुँ अस ठयऊ । पियहि काल बस मतिभ्रम भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

tava batakahī gūṛha mṛgalōcani. samujhata sukhada sunata bhaya mōcani. 7.
mandōdari mana mahum̐ asa ṭhaya'ū. piyahi kāla basa matibhrama bhaya'ū.
8.

Oh the one with beautiful eyes like that of a fawn (mṛgalōcani)! Your words are veiled or encrypted in secrecy, and they convey a message that is not apparent on the surface. This veiled message though, when fully understood, gives comfort to think of it; it grants immense joy and happiness to the hearer; and it dispels all his fears'¹. (7)

Meanwhile, Mandodari concluded that her husband is under the influence of Kaal (death; doomed destiny) so much that his mind has become deluded and it has lost its rational way of thinking resulting in his wisdom and prudence becoming eclipsed². (8)

[Note—¹Ravana means two things here. Firstly, he thanks Mandodari to remind him that the Supreme Being has come himself to give him deliverance from this gross sinful body of a demon, and to liberate his soul that is trapped inside it. So therefore he is very fortunate as otherwise there was little hope of his ever finding redemption and salvation for his soul.

Secondly, he thanks her for reminding him of his own valour, power and strength by which he had conquered all the gods of the heaven who are one or the other manifestations of the Supreme Being. So he must not feel scared in facing Lord Ram.

He says that Mandodari's words are encrypted in secrecy because had she spoken straightforward in the way outlined herein above then it would seem that she is instigating her husband to wage a bloody war that might culminate in the ruin of the whole demon race. So she used a round about way of conveying her intent.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37.]

दो०. एहि बिधि करत बिनोद बहु प्रात प्रगट दसकंध ।
सहज असंक लंकपति सभाँ गयउ मद अंध ॥ १६ (क) ॥
dōhā.

ēhi bidhi karata binōda bahu prāta pragaṭa dasakandha.
sahaja asaṅka laṅkapati sabhām̐ gaya'u mada andha. 16 (a).

In this way, the night was spent in jest and light talk. When the next day dawned, the ten-headed Ravana—who was accustomed to being fearless by his nature (sahaja asaṅka) and made blind with a sense of false pride of strength and invincibility that made him arrogant and haughty (mada andha)—went to attend his royal court as he

used to do routinely (as if nothing serious has happened at all, and therefore there is aught naught to worry). (Doha no. 16-a)

सो०. फूलइ फरइ न बेत जदपि सुधा बरषहिं जलद ।
मूरुख हृदयँ न चेत जौं गुर मिलहिं बिरंचि सम ॥ १६ (ख) ॥
sōraṭhā.

phūla'i phara'i na bēta jadapi sudhā baraṣahim jalada.
mūrukha hr̥dayam̐ na cēta jaur̥m gura milahim birañci sama. 16 (b).

Verily indeed, it is said that no matter how much it rains, but the reed never bears flowers or fruits.

Likewise, a fool (especially the one who is under the spell of death and doom) will never learn or understand anything (nor will he rectify his mistakes and change his wayward manners) even if he is advised and shown the correct path by the most learned of teachers, such as the Creator himself¹. (Sortha no. 16-b)

[Note—¹Here the ‘reed’ is used to mean Ravana. He was so stupid and had come under the influence of his doomed destiny that he did not listen to anyone who advised him to avoid a confrontation with Lord Ram as it would ruin him. None of Ravana’s advisors succeeded in bringing him to his senses.]

चौ०. इहाँ प्रात जागे रघुराई । पूछा मत सब सचिव बोलाई ॥ १ ॥
कहहु बेगि का करिअ उपाई । जामवंत कह पद सिरु नाई ॥ २ ॥
सुनु सर्बग्य सकल उर बासी । बुधि बल तेज धर्म गुन रासी ॥ ३ ॥
मंत्र कहउँ निज मति अनुसार । दूत पठाइअ बालिकुमारा ॥ ४ ॥
caupāī.

ihām̐ prāta jāgē raghurā'ī. pūchā mata saba saciva bōlā'ī. 1.
kahahu bēgi kā kari'a upā'ī. jāmavanta kaha pada siru nā'ī. 2.
sunu sarbagya sakala ura bāsī. budhi bala tēja dharma guna rāsī. 3.
mantra kaha'um̐ nija mati anusārā. dūta paṭhā'i'a bālikumārā. 4.

Here meanwhile (i.e. on Mt. Subel), Lord Ram (raghurā'ī) woke up the next morning and called all his ministers to discuss and finalise the next course of action. (1)

He said to them, ‘Tell me quickly what is to be done now.’ At this, Jamvant (the aged chief of the bears and one of the wisest amongst the Lord’s advisors) bowed his head before the Lord and replied, --- (2)

‘Listen my Lord! You are all-knowing (sarbagya), and you know all about the thoughts of every living being as you reside in their heart (in the form of their Atma or soul, which is pure consciousness and their true self—“sakala ura bāsī”). [To wit, you are omniscient and omnipresent.]

Indeed, you are an embodiment of intelligence, strength, dynamism, and the virtues of righteousness, propriety and probity. (3)

I am advising you what I feel is the best course of action at present according to my thinking. We must send the son of Baali (i.e. Angad, the prince of the monkeys) as your emissary (to Ravana).¹ (4)

[Note—¹Jamvant was very wise. To justify his advice that the Lord would do the right thing by first sending an emissary to Ravana to explore all avenues the make peace and avoid a destructive, and to stress that what he proposes is a genuine advice coming from his heart, he highlights the virtues of Lord Ram as said in verse no. 3.

To wit, since the Lord knows what is in the heart of a living being and all about his inner thoughts he would naturally know that the advice that Jamvant is giving is sincere and genuine as it is coming from his heart.

Secondly, since the Lord is an upholder of the laws of Dharma, he would agree that every chance must be given to one's enemy to make peace. It would be the right and the correct thing to do therefore to send a messenger to Ravana and exhaust this option first before launching any assault on Lanka.

An important question arises here: Why did Jamvant select Angad to be sent as an emissary? He wanted to ascertain whether or not Angad would remain faithful and loyal during the course of the war. Angad's father Baali was Ravana's friend, and he was killed by Sugriv, Angad's uncle, because the two brothers (elder brother Baali and his younger sibling Sugriv) were bitter enemies due to some misunderstanding of the past. Now by sending Angad directly to Ravana as an emissary an opportunity was given to him to defect and take revenge upon his uncle Sugriv by joining Ravana's camp, just like Vibhishan, Ravana's brother, had defected to Lord Ram's camp.

If this thought was secretly present in somewhere in the mind and heart of Angad, and he was waiting for an opportunity to settle old accounts with Sugriv for being instrumental in the death of his father Baali, then he was sure to grab this golden chance and desert Lord Ram's camp now. It would be much better if Angad's intentions are out in the open now as compared to some nasty back-stabbing, treason and betrayal by him later on during the heat of battle, for that would be disastrous.

Jamvant hinted to Lord Ram about this when he said that the Lord knows the inner thoughts of all living beings—which was a veiled hint to the Lord to check what was inside the heart of Angad by sending him directly to visit Ravana. If Angad wished to escape Sugriv's camp then asking him to go to Ravana as an emissary would be like offering him something that he may have secretly wished in his heart. If Angad wished to escape Sugriv then there would be no better chance for him later on; and on the contrary if he wished to serve Lord Ram inspite of his bitter feelings for his uncle then he would come back, and this would make him favourite of the Lord just like Hanuman was. In this case, Sugriv would never dare to harm Angad because he would be protected by the Lord. This scenario is not imaginary, for Angad has acknowledged it that he is alive because of Lord Ram's mercy and grace and protection, otherwise his uncle would have already done something to get rid of him by now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26.

There is another reason also. Jamvant was a fatherly figure for Angad who was orphaned by his father Baali's death. Previously Hanuman had gained Lord Ram's favour by going to Lanka and trouncing Ravana by burning Lanka. Perhaps

this event had caused a bit of depression in the mind of Angad, that now everyone would treat Hanuman with more respect and awe not only because he had gained Lord Ram's favour but also because he had proved his might and mettle by achieving success in such a daunting task as crossing the ocean, entering the fort of the demons fearlessly alone, then fighting and winning the fracas that followed, and finally burning the well-protected city of Lanka, a deed unmatched in history.

So Jamvant gave Angad an opportunity to prove himself, to show everyone that he is in no way inferior to Hanuman—by going to Lanka alone, by killing one of Ravana's sons (apropos: Chaupi line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 18 herein below), by confronting Ravana in full court and humiliating him like Hanuman had done earlier, and then return triumphantly unharmed after having successfully accomplishing the mission.

And as the events unfolded, Angad did prove his integrity, abilities and skills.]

नीक मंत्र सब के मन माना । अंगद सन कह कृपानिधाना ॥ ५ ॥
 बालितनय बुधि बल गुन धामा । लंका जाहु तात मम कामा ॥ ६ ॥
 बहुत बुझाइ तुम्हहि का कहऊँ । परम चतुर मैं जानत अहऊँ ॥ ७ ॥
 काजु हमार तासु हित होई । रिपु सन करेहु बतकही सोई ॥ ८ ॥

nīka mantra saba kē mana mānā. aṅgada sana kaha kṛpānidhānā. 5.
 bālitanaya budhi bala guna dhāmā. laṅkā jāhu tāta mama kāmā. 6.
 bahuta bujhā'i tumhahi kā kaha'ūm'. parama catura mairi jānata aha'ūm'. 7.
 kāju hamāra tāsu hita hō'i. ripu sana karēhu batakahī sō'i. 8.

When everyone endorsed Jamvan't suggestion as being a good advice, Lord Ram, who is a treasury of mercy, kindness, grace and compassion (kṛpānidhānā)¹, called Angad and said, --- (5)

‘Oh the son of Baali (bālitanaya)! You are an embodiment of intelligence, wisdom, strength and virtues (budhi bala guna dhāmā). My dear (tāta), go to Lanka to do a job for me; to there on a mission on behalf of me². (6)

What much can I tell you, and there is no need for me to explain things much to you because I know that you are extremely wise, intelligent and clever (parama catura) in all matters so as to be able to tackle things on your own. (7)

My brief in simple words is this: Talk with him (Ravana) keeping in mind that my (or ‘our’—“hamāra”) objective is accomplished (which is to get Sita freed from his captivity), and at the same time my (or ‘our’) actions could be such that would be for his own good and welfare.³ (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has been described here as being a treasury of mercy, kindness, grace and compassion—i.e. as being “kṛpānidhānā”. This epithet is apt for the Lord as is clear in verse no. 8 where Lord Ram advises Angad to ensure that the Lord's actions are for the good and welfare for his enemy. It is really a great quality and a sign of a noble heart for someone to think nice of his arch enemy, especially one who has kidnapped the person's wife as Ravana had done with Lord Ram.

Ordinarily, if there was someone else in place of Lord Ram he would have asked his messenger to make it sure that his own interests are protected instead of worrying about the welfare of his enemy.

²This is a remarkable verse. Earlier Lord Ram had called Hanuman and chosen him, instead of Angad, to go on a mission to find Sita, and when Hanuman came back with the good news the Lord had lavished praises on him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 23; and (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 32.}

Angad felt very sad and depressed that the Lord had neglected him and thought him to be incompetent. Angad was emotionally hurt and thought that he was being sidelined by the Lord though he was the crown prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha. The reason is that his father Baali had personally entrusted the future of Angad to Lord Ram at the time of his death, and when Sugriv was appointed the next king of Kishkindha, Angad was anointed as the crown prince. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10; and (ii) Doha no. 11.}

Lord Ram, as has been already observed about him in verse no. 5 above, was a “treasury of mercy, compassion, grace and kindness”, and so he too felt sad when he saw that Angad was feeling dejected and forlorn. The Lord wanted to restore Angad’s pride-of-place in the hierarchy of the monkey race, and he wished to assuage Angad’s hurt feelings. So the kind Lord chose Angad over all others for this mission which was as much fraught with danger as the earlier mission of Hanuman.

But why did Lord Ram choose Hanuman and not Angad on the previous occasion when the search party was sent out to find Sita? The answer is clear: because the “all-knowing Lord” (refer: verse no. 3 herein above) knew that the qualities and skills needed for the successful completion of the mission was possessed by Hanuman alone. The first such requirement was to cross the ocean twice—once to go to Lanka, and then to come back from there. Angad lacked this ability; he himself has acknowledged it. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

Now that main hurdle—of crossing the ocean—was not there. So it was time to give Angad his due share of fame and glory. Angad’s choice as Lord Ram’s messenger and his resounding success in the mission would remove any doubts that may be present in the mind of others, including Hanuman, about his closeness with the Lord as well as his abilities. Lord Ram removed all doubts in this regard by addressing Angad with the affectionate word “*tāta*”—meaning ‘my dear’.

³Lord Ram told Angad, “Try to find out a way, if it is at all possible, to ensure Sita’s freedom peacefully so that a disastrous war can be avoided. I am not itching for a war at any cost to avenge Sita’s abduction; I am not a blood-thirsty conqueror. I do not have any greed for the crown of Lanka, and nor do I wish to put anyone to discomfort for me. I do not even expect Ravana to come to surrender; if he agrees to send Sita back then I shall return peacefully. I have no intention that anyone suffers due to me; I have no desire to unleash destruction and mayhem on the demon kingdom. Ravana can continue to rule his kingdom without any fear from me if he returns my wife honourably. Surely this is a noble proposition that no one can find fault with. Should Ravana agree, there will be peace and harmony; no one would blame me for causing unnecessary blood-shed and havoc on a prosperous country.

Nevertheless, this gesture of peace ought naught to be taken as weakness on my part personally, or of our army in general. So be careful in your talk with Ravana that no wrong interpretation is made by him. Warn him once again about the wrong path he is treading, and that such path would lead to his own ruin.

I leave the details of the talk, and the way it should be steered to a definite conclusion, upon you, for I know you are competent to handle it in an expert manner.”]

सो०. प्रभु अग्या धरि सीस चरन बंदि अंगद उठेउ ।

सोइ गुन सागर ईस राम कृपा जा पर करहु ॥ १७ (क) ॥

स्वयं सिद्ध सब काज नाथ मोहि आदरु दियउ ।

अस बिचारि जुबराज तन पुलकित हरषित हियउ ॥ १७ ॥ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

prabhu agyā dhari sīsa carana bandi aṅgada uṭhē'u.

sō'i guna sāgara īsa rāma kṛpā jā para karahu. 17 (a).

svayaṁ sid'dha saba kāja nātha mōhi ādaru diya'u.

asa bicāri jubarāja tana pulakita haraṣita hiya'u. 17 (b).

Angad cheerfully accepted the Lord Ram's command. Bowing reverentially at the Lord's feet, he rose to fulfil the task assigned to him.

Angad said, 'Oh Lord Ram (īsa rāma)! He upon whom you show your grace and favour is surely an ocean of virtues and qualities. It's indeed a rare privilege for one to gain the Lord's confidence¹.' (Sortha no. 17-a)

Angad was extremely happy. He thought that Lord Ram, who can do everything himself as he possesses immense mystical powers (because he is the Supreme Lord of the world), has graciously chosen him (Angad) for his job, which is indeed a rare privilege and honour that the Lord had been kind enough to bless him with.

This thought made the prince ("jubarāja"; Angad) thrilled in his body and exhilarated in his heart. (Sortha no. 17-b)

[Note—¹To wit, a person who is selected by the Lord for something is indeed very lucky and privileged because not only he gets an opportunity to serve the Lord but also because the Lord has seen some good quality in him to have chosen him for what the Lord wishes to get done. Indeed, this is a rare honour for the chosen person. Surely Lord Ram would not pick an incompetent person for a job, so therefore if the Lord chooses someone for a particular mission then that person is truly lucky; it also proves to the world that that person has certain qualities that others lack.

A person who is selected by a king becomes an envy of others; everyone would henceforth show great respect to this person because the king favours him—it is as simple as that.

Such thoughts cheered Angad and lifted his spirits.]

चौ०. बंदि चरन उर धरि प्रभुताई । अंगद चलेउ सबहि सिरु नाई ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु प्रताप उर सहज असंका । रन बाँकुरा बालिसुत बंका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bandi carana ura dhari prabhutāī. aṅgada calē'u sabahi siru nāī. 1.
prabhu pratāpa ura sahaja asaṅkā. rana bām'kurā bālisuta baṅkā. 2.

Angad paid his obeisance at the feet of Lord Ram to seek his blessings, enshrined the Lord's glory and might in his heart (to give him internal strength, courage and confidence), and then he departed on his assignment after bowing his head before all the rest who were present there (to courteously seeking their blessings too). (1)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, the son of Baali (i.e. Angad)¹ was truly brave, courageous and valiant by nature, one who could not be matched in the battle-field, and now with Lord Ram's glory and blessings as an additional boon for him, he had become absolutely fearless, bold, invincible and formidable by all counts². (2)

[Note—¹Addressing Angad as “the son of Baali” is significant here. It is to remind everyone about the incident when his father Baali had once humiliated Ravana extremely by grabbing him and tucking him under his armpit because Ravana had gone to disturb Baali's meditation. Ravana remained squeezed there for many days as Baali had gone to many pilgrim places as part of his religious practice. When Baali returned home and raised his arm to greet his wife and son (Angad), Ravana fell down on the ground, hungry, cramped in muscles, and sore affright. Baali kept him tied as a plaything for Angad, but later on released him with a condition that Ravana would never disturb him any more in future. Angad remembered this incident and scornfully reminds Ravana of it too—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24.

The details of this incident would be narrated a little later when we read the above Doha.

²Ravana's wife Mandodari knew that both Angad and Hanuman possess these excellent qualities, and she had minced no words in telling her husband about it while sternly admonishing him for his unrelenting stubbornness and impractical approach in dealing with Lord Ram, for he had turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to all evidences that clearly indicate total rout and destruction of the demon race if Ravana remains adamant to wage a war with Lord Ram inspite of all attempts to dissuade him from doing so—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 37.]

पुर पैठत रावन कर बेटा । खेलत रहा सो होइ गै भेटा ॥ ३ ॥

बातहिं बात करष बढि आई । जुगल अतुल बल पुनि तरुनाई ॥ ४ ॥

तेहिं अंगद कहूँ लात उठाई । गहि पद पटकेउ भूमि भवाँई ॥ ५ ॥

pura paiṭhata rāvana kara bēṭā. khēlata rahā sō hō'i gai bhēṭā. 3.

bātaḥim bāta karaṣa baḍhi āī. jugala atula bala puni tarunāī. 4.

tēhim aṅgada kahum' lāta uṭhāī. gahi pada paṭakē'u bhūmi bhavāī. 5.

When Angad entered the city of Lanka he met Ravana's son who was playing around the place. (3)

First they talked casually, but soon the conversation turned into an acrimonious verbal spat because both were extremely brave and bold and had never known to be subdued or browbeaten by their opponent. The situation was aggravated further because both were princes of young age, and so they were habituated to lose their temper quickly when someone opposed them. (4)

He (Ravana's son) raised one of his legs at Angad (as a rude gesture to insult him by way of symbolic kicking)¹. Angad grabbed that leg and swung him around viciously before dashing him on the ground, killing Ravana's son instantly². (5)

[Note—¹Ravana's son had picked up this bad habit, of raising his leg to kick anyone who displeased him, from his father. Ravana was used to kicking others at the least provocation; anyone who annoyed him got kicked. He had kicked his brother Vibhishan, and then his own messenger Suka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 (Vibhishan); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57 (Suka).}

²This was the death of Ravana's second son. The first son, Akshaya Kumar, was killed by Hanuman prior to the burning of Lanka when the former was sent by Ravana to capture him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 18.]

निसिचर निकर देखि भट भारी । जहँ तहँ चले न सकहिं पुकारी ॥ ६ ॥
एक एक सन मरमु न कहहीं । समुझि तासु बध चुप करि रहहीं ॥ ७ ॥

nisicara nikara dēkhi bhaṭa bhārī. jaham̐ taham̐ calē na sakahīm pukārī. 6.
ēka ēka sana maramu na kahahīm. samujhi tāsū badha cupa kari rahahīm. 7.

All the demon guards who had accompanied the prince (i.e. Ravana's son) were stupefied with terror and dazed into inaction when they saw the great warrior (Angad) and what he did to their prince (who they were supposed to protect).

As soon as Ravana's son died, the demon guards ran helter-skelter, scampering away hastily from the scene without uttering a word¹. (6)

None of them dared to utter a single word to anyone about the developments; they chose to keep absolutely mum about the killing of the prince. (7)

[Note—¹The guards were terrified with fear, apprehending severe punishment. They were so petrified that they escaped from the site quietly, without uttering a word, so that no one would know they were present when Angad killed Ravana's son. They did not want to be produced as a witness of this killing. Surely they would be severely tortured and roasted alive.]

भयउ कोलाहल नगर मझारी । आवा कपि लंका जेहिं जारी ॥ ८ ॥
 अब धौं कहा करिहि करतारा । अति सभित सब करहिं बिचारा ॥ ९ ॥
 बिनु पूछें मगु देहिं दिखाई । जेहि बिलोक सोइ जाइ सुखाई ॥ १० ॥

bhaya'u kōlāhala nagara majhārī. āvā kapi laṅkā jēhim jāri. 8.
 aba dhaurṁ kahā karihi karatārā. ati sabhita saba karahim bicārā. 9.
 binu pūchēm magu dēhim dikhāi. jēhi bilōka sō'i jā'i sukhāi. 10.

There was uproar in the city that the monkey who had burnt Lanka earlier has arrived once again¹. (8)

The citizens got into a huddle everywhere, wondering in fear what would happen next and about what the Creator's intention was. (9)

Meanwhile, Angad fearlessly moved into the city. Everyone stepped aside to give him passage. Anyone whom Angad glanced even casually became petrified with terror (fearing for his life)². (10)

[Note—¹Both Angad and Hanuman looked alike as they were of the same age. So when the news spread that one fierce monkey warrior has entered the city and has killed Ravana's son, the citizens thought he was Hanuman.

²Angad's passage through the city streets was like that of a conqueror. As soon as the demons saw him approach, they became silent and stood aside to give him right of way. No one dared either to oppose him, or question who he was and why he had come. A deathly silence descended on Lanka as Angad wended his way to Ravana's palace.]

दो०. गयउ सभा दरबार तब सुमिरि राम पद कंज ।
 सिंह ठवनि इत उत चितव धीर बीर बल पुंज ॥ १८ ॥
 dōhā.

gaya'u sabhā darabāra taba sumiri rāma pada kaṅja.
 sinha ṭhavani ita uta citava dhīra bīra bala puṅja. 18.

Remembering the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram (to assure himself that he has the blessing and protection of the Lord), Angad went to the palace and stood before the gates of its royal court.

He, who was an embodiment of bravery, courage, strength and valour, glanced around the place like a bold lion would survey its surroundings fearlessly. (Doha no. 18)

चौ०. तुरत निसाचर एक पठावा । समाचार रावनहि जनावा ॥ १ ॥
 सुनत बिहँसि बोला दससीसा । आनहु बोलि कहाँ कर कीसा ॥ २ ॥

आयसु पाइ दूत बहु धाए । कपिकुंजरहि बोलि लै आए ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

turata nisācara ēka paṭhāvā. samācāra rāvanahi janāvā. 1.
sunata bihamśi bōlā dasasīsā. ānahu bōli kahām̐kara kīsā. 2.
āyasu pā'i dūta bahu dhā'ē. kapikunjarahī bōli lai ā'ē. 3.

He (Angad) immediately sent a demon guard to inform Ravana of the news of his arrival, and about his intention to meet the latter. (1)

Ravana, the ten-headed one, smiled when he heard the news¹, and ordered the guard: 'Go and bring the monkey here. Let me see who he is and from where he has come.' (2)

As soon as the instruction was given, many messengers (demon guards) rushed out² to bring the monkey chief (i.e. Angad) to the court. (3)

[Note—¹There are two reasons why Ravana “smiled”. One is to give the impression that he is not at all worried or afraid of the visitor, even if he is some brave warrior sent by his arch enemy Lord Ram. This was done to instill confidence in his army and its commanders.

The second reason is that he thought now was his chance to settle scores with the intruder who had destroyed his city of Lanka earlier by burning it.

²Only one demon guard was sent by Angad to inform Ravana of his arrival. But when Ravana ordered Angad to be brought in, many guards went out to fetch him. Why? Because the news of a “monkey arriving to meet Ravana” aroused immense anxiety and curiosity in the rank and file of royal guards present in the royal court of Ravana so that many of them rushed out to see who this monkey was. After their bitter experience with Hanuman on an earlier occasion they thought it fit to go in a group, rather than alone, to bring the new monkey visitor to the court; they feared that if only one guard went to bring the monkey in then there were fair chances that this poor fellow would be killed by that monkey, on some pretext or the other, while accompanying him to the court.]

अंगद दीख दसानन बैसैं । सहित प्रान कज्जलगिरि जैसैं ॥ ४ ॥

भुजा बिटप सिर सृंग समाना । रोमावली लता जनु नाना ॥ ५ ॥

मुख नासिका नयन अरु काना । गिरि कंदरा खोह अनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥

aṅgada dīkha dasānana baisēm̐. sahita prāna kajjalagiri jaisēm̐. 4.
bhujā biṭapa sira sṛṅga samānā. rōmāvalī latā janu nānā. 5.
mukha nāsikā nayana aru kānā. giri kandarā khōha anumānā. 6.

[These verses describe the image of Ravana that Angad had first glimpse of.]

The first impression that Angad got of the ten-headed Ravana was that of a huge dark mountain made of black soot sitting in a personified form. (4)

His arms were like gigantic trees, and his heads were like the top of these trees¹. The hairs on his body were like so many creepers hanging from these trees. (5)

His mouths, noses, eyes and ears appeared to resemble large dark caves and deep crevices on a huge mountain. (6)

[Note—¹We must remember that Ravana is said to have had ten heads and twenty arms. This is why the plural term “trees” has been used here.]

गयउ सभाँ मन नेकु न मुरा । बालितनय अतिबल बाँकुरा ॥ ७ ॥
उठे सभासद कपि कहूँ देखी । रावन उर भा क्रोध बिसेषी ॥ ८ ॥

gaya'u sabhām̐ mana nēku na murā. bālitanaya atibala bām̐kurā. 7.
uṭhē sabhāsada kapi kahum̐ dēkhī. rāvana ura bhā krōdha bisēṣī. 8.

The extremely bold and brave son of Baali (i.e. Angad) went to the court fearlessly. He was not the slightest bit afraid or hesitant on beholding the majesty and pomp of Ravana's court. (7)

When Angad strode in with a majestic gait fearlessly, all the courtiers present in the court stood up¹. This sight severely annoyed and angered Ravana². (8)

[Note—¹Why did the courtiers stand up when Angad stepped inside the royal court? First it was a sign that they were civilised enough to show due respect to a guest. Angad had come directly as a guest, as a messenger, unlike Hanuman who was caught as an intruder wrecking the royal garden of Ravana (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 18).

Secondly, everyone was eager and anxious to have a glimpse of this new monkey, and to make a fair guess as to his identity. So to get a better view of Angad they all stood up at once and craned their necks to see him as he entered the royal court.

Thirdly, after their frightful experience with Hanuman they wished to play safe by standing up to greet the new monkey so that he would not find an excuse to pounce upon one of the courtiers who is caught sitting, because to keep sitting could be interpreted as showing disrespect to the visitor, thereby inviting his wrath which everyone wished to avoid at all costs.

Fourthly, the courtiers were amazed at the confidence and fearlessness with which Angad strode in the court teeming with fierce looking demons. He walked in like a lion faces a herd of wild elephants—see Doha no. 19 below. This sight filled the demon courtiers with awe and respect for Angad.

²Ravana's annoyance is understandable. He had not asked them to stand up, so they virtually defied his authority by standing without permission. Further, he hadn't expected that his courtiers would stand up to show respect to a monkey, especially when one such member of his tribe had caused so much devastation to Lanka earlier. So it was natural for him to show anger and annoyance.]

दो०. जथा मत्त गज जूथ महुँ पंचानन चलि जाइ ।

राम प्रताप सुमिरि मन बैठ सभाँ सिरु नाइ ॥ १९ ॥

dōhā.

jathā matta gaja jūtha mahum̐ pañcānana cali jā'i.

rāma pratāpa sumiri mana baiṭha sabhām̐ siru nā'i. 19.

Just like a brave lion enters a herd of wild elephants without any fear, Angad entered the demon while remembering the glory and majesty of Lord Ram in his heart and mind. Then he bowed his head before the assembly to show courtesy and good manners, and sat down. (Doha no. 19)

[Note—Angad was a prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, so he was well-versed with the etiquettes of royal courts. He observed that all the courtiers had stood up when he entered to show due respect to him, and so he wished to reciprocate their honourable gesture by bowing before the assembly before taking his seat.

Where did Angad sit? Well, every royal court has a seat where guests sit, and being a prince Angad knew it. He quickly glanced around the place and discerned that seat on which royal guests are expected to be seated. It is also quite possible that one of the guards who had ushered him in guided him to his seat.]

चौ०. कह दसकंठ कवन तैं बंदर । मैं रघुबीर दूत दसकंधर ॥ १ ॥

मम जनकहि तोहि रही मिताई । तव हित कारन आयउँ भाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha dasakaṇṭha kavana taim̐ bandara. maim̐ raghubīra dūta dasakandhara.

1.

mama janakahi tōhi rahī mitāī. tava hita kārana āya'um̐ bhāī. 2.

Ravana (“dasakaṇṭha”; literally one with ‘ten necks’, and hence has ten heads) asked, ‘Who are you monkey?’

Angad replied, ‘Oh Ravana (“dasakandhara”; literally one with ‘ten shoulders’, and hence has ten necks and ten heads)! I am a messenger of Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave prince of the race of king Raghu of Ayodhya). (1)

My father had friendship with you¹. So I have come here for the sake of your own good and welfare². (2)

[Note—¹The story of how Angad’s father Baali and Ravana became friends have been narrated in (i) Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 34; (ii) Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in (iii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.

The story in brief is this: Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Vaali (also pronounced as “Baali”), had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana’s arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop

him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him.

This pact of friendship suited both the kings of Kishkindha and Lanka. For Baali, the king of Kishkindha, it meant that the demons of Lanka ruled by Ravana would not disturb his kingdom any longer, and it also ensured there would be no invasion from the south of Kishkindha. For Ravana, the king of Lanka, it was to ensure security for Lanka from the northern direction. Now there was no fear of any invasion from one of the powerful kingdoms that ruled in the north of the mainland, because Kishkindha, the kingdom of monkeys ruled by Baali, would act as a buffer between Lanka and the invading army from the north. Since the nearest landmass to the island kingdom of Lanka from which there was any fear of invasion was the mainland in its northern direction where Kishkindha was situated, a distance of merely 800 miles of ocean which could be crossed by a determined army, this pact of friendship between Baali and Ravana virtually made Lanka impregnable. On all the other sides of Lanka the ocean stretched literally interminably, for hundreds and thousands of miles. With the nearest kingdom becoming friendly, added with the additional protection provided by the ocean that circled the island of Lanka like a huge natural moat, the fort of the demon kingdom became safe and invincible.

This is the obvious reason why Ravana had become so confident that no power on earth could harm him.

²This was also Lord Ram's instruction—that they must act in a way which is good for Ravana. {Apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 17.}]

उत्तम कुल पुलस्ति कर नाती । सिव बिरंचि पूजेहु बहु भाँती ॥ ३ ॥
बर पायहु कीन्हेहु सब काजा । जीतेहु लोकपाल सब राजा ॥ ४ ॥

uttama kula pulasti kara nātī. siva biran̄ci pūjēhu bahu bhām̄tī. 3.
bara pāyahu kīnhēhu saba kājā. jītēhu lōkapāla saba rājā. 4.

You are born in an illustrious family of sage Pulastya¹; you had worshipped and subsequently pleased Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma in a variety of ways². (3)

After obtaining boons from these exalted Gods, you had accomplished all that you had wished to do. Verily indeed, you had conquered even the greatest of gods and all the mighty kings of the world³. (4)

[Note—¹Ravan's birth in the family of sage Pulastya has been narrated in: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uttarkand, Cantos 1, verse nos. 25-57; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 9; (iii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 8-24.

²Ravana's worshipping of Lord Shiva and Brahma is narrated in: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uttarkand, Cantos 2, verse nos. 10-15; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 10, verse nos. 10-25½ ; (iii) Anand

Ramayan, Sarkand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 26-39; 47-53; and (iv) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178—to Doha no. 182.]

नृप अभिमान मोह बस किंबा । हरि आनिहु सीता जगदंबा ॥ ५ ॥
 अब सुभ कहा सुनहु तुम्ह मोरा । सब अपराध छमिहि प्रभु तोरा ॥ ६ ॥
 दसन गहहु तृन कंठ कुठारी । परिजन सहित संग निज नारी ॥ ७ ॥
 सादर जनकसुता करि आगें । एहि बिधि चलहु सकल भय त्यागें ॥ ८ ॥

nṛpa abhimāna mōha basa kimbā. hari ānihu sītā jagadambā. 5.
 aba subha kahā sunahu tumha mōrā. saba aparādha chamihi prabhu tōrā. 6.
 dasana gahahu tṛna kaṇṭha kuṭhārī. parijana sahita saṅga nija nārī. 7.
 sādara janakasutā kari āgēm. ēhi bidhi calahu sakala bhaya tyāgēm. 8.

Unfortunately, whether out of arrogance that you acquired by virtue of your ascension to the powerful title of being the king of the demon race, or out of your stupidity and delusions that made you think that you had the right to do whatever you wished to do irrespective of the probity and propriety of your actions—you had abducted Sita, a manifestation of the Supreme Goddess, who is the Mother of the World (sītā jagadambā). (5)

Nevertheless, things can still be sorted out and settled in your favour if you pay heed to me. Now, listen to my good and friendly advice which is for your own good and welfare, and if you act accordingly then (be rest assured that) all your offences, all your mistakes and evil doings would be forgiven by the Lord (Sri Ram). (6)

[I'll tell you what to do.] Hold a twig in your mouth between the two rows of teeth, tie an axe around your neck so that its sharp blade is just below your throat¹, then collect all your family members, including your wives, and keeping Sita, the daughter of Janak, in the front, walk in a procession², without any kind of fear (to go and voluntarily surrender before Lord Ram). (7-8)

[Note—¹What is the significance of “holding a twig or a bunch of grass blades in the mouth”, and “an axe tied around the neck with its blade below the throat”? It is a symbolic way for Ravana of saying to Lord Ram that: (i) “I may be excused and forgiven for my offences because I am no better than an animal which grazes in the meadows, and therefore I deserve your mercy for my foolishness because like an animal I often times act rashly without thinking of the consequences of my stupid acts”; and (ii) “I am at your mercy; if you want you can cut my throat for I have an axe placed across it”.

When Lord Ram, who is reputed to be an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness, sees Ravana approaching him in the aforesaid manner, he is sure to forgive the latter and excuse him for all his follies.

²Collecting all the family members and walking in a peaceful procession with Sita in the lead would be a clear signal for Lord Ram that Ravana has come to make peace with a sincere mind and honest intentions.

Keeping Sita in the vanguard is most crucial and a must thing to do because she is the reason which had caused so much unnecessary and unexpected bitterness between Ravana and Lord Ram in the first place, and she is the reason why the war would be fought now. So therefore, if Sita is returned to Lord Ram then that ‘reason’ would no longer exist, and so there would be no reason why two great kings would be so inimical to each other that they would fight a war till death. Hence, the best thing to do is to remove the primary cause of all irritation, which is to return Sita to her husband; all other things were secondary in nature.]

दो०. प्रनतपाल रघुबंसमनि त्राहि त्राहि अब मोहि ।

आरत गिरा सुनत प्रभु अभय करैगो तोहि ॥ २० ॥

dōhā.

pranatapāla raghubansamani trāhi trāhi aba mōhi.
ārata girā sunata prabhu abhaya karaigō tōhi. 20.

[Angad told Ravana—] As soon as you reach Lord Ram, prostrate yourself before him pitifully, pleading earnestly: “Oh the ‘Jewel of the Raghus’ (i.e. the most illustrious and the best king in the race of king Raghu of Ayodhya; “raghubansamani”)! I prostrate (and surrender) myself before you. Have mercy upon me; protect me and show your grace upon me (trāhi trāhi aba mōhi).”

When the Lord (Sri Ram) hears your plea for mercy, rest assured that he would grant you freedom from all kinds of fears. [To wit, have no doubt that Lord Ram will forgive you. Not only will the Lord forgive you, but he will also grant you the boon of fearlessness as well as immunity from all punishment for your past misdeeds.]’ (Doha no. 20)

चौ०. रे कपिपोत बोलु संभारी । मूढ़ न जानेहि मोहि सुरारी ॥ १ ॥

कहु निज नाम जनक कर भाई । केहि नातें मानिए मिताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rē kapipōta bōlu sambhārī. mūrha na jānēhi mōhi surārī. 1.
kahu nija nāma janaka kara bhāī. kēhi nātēn māni'ai mitāī. 2.

[Obviously Ravana would not agree to this way of surrendering before his enemy. Why only Ravana, no other king, big or small, who is worth his salt and has any self-esteem, would ever wish to surrender in this abject manner as Angad had proposed. So, Angad’s advice angered Ravana like putting oil to a smouldering fire. He burst out in indignation—]

‘Oh you dumb-witted son-of-a-monkey (kapipōta)! You stupid fellow; be careful in what you speak. Don’t you know my fame and about my reputation that I am an enemy of the gods¹. (1)

Well, come and tell me the name of your father, and why you think we have some kind of friendly relationship having its root in the past².’ (2)

[Note—¹How idiotic are you? Tell me, is it easy to conquer the powerful gods, and even if they are once conquered is it easy to be able to retain control over them for long? I have done all that, and here you are giving me a lecture on how to surrender! Woe to you, and shame to your father.]

²Refer: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 20 herein above—where Angad has told Ravana that his father and Ravana were friends. This amazed Ravana as till now he was not acquainted with the identity of Angad, that the latter was the son of Baali, the erstwhile ruler of Kishkindha, with whom Ravana had had a peace treaty made in some ancient time. The relevant story is narrated as a brief note appended to the above mentioned verse. In fact, Ravana did not even know that Baali was dead—this is clear in his observation made in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 21 herein below.]

अंगद नाम बालि कर बेटा । तासों कबहुँ भई ही भेटा ॥ ३ ॥

अंगद बचन सुनत सकुचाना । रहा बालि बानर में जाना ॥ ४ ॥

aṅgada nāma bāli kara bēṭā. tāsōm kabahum̐ bhaī hī bhēṭā. 3.

aṅgada bacana sunata sakucānā. rahā bāli bānara mair̐ jānā. 4.

Angad replied, ‘My name is Angad, and I am the son of Baali. Have you ever met him (my father, Baali)?’ (3)

When Ravana heard the words of Angad (i.e. when he heard Angad mention Baali), he felt uneasy (and probably shifted uncomfortably in his seat).

[After a moment of hesitation, he recovered his composure and said reluctantly—] ‘Yes, there was a monkey named Baali. I am acquainted with him¹.’ (4)

[Note—¹When Ravana heard the name of Baali, he recollected the bad memory of his past humiliation at the hands of the monkey king when the latter had kept Ravana tucked and squeezed under his armpit for quite a long time. This memory made Ravana squirm irritably in his throne, and perhaps he even had some beads of sweat making their appearance on his forehead.]

In order to deflect the import and the gravity of this bit of information, and to give the impression that he was not bothered by any isolated instance that may have happened per chance of misfortune, as ups and downs are part of the game of life and should be taken in one’s stride without giving them undue importance, he pretended to have only a vague remembrance of some monkey by the name of Baali—to give an impression that Baali was like so many other creatures with whom he has had a chance to interact in the course of his life and conquests. So there was nothing special about Baali, and he was just a faded acquaintance.]

अंगद तहीं बालि कर बालक । उपजेहु बंस अनल कुल घालक ॥ ५ ॥

गर्भ न गयहु ब्यर्थ तुम्ह जायहु । निज मुख तापस दूत कहायहु ॥ ६ ॥

aṅgada tahīm bāli kara bālaka. upajāhu bansa anala kula ghālaka. 5.
garbha na gayahu byartha tumha jāyahu. nija mukha tāpasa dūta kahāyahu.
6.

Are you indeed the son of Baali? Woe to you for bringing shame to your family and its name. You were born to ruin your clan just like fire that is lit in a cluster of flourishing bamboos to burn it to ashes. (5)

Why did your mother not abort you while still in her womb, for it would have been better had she not given you birth. Shame to you for calling yourself a messenger of the hermit (Lord Ram)!

[To wit, you are like an ugly wart in your exalted family; you have brought immense infamy to it.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹Ravana immediately recovered himself from the shocking news that Angad was the son of Baali who had once subjected Ravana to extreme humiliation.

He decided to use this bit of information—that Angad was Baali’s son—to turn the tables on Angad and cornering him by chiding and putting him to shame, saying that being a prince of the great kingdom of Kishkindha of which his illustrious father Baali was a king, it is an extremely disgraceful, dishonourable and ignominious thing to serve someone else by becoming the latter’s messenger, for being a messenger is a lowly job and an act that undermines the greatness of his stature and that of his family.

To wit, Ravana was playing on the emotions and sentiments of Angad, and trying to make him biased against Lord Ram by reminding him of his late father Baali who was killed by his uncle Sugriv in a duel in which Lord Ram took sides with Sugriv, and by pointing out to him about his noble birth that does not fit well with the role that he chose for himself, i.e. to become a ‘messenger of a humble hermit’. It would have been alright for Angad to have come to Ravana with a message from his father Baali, the king of Kishkindha, which would be like a prince visiting another king with a goodwill message from his father who is a king himself. But for a noble prince to serve someone else like a mere servant and become his messenger is totally unworthy of him, and it is extremely demeaning and humiliating for the noble family and the kingdom to which he belongs.

Ravana thought that this reminder would kindle indignation in Angad for becoming a messenger for Lord Ram as it would arouse his sense of self-respect and the pride of his royal lineage.

But as it turned out, Angad was made of a sterner stuff. He wouldn’t betray his friends of Kishkindha, the monkeys and bears who constituted the army of Lord Ram, as well as the Lord himself who had been so kind and fatherly towards Angad since his father, Baali’s, death.

Why would Angad not betray Lord Ram? It is because of various reasons. For one, his father, Baali, had entrusted Angad in the care of the Lord at the time of his death, and the Lord had promised the dying Baali that he would take care of Angad as his own ward. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

Further, Angad was not to be fooled so easily. He knew very well the rude nature and selfish character of Ravana, from the treatment meted out to Vibhishan as well as the spy named Suka, and also from what Hanuman had told about Ravana after his return from Lanka, that he would show outwardly favour to Angad as long as it served his purpose, and when the time comes he would put Angad to the sword, arguing that a person who is not loyal to his own kith and kin, his own race and companions, is not to be trusted, and as he is a betrayer of his own people he can as easily betray others with whom he has no blood ties. Such persons deserve nothing but death. Angad apprehended this fate if he joined Ravana's side, and so even if he had had a remote thought of abandoning Sugriv that thought was immediately shaken off. Angad had seen very closely how graceful, amiable and affable Lord Ram was; he was also acquainted with the way Ravana treated those around him. The question of abandoning such a gracious Lord and betraying him in favour of a cruel and vulgar Ravana was therefore obviously out of the question.

Angad had observed that Lord Ram possessed certain supernatural mystical powers, as was proved by the way the Lord had slayed huge demon armies earlier as was done in the case of Khar and Dushan¹, and also in the case of Marich and Subahu earlier still², and the way he had felled seven tall coconut trees that were not in a straight line³, and the way his arrow had demolished the ten crowns over the heads of Ravana, dismantled his parasol and felled the earrings of Mandodari⁴. Angad had also heard of the miraculous way a rock was transmuted into a divine lady named Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, when Lord Ram touched the said rock with his foot⁵; he had also heard how the Lord had swiftly, and without the least effort, broken the tuff bow of Lord Shiva to marry Sita⁶. Well, he concluded, none of these events could have been made possible by an ordinary human being.

Compared to these singular events that subtly point to Lord Ram's might and prowess, there was Ravana who only boasted of his powers and strength but who could not even avenge his son Akshaya Kumar's death at the hands of Hanuman⁷, nor prevent the latter from burning the city of Lanka to ashes⁸.

{¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20-a.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

³Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 7.

⁴Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

⁵Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 211 along with Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede it.

⁶Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.

⁷Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 18.

⁸Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.}

Angad was therefore convinced that in the forthcoming war, Ravana stood no chance of victory against the almighty Lord Ram. Surely then it would be height of stupidity and foolishness on Angad's part to bite the bait that Ravana cunningly threw at him by way of reminding him that he was unfaithful to his father Baali by joining

hands with those who had been instrumental in his death—as clearly said by Ravana here in verse line nos. 5-6.

So, Angad firmly decided to rebuke Ravana for his effort to make his mind biased against Lord Ram, for it would be betrayal of the trust that the Lord had put in him, and it would be forfeiting his claim for protection by the almighty Lord Ram which the latter had promised to Angad's father at the time of his death. Angad therefore determined that he and his future were safer in the hands of Lord Ram.]

अब कहु कुसल बालि कहँ अहई । बिहँसि बचन तब अंगद कहई ॥ ७ ॥
 दिन दस गएँ बालि पहिँ जाई । बूझेहु कुसल सखा उर लाई ॥ ८ ॥
 राम बिरोध कुसल जसि होई । सो सब तोहि सुनाइहि सोई ॥ ९ ॥
 सुनु सठ भेद होइ मन ताकें । श्रीरघुबीर हृदय नहिँ जाकें ॥ १० ॥

aba kahu kusala bāli kahaṁ aha'ī. bihamṣi bacana taba aṅgada kaha'ī. 7.
 dina dasa ga'eṁ bāli pahim jā'ī. būjhēhu kusala sakhā ura lā'ī. 8.
 rāma birōdha kusala jasi hō'ī. sō saba tōhi sunā'ihī sō'ī. 9.
 sunu saṭha bhēda hō'i mana tākēṁ. śrīraghubīra hṛdaya nahim jākēṁ. 10.

Now tell me about the welfare of Baali. Where is he?¹

Hearing this, Angad laughed (sarcastically) and replied (in a taunting manner),
 --- (7)

‘You will go and meet him in the course of the next ten days (i.e. very soon), and then embrace your dear friend (Baali) and ask about his welfare yourself. (8)

What kind of good comes to a person who is opposed to Lord Ram, he (Baali) will himself tell you all about it. (9)

Listen you wicked fellow! Those who do not have the presence of Lord Ragubir (Lord Ram) in their hearts (i.e. those who are not totally loyal and devoted to the Lord, and are not convinced by the divine nature of the Lord) can be swayed by doubts and influenced by attempts to make them disloyal to the Lord by creating a wedge between them and their Lord (Ram)².’ (10)

[Note—¹This statement of Ravana indicates two things: either he was not aware of Baali's death, or he had tried to stoke hidden anger in the heart of Angad by reminding him of his late father who was killed by Sugriv, Angad's uncle under whom he works now, and in this killing Lord Ram had sided with Sugriv by aiding him in Baali's death.

If Ravana was really not aware of Baali's death, then it implies that his network of spies and informers, who were assigned the task of keeping Ravana abreast of the developments in the world around him, had failed him miserably, either because of their incompetence or because they had laid down their guards due to exaggerated sense of over-confidence and invincibility of their lord Ravana. This cocoon of ignorance that made Ravana believe that there is no one to challenge him as well as his supremacy, authority and sovereignty in the world was the primary cause of his downfall as a king; it made him live in an imaginary world where he ruled one

and all, where there was no one to challenge him, and where he alone called the shots. This airy castle made him arrogant and haughty, and oblivious of the gravity of the danger lurking in his own backyard in the form of the mighty army of Lord Ram coming and pitching camp right on the soil of Lanka, at Mt. Subel.

By enquiring about Baali in a causal manner he wished to convey the idea that he cherished his friendship, and that he was not uneasy by the mention of Baali's name which may have reminded him of the past episode when he was humiliated by the latter.

On the other hand, if Ravana had recalled his friendship with Baali inspite of knowing about his death then it clearly means that he was trying to win over Angad's loyalty by touching a sensitive nerve of his by reminding him that he was doing a shameful and ignominious thing by betraying his own father and showing immense disrespect to the departed soul by serving those who were responsible for his death, i.e. both Sugriv and Lord Ram. See also a note appended to verse nos. 5-6 herein above.

²Angad tells Ravana that he would fail to sway his loyalty, devotion and commitment to Lord Ram by trying to play on his sentiments and emotions by feigning ignorance about his father Baali's death by asking about his old friend's welfare, with a clear intention of reminding Angad of his late father, and why he was killed and by whom. Ravana had hoped that when Angad recalls how his father was killed in a battle with his uncle Sugriv, and how Lord Ram had sided with Sugriv to become instrumental in his father's death, most likely he would be stirred sufficiently enough to revolt against both Lord Ram and Sugriv, and to avenge Baali he would choose to join Ravana.

That would be god-sent boon for Ravana because Angad would help him with all the secrets of the army of Lord Ram, now, as well as in the future during the course of the war. Nothing would be better from the military angle as far as Ravana was concerned.

The way Angad answered Ravana clearly hinted to the latter that his trick had failed; that it was not possible to win over Angad's loyalty and make him betray or desert Lord Ram.]

दो०. हम कुल घालक सत्य तुम्ह कुल पालक दससीस ।

अंधउ बधिर न अस कहहिं नयन कान तव बीस ॥ २१ ॥

dōhā.

hama kula ghālaka satya tumha kula pālaka dasasīsa.
andha'u badhira na asa kahahim nayana kāna tava bīsa. 21.

[Angad continued—] 'Oh you ten-headed one (dasasīsa)! Really I am one who has been a cause of ruin and shame of my family, and you have been one who has made your family flourish and gain fame.

How absurd and incongruous a statement is this (because it is contrary to the truth and facts)! Even a person who is blind and deaf wouldn't be so stupid as to say such a rubbish, but you have twenty eyes and ears (instead of just two, and so such a ridiculous observation was never expected from you)! (Doha no. 21)

[Note—A blind person can know things to some extent by hearing of it; and a deaf person likewise can know things to some extent by seeing it. But if both these faculties are lacking in a person, if he can't see or hear, there is no way he can know what is happening around him, except to some extent by touching or tasting anything or by some rare gift of the sixth sense, but such knowledge would be extremely limited and cannot give a truthful account of anything. Hence, such persons can't be relied upon.]

So, Angad scorns at Ravana, saying that Ravana calling him as one who has been an ugly wart in his family, one who has ruined the good name and reputation of his father Baali's family is nothing but rubbish and utter nonsense. Angad would elaborate upon this in the verses that follow herein below.]

चौ०. सिव बिरंचि सुर मुनि समुदाई । चाहत जासु चरन सेवकाई ॥ १ ॥
तासु दूत होइ हम कुल बोरा । अइसिहुँ मति उर बिहर न तोरा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

siva biran̄ci sura muni samudā'ī. cāhata jāsū carana sēvakā'ī. 1.
tāsū dūta hō'i hama kula bōrā. a'isihum̃ mati ura bihara na tōrā. 2.

Lord Shiva, the creator Brahma, as well as the community of saints, sages and ascetics—all of them are willing and eager to have an opportunity to serve his (Lord Ram's) holy feet. (1)

And here you are ridiculing me by saying that by being a messenger of such an exalted Lord I have shamed my family and drowned its good name and fame! Alas; even after having such a deadwood in lieu of intelligence, it is a matter of great wonder, truly, that your heart does not rupture and burst under your chest.

[To wit, it is such an irony that instead of realising how lucky and privileged I am that Lord Ram, whom the greatest of gods and sages wish to serve cheerfully, has chosen me to become his messenger, you deride me and call me an ugly wart in my family and a shame to the name of my great father. It shows that you have not even an iota of wisdom and intelligence left in you. If this is the case, why does your dry-as-soil heart not burst out of its cage in your chest and fall apart just like the dry soil under an old deadwood tree heaves and crumbles into dust?]' (2)

सुनि कठोर बानी कपि केरी । कहत दसानन नयन तरेरी ॥ ३ ॥
खल तव कठिन बचन सब सहऊँ । नीति धर्म मैं जानत अहऊँ ॥ ४ ॥

sunī kaṭhōra bānī kapi kērī. kahata dasānana nayana tarērī. 3.
khala tava kaṭhina bacana saba saha'ūm̃. nīti dharma mair̃ jānata aha'ūm̃. 4.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard the Kapi's (Angad's) sharp rejoinder, he scowled at the latter with eyes full of scorn and wrath. (3)

Ravana shot back, ‘Oh you wretch of a fellow (khala)! I cope with your nasty, provocative and insulting words only because I wish to follow the principles of righteousness, propriety and probity.

[You are a messenger, and a messenger enjoys certain privileges, such as immunity from punishment, prosecution or imprisonment. That is why I am forced to tolerate your impertinent and irreverent talking. Otherwise you know, I would have immediately got you arrested and severely punished. But mind you; don’t take this as my weakness. Rather, you must appreciate my noble character and high thinking that I follow established principles and adhere to norms of decency and courteous behaviour when dealing a messenger, irrespective of whose messenger he is. So don’t give me a lecture on what is right and what is not. Do you hear?]

 (4)

कह कपि धर्मसीलता तोरी । हमहुँ सुनी कृत पर त्रिय चोरी ॥ ५ ॥
देखी नयन दूत रखवारी । बूढ़ि न मरहु धर्म ब्रतधारी ॥ ६ ॥

kaha kapi dharmasīlatā tōrī. hamahum’ sunī kṛta para triya cōrī. 5.
dēkhī nayana dūta rakhavārī. būṛi na marahu dharma bratadhārī. 6.

The monkey (“kapi”; i.e. Angad) retorted in a most scornful and contemptible way, ‘Yes indeed, I too have heard about how great an expert you are in the laws of Dharma (probity, propriety, righteousness and ethics), and how diligently you follow them when I came to know that you had stolen another person’s wife¹. (5)

As if that was not enough, I have also seen how you extend your hospitality and protection to a messenger².

Oh you pretentious upholder of Dharma; why don’t you drown yourself to death for such falsehood and pretensions of righteousness and noble conduct (for your deeds squarely speak against you and demolish your claims regarding your upright nature)³. (6)

[Note—¹This refers to abduction of Sita by Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 28.

²This refers to the treatment meted out to Hanuman, who was also a messenger of Lord Ram, sent to find Sita and give the Lord’s message to her. Ravana had ordered first that he be killed or severely beaten so that his body suffers grave wounds, but on second thoughts ordered that his tail be set on fire—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 13 and 21; (b) Doha no. 24 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-10 that precede it.

³You speak as if you are a holy, pious and noble soul who lives by what is right and proper, but what you actually do is quite the opposite. You stole Sita like a thief; is this righteous conduct? You ordered that Hanuman be killed, beaten and burnt alive—is this the correct way to treat a messenger?]

कान नाक बिनु भगिनि निहारी । छमा कीन्हि तुम्ह धर्म बिचारी ॥ ७ ॥

धर्मसीलता तव जग जागी । पावा दरसु हमहुँ बड़भागी ॥ ८ ॥

kāna nāka binu bhagini nihārī. chamā kīnhi tumha dharma bicārī. 7.
dharmasīlatā tava jaga jāgī. pāvā darasu hamahum̐ barābhāgī. 8.

Truly, when you saw that your sister's nose and ears had been chopped off, surely I believe you had forgiven the person who had brought such abject humiliation to your family because of your gracious and forgiving nature, is it not?¹ (7)

Really indeed, your fame as an upholder of the excellent moral virtues coming under the umbrella of the term 'Dharma' are so famous in the world that I feel it is my honour to have an opportunity to meet you in person!' (8)

[Note—¹Angad teases Ravana by drawing his attention to the episode of Supernakha whose nose and ears were cut by Laxman on the orders of Lord Ram as she was attempting to play foul with the Lord and make him break his vows of remaining loyal to his chaste wife Sita by cajoling him to marry her. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 22.

Angad says, "Well, if you really are so courageous, brave and bold as well as an upholder of Dharma, then tell me why didn't you immediately seek revenge by attacking Lord Ram who had deformed your sister and bring him to justice; why did you went home quietly, worried and in a depressed mood? Oh yes sure, you did not decide to punish the perpetrator because you wanted to forgive him!

Well, if you are such a great upholder of the laws of Dharma that you wished to forgive the person who had committed this atrocious act of cutting off the nose and ears of your sister because you are so gracious, magnanimous, benevolent and kind-hearted, then will you please tell me why you went like a thief and abduct the wife of this person, putting him to extreme grief and forcing him to come here searching for her, even risking his life in the process, instead of challenging him to a duel to punish him for his deed of wounding your sister right on the spot? This clearly debunks your claim of being a 'holy cow'."]

दो०. जनि जल्पसि जड़ जंतु कपि सठ बिलोकु मम बाहु ।
लोकपाल बल बिपुल ससि ग्रसन हेतु सब राहु ॥ २२ (क) ॥
पुनि नभ सर मम कर निकर कमलन्हि पर करि बास ।
सोभत भयउ मराल इव संभु सहित कैलास ॥ २२ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

jani jalpasi jaṛa jantu kapi saṭha bilōku mama bāhu.
lōkapāla bala bipula sasi grasana hētu saba rāhu. 22 (a).
puni nabha sara mama kara nikara kamalanhi para kari bāsa.
sōbhata bhaya'u marāla iva sambhu sahita kailāsa. 22 (b).

Extremely upset by Angad's scorching comments that directly hit at his self-esteem and dignity, Ravana vehemently hit back in an angry tone, 'Oh you rascal monkey, a

useless creature who is no better than an insect. Don't babble incoherently like someone who is hallucinating.

Look here at my majestic, robust and strong arms; they are strong and powerful enough to vanquish the might and pride of all the Lokpals (the gods who take care of the welfare of the world) at once just like Rahu who can devour many moons simultaneously. (Doha no. 22-a)

[Listen more about the majesty, the might and the stupendous powers of my arms.] Further, Lord Shiva looked like a swan in the heavenly lake represented by my cupped palms as he rested on Mt. Kailash which I had once held up in my hands¹. (Doha no. 22-b)

[Note—¹This episode where Ravana had held the whole of Mt. Kailash, where Lord Shiva is said to have his abode in the heaven, aloft in his hands, is narrated briefly in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse no. 40.]

चौ०. तुम्हरे कटक माझ सुनु अंगद । मो सन भिरिहि कवन जोधा बद ॥ १ ॥
तव प्रभु नारि बिरहँ बलहीना । अनुज तासु दुख दुखी मलीना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

tumharē kaṭaka mājha sunu aṅgada. mō sana bhirihi kavana jōdhā bada. 1.
tava prabhu nāri biraham̐ balahīnā. anuja tāsu dukha dukhī malīnā. 2.

[In the following verses, Ravana lists all the great warriors of Lord Ram's army, including the Lord himself, one-by-one, and pointing out how each one of them stands no chance against him and his might.]

Ravana said with rebuke and contempt in his voice, 'Listen Angad! Which warrior in the rank and file of your army is capable of facing me in the battle-field? Tell me, is there anyone amongst you who is strong and brave enough to stand in front of me? (1)

Your lord (i.e. Lord Ram) has already been weakened by grieving for his wife, and his brother (i.e. Laxman) too has become weak and gloomy because of the distress that has overcome him when he sees his brother sad and grieving constantly.

[Hence, both of them have lost their original vigour and strength to withstand the rigours of warfare. They lack the energy and the stamina needed to fight a battle. Surely, protracted grief must have sapped their energy to such an extent that they won't stand a wee bit chance against my might and punch in the battle-field.] (2)

तुम्ह सुग्रीव कूलद्रुम दोऊ । अनुज हमार भीरु अति सोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
जामवंत मंत्री अति बूढ़ा । सो कि होइ अब समरारूढ़ा ॥ ४ ॥

tumha sugrīva kūladruma dō'ū. anuja hamāra bhīru ati sō'ū. 3.
jāmavanta mantrī ati būrḥā. sō ki hō'i aba samarārūrḥā. 4.

You and Sugriv are like plants or trees that grow on the edge of the bank of a river or the shore of the sea¹. As far as my younger brother (Vibhishan) is concerned, he is a very cowardly person who is scared out of his wits². (3)

Jamvant (the chief of the bear community) has become old and infirm. Can he ever stand his ground in the aggressive environment of the battle-field where exceptional agility, stamina and vigour are needed (which he obviously lacks due to his old age)? (4)

[Note—¹Trees and plants that grow near flowing water, such as rivers and seas, can't find firm ground for their roots because the soil near the banks of rivers and shores of seas is soft and prone to being swept away by swift currents. Such trees or plants can fall very easily; they are uprooted with a swift current that undercuts their roots. If there is a flood accompanied with a strong wind, the trees on the edge of the river bank would topple over into the water.

Ravana compares both Angad and Sugriv to such plants and trees that look big on the outside but have no strong foundation to keep them permanently rooted. To wit, when the war actually starts, Angad and Sugriv would be felled without the least effort just like the trees and plants growing on the edge of rivers and seas.

²Vibhishan is in a precarious state; he is weakened by worry. He is not sure of his own fate. On the one hand he has made his own people, the demons, his enemy, and on the other hand he is living amongst alien people who are arch enemies of his demon race, and so he can never be certain about them, about what they would do to him once their objective was fulfilled. Surely, in this uncertain situation Vibhishan must be living a worried and terrified life like someone living between the two sharp edges of a sword.]

सिलिपि कर्म जानहिं नल नीला । है कपि एक महा बलसीला ॥ ५ ॥

आवा प्रथम नगरु जेहिं जारा । सुनत बचन कह बालिकुमारा ॥ ६ ॥

silpi karma jānahim̐ nala nīlā. hai kapi ēka mahā balasīlā. 5.

āvā prathama nagaru jēhim̐ jārā. sunata bacana kaha bālikumārā. 6.

The two, Nala and Neela, are skilled in the art of construction; they are not expected to know anything about the martial art of warfare.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that there is only one monkey amongst you who possesses great strength. (5)

He is the one who had come earlier to Lanka and had burnt the city¹.

When the son of Baali (“bālikumārā”; Angad) heard these words (that referred to Hanuman), he immediately seized the opportunity to turn the table on Ravana by snapping back sarcastically, --- (6)

[Note—¹Ravana is referring to Hanuman here.]

सत्य बचन कहु निसिचर नाहा । साँचेहुं कीस कीन्ह पुर दाहा ॥ ७ ॥

रावन नगर अल्प कपि दहई । सुनि अस बचन सत्य को कहई ॥ ८ ॥

satya bacana kahu nisicara nāhā. sām̐cēhum̐ kīsa kīnha pura dāhā. 7.
rāvana nagara alpa kapi daha'ī. suni asa bacana satya kō kaha'ī. 8.

‘Oh the king of demons (nisicara nāhā)! Tell me honestly, is it really true that a monkey had burnt (your fabulous city of) Lanka? (7)

Who will believe that it is true that a humble monkey would ever be able to burn the great city of Ravana¹? (8)

[Note—¹Angad scorned at Ravana and put him to shame by turning his own words against him when he said something to this effect: “It seems incredulous and out of imagination that a city so well protected by a mighty demon king of the name of Ravana, who claims to have vanquished all the gods and conquered all the creatures of the Creator’s creation, could be burnt down by a lonely monkey, all by himself. Why, this seems absolutely impossible. But you have acknowledged yourself that this was done by that diminutive-looking monkey. Prey, tell me, what were you doing then; why didn’t you stop him from causing such havoc to your beloved city; what were your warriors doing; where was your strength and valour, of which you boast so much, at that time?”] (8)

जो अति सुभट सराहेहु रावन । सो सुग्रीव केर लघु धावन ॥ ९ ॥
चलइ बहुत सो बीर न होई । पठवा खबरि लेन हम सोई ॥ १० ॥

jō ati subhaṭa sarāhēhu rāvana. sō sugrīva kēra laghu dhāvana. 9.
cala'i bahuta sō bīra na hō'ī. paṭhavā khabari lēna hama sō'ī. 10.

Look Ravana; that monkey whom you have praised yourself so much for his valour and strength and courage is merely an ordinary messenger in the service of Sugriv¹. (9)

That he came here alone after covering a great distance (across the ocean) would not make him a great warrior, for actually it was us who had sent him on this mission². (10)

[Note—¹Angad calls Hanuman a messenger of Sugriv because it was Sugriv, being the king of the monkeys and the kingdom of Kishkindha, who had summoned and dispatched all the monkeys, including Hanuman, in all the directions to search for Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 22.

Angad’s observation that “Hanuman was serving Sugriv in an ordinary way” shows that there was not much of a formal hierarchy in the kingdom of Kishkindha, and all the monkeys mingled with each others as brothers and compatriots of equal status. This informal relationship helped to bind the community closely in a bond of brotherhood and friendship.

²Hanuman was one amongst so many other monkey messengers sent by Sugriv in all the directions to search for Sita. Sugriv had not particularly directed Hanuman to go in a specific direction, such as to Lanka.

It was later on when the party, of which he was a member, reached the shore of the ocean that it became necessary for someone to go across the ocean to Lanka if they were to be successful in their mission of finding Sita. At that juncture, Angad and Jamvant, who were the leaders of this team, decided to send Hanuman on this job. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

To wit, Hanuman had no instructions to burn Lanka; his mandate was to find Sita. If he could achieve the feat of burning Lanka and destroying a large section of its army which had tried to catch him, it was his personal choice.

Angad wanted to drive home the point that if a single monkey could cause such a tremendous damage to Lanka, what would happen when the might of the whole monkey army unleashes its fury on the demon kingdom—has Ravana considered it?]

दो०. सत्य नगरु कपि जारेउ बिनु प्रभु आयसु पाइ ।

फिरि न गयउ सुग्रीव पहिं तेहिं भय रहा लुकाइ ॥ २३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

satya nagaru kapi jārē'u binu prabhu āyasu pā'i.

phiri na gaya'u sugrīva pahim̐ tēhim̐ bhaya rahā lukā'i. 23 (a).

[Angad continued—] It's true that the Kapi (the monkey; i.e. Hanuman) had burnt Lanka without an express order to do so from Lord Ram, and that is the reason why, now I understand from hindsight, he did not go back directly to report boldly to Sugriv (about the success of his mission to Lanka to find Sita), but preferred to hide himself out of fear¹. (Doha no. 23-a)

[Note—¹Angad said: “Since Hanuman had burnt Lanka on the spur of the moment, without any order either from Lord Ram or from Sugriv, he was afraid of severe reprimand from his chief, Sugriv, the king of the monkeys. So he was reluctant to go to him straight upon return, and hid himself. I first went and told Sugriv about the good news, that Sita has been found, and this good news cheered up Sugriv and helped me to win his good humour and favour sufficiently enough to ensure that he would overlook or neglect Hanuman's deed of burning Lanka without orders. Then I told Hanuman that there was nothing to fear, and I took him with me to Sugriv, who in turn took him to Lord Ram. The Lord of course was waiting for him, and he affectionately and warmly welcomed Hanuman, and appreciated his actions.

The point to note here is this: Hanuman was scared of Sugriv, and not Lord Ram. This is because Sugriv was a king, and a king would, in all likelihood, become annoyed if his orders are violated. Sugriv orders were clear: the monkeys and bears who were dispatched from Kishkindha were to search and find Sita, and come back to report within a month's time; they were not expected to do anything more. And here Hanuman had run wild by fighting and killing a large number of demons, ruining their king's royal garden called Ashok Van, had even killed Akshaya Kumar, the son of Ravana, and then lost his cool to become violent and burn the whole city of Lanka.

This was not his mandate, and as such Hanuman was scared of facing Sugriv because he feared punishment.

But there was no such fear from Lord Ram—for everyone knew that the Lord was very kind, compassionate, loving, forgiving and accommodating. That's why Hanuman had no reservations in disclosing his deeds to the Lord.

Presently, Angad tells Ravana all these things to drive home the point that Hanuman, whom Ravana acknowledges as being exceptionally brave, bold and courageous, was actually very humble and docile, and he didn't have the courage and the boldness to face his king, Sugriv, and disobey his orders. This means that Sugriv was more powerful than Hanuman, for otherwise the latter would have no fear of him.

This was done to remind Ravana that he is fooling himself by thinking that only Hanuman is the 'brave one' in the whole of the monkey army, for he has yet not met and tested the others. It was to debunk Ravana's general perception that the monkeys as a whole are a weak, inept and incompetent lot of clumsy and fickle minded creatures, and they stand no chance against his valour, courage, strength and power.]

सत्य कहहि दसकंठ सब मोहि न सुनि कछु कोह ।
कोउ न हमारें कटक अस तो सन लरत जो सोह ॥ २३ (ख) ॥

satya kahahi dasakaṇṭha saba mōhi na suni kachu kōha.
kō'u na hamārēm kaṭaka asa tō sana larata jō sōha. 23 (b).

Truly Ravana, what you say is right¹, and I am not offended by your comments. In all sooth, really, there is no one in our rank and file who would feel glad and honoured to be able to fight with you!² (Doha no. 23-b)

[Note—¹Angad refers to what Ravana has said about all the monkey warriors in the previous verse nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 23-a herein above.

²Angad here refers to Ravana's assertion in verse no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 23-a herein above that "there is no one in the monkey army who would be able to fight Ravana". Angad gives the reason for it in the next Doha no. 23-c.

Here he is taunting Ravana in a contemptuous way by saying that it is true that none of his friends and compatriots would like to fight with him, not because they can't fight him as they are weak, or are afraid to face him in the battle-field for fear of defeat, but because they would feel it is demeaning and insulting for their own honour and pride, as fighting with Ravana, who is a false warrior, a mere pretender full of loud boast and bluster without anything of substance in him, would put them to shame for having wasted their time and energy, their valour, courage, marital skills, strength and powers on a good-for-nothing, loud-mouthed crook. It would be like trying to kill a mosquito by using a gun against it, or employing a battering ram to fall a puppet, or wasting energy by repeatedly punching a rubber dummy thinking it to be a living giant.]

प्रीति बिरोध समान सन करिअ नीति असि आहि ।

जौं मृगपति बध मेडुकन्हि भल कि कहइ कोउ ताहि ॥ २३ (ग) ॥

prīti birōdha samāna sana kari'a nīti asi āhi.

jauṁ mrgapati badha mēḍukanhi bhala ki kaha'i kō'u tāhi. 23 (c).

It is an established norm for mutual engagement that one should develop any kind of relation, either friendly or hostile, only with those who are almost of the same stature and have almost the same standing as his own.

[To wit, both the sides should be on almost the same level; they should be at par with each other; there should be a balance between them. Great disparity between the two sides is not conducive to any worthwhile relationship, whether friendly or hostile. There should be a level playing field for both the sides as it helps to sustain long-term relationships in case of friendship, and to decide who the actual winner is in the case of hostility.]

For instance, if a lion kills a frog, will anyone in his right senses call it a good thing, an act of bravery on the part of the lion¹?

[Definitely and doubtlessly, the answer is “no”. Similarly, if a strong man subdues a weakling by using physical force, it is a matter of shame for the former instead of praise.] (Doha no. 23-c.)

[Note—¹Angad clarifies why he considers that none of his friends should fight Ravana by citing the example of a “lion killing a frog”, which is a shameful act for the lion. Here, he compares the monkey warriors to the ‘lion’, and Ravana to the ‘frog’.

We can observe how the debate is becoming more and more acerbic, abrasive and personal in a gradual manner, how it is descending lower and lower in the scale of decency and decorum. Both Ravana and Angad have used denigrating and deprecating language for the other, stoking mutual anger, and enhancing bitterness and repugnance further.]

जद्यपि लघुता राम कहँ तोहि बधें बड़ दोष ।

तदपि कठिन दसकंठ सुनु छत्र जाति कर रोष ॥ २३ (घ) ॥

jadyapi laghutā rāma kahum̐ tōhi badhēm̐ barā dōṣa.

tadapi kaṭhina dasakaṇṭha sunu chatra jāti kara rōṣa. 23 (d).

So therefore, oh Ravana, it is true that it would be too lowly and demeaning for Lord Ram to slay you, for it would be a great error on the part of the Lord to do so¹, but mind you, oh the ten-necked one (*dasakaṇṭha*), that the anger of the Kshatriya race (the ‘warrior race’ to which Lord Ram belonged) is very dangerous, and the accompanying wrathful fury is hard to overcome². (Doha no. 23-d)

[Note—¹Angad has just cited the instance of “a lion killing a frog” to stress that it is not a good thing for a great person of abilities and wisdom to use force to kill those who are too weak, humble and lowly in front of him. So therefore it would not be worthy for Lord Ram, the great and almighty Lord of the world, to stoop to such a low level as to employ his powers and strength to vanquish and slay someone as

lowly and worthless as Ravana, who is no comparison whatsoever, by any measure, to the Lord's exalted stature, majesty and greatness.

The world would look down upon Lord Ram for waging a bloody war and causing the death of so many creatures (demons) just for retrieving his wife from Ravana's clutches—for it was an easy task for the almighty Lord. The world would say that Lord Ram could have simply subdued Ravana, make him give Sita back, exact some tribute from him if he wished to punish the demon king, impose certain strict strictures upon him so that he does not misbehave in the future, and then release him with stern warning not to disobey the Lord's words.

Instead of this approach, when the Lord's objective could have been achieved by more peaceful method, the Lord chose to fight a fierce war that led to so much devastation and havoc just in order to kill Ravana to punish him for stealing Sita.

This will surely be a blot on the Lord's good reputation for ever. But the thing is that anger is a very bad proposition. So if Ravana continues with his wild and arrogant ways, refusing to relent and make peace with the Lord, and consequently forcing the war on the Lord, then his anger would be ignited, and once this fire is kindled, there is no way it can be put out.

²Lord Ram belonged to the Kshatriya race, the noble warrior race that was famous for its valour, courage, boldness, marital skills, bravery and strength. The kings of ancient times usually belonged to this race. The main job of this race was to give protection to the rest of the society.

One characteristic of this race was that while they were usually kind and magnanimous and forgiving, but if a limit of tolerance was passed and their anger was ignited then it was quite impossible to subdue them. Once they decided to achieve an objective, they would accomplish it no matter what happened.

Angad alludes to this unique character. He tells Ravana that though it is correct to say that it would not be a proper thing for Lord Ram to kill him, but if things spin out of control then there would no stopping the Lord either, inspite of the fact that the consequences may not be conducive for the Lord's reputation as being merciful, kind, gracious, forgiving, compassionate, magnanimous and benevolent.

So therefore Angad advised Ravana not to test Lord Ram's patience; and that he ought naught to do anything that would precipitate disaster.]

बक्र उक्ति धनु बचन सर हृदय दहेउ रिपु कीस ।

प्रतिउत्तर सड़सिन्ह मनहुँ काढ़त भट दससीस ॥ २३ (ड) ॥

bakra ukṭi dhanu bacana sara hr̥daya dahē'u ripu kīsa.

prati'uttara saṛasinha manahum̐ kāṛhata bhaṭa dasasīsa. 23 (e).

The words of the Kapi (literally the 'monkey'; here referring to Angad), which were shot like sharp arrows mounted on a bow represented by sarcastic speech, pierced deep into the heart of the ten-headed Ravana, who made desperate attempts to heal his wounds (i.e. his ego, self-respect and dignity) by taking these arrows out using a tong symbolized by his equally sharp rejoinders and rebuffs (made to Angad)¹. (Doha no. 23-e)

[Note—¹Here, the sharp answers that Ravana gave to Angad for each of his taunts have been likened to a wounded person trying to heal his wounds by plucking out the sharp projectiles, shot by his enemy, that have dug deep into his body, and then throwing them vigorously back at his opponent in a tit-for-tat reaction so that some kind of injury could be inflicted on the latter, as far as it was possible.

This will be more evident in the following verses where we shall read that the sarcasm, the taunt and the contempt for each other will reach a crescendo, with quick, biting and witty responses being shot back and forth by both the sides.]

हँसि बोलेउ दसमौलि तब कपि कर बड़ गुन एक ।
जो प्रतिपालइ तासु हित करइ उपाय अनेक ॥ २३ (च) ॥

ham̐si bōlē'u dasamauli taba kapi kara barā guna ēka.
jō pratipāla'i tāsū hita kara'i upāya anēka. 23 (f).

Then the ten-headed Ravana laughed (to indicate that he isn't offended, nor does he take Angad seriously) and said, 'One of the good characters of a monkey is that he will always try to serve his master, who takes care of him and feeds him, in the best way he can, and do doing whatever is within his means to support the master's cause¹. (Doha no. 23-f)

[Note—¹Ravana effectively said this: "I appreciate your enthusiasm in supporting the cause of Lord Ram and for serving Sugriv. Yes, it is the nature of the monkeys in general that they would diligently serve him who feeds them. This habit is evident when one observes how a monkey obeys a monkey-charmer; the monkey would obey his master's commands, without asking questions, by doing all the tricks he is ordered to do to please the spectators who gather to watch the show, because the monkey knows that the charmer gives him food, lodging and protection, and if he does not obey him then the master would not only beat him but may even cut-off his ration. And, worse, if the master gets angry beyond a limit, he would let the monkey loose, and there are so many predators waiting to grab him and kill him, by stoning him, beating him, or in some other way.

A domesticated monkey usually becomes servile, weak and docile as he loses most of his natural vigour, aggressiveness, and the many skills that are possessed by his peers who live a free life in the forests where they have to fend for themselves because they have no patrons like the monkey-charmer who would feed them, protect them, and give them a shelter to rest.

You live a comfortable life of a prince of the monkey kingdom. You owe your life's privileges to your uncle Sugriv because he has made you a 'prince', as well as to Lord Ram, for it is the Lord who ensures your safety at the hands of your father's bitter enemy, your uncle Sugriv, and has compelled the latter to let you live in peace.

Well, I am not at all surprised that you would sing the song of praises for the two, Sugriv and Lord Ram, because they feed you and allow you to enjoy the privileges of prince-hood. Woe to you; shame to you, for being a servile servant of those who eliminated your noble father and the great monkey named Baali; you have dishonoured yourself by serving them and dancing to their tune, inspite of being the son of the great and fearless monkey warrior king named Baali!"

The following verses reiterate and endorse the above view.]

चौ०. धन्य कीस जो निज प्रभु काजा । जहँ तहँ नाचइ परिहरि लाजा ॥ १ ॥

नाचि कूदि करि लोग रिझाई । पति हित करइ धर्म निपुनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhan'ya kīsa jō nija prabhu kājā. jaham̐ taham̐ nāca'i parihari lājā. 1.
nāci kūdi kari lōga rijhāī. pati hita kara'i dharma nipunāī. 2.

[Ravana invokes the example of the monkey-charmer to support his comment made in Doha no. 23-f above.]

Ravana continued, 'Hats off to a monkey who dances, everywhere and anywhere, in the service of his master, without feeling even a wee bit shy or having the least amount of shame or regret for the acts his master orders him to do. (1)

He (the pet monkey) would play a perfect role of a joker, dancing and jumping and hopping (besides making funny faces and uttering ridiculous sounds) in order to entertain and please the spectators who gather around him to watch his antics, for the pecuniary benefit of his master. Forsooth, you monkeys are truly honest followers of the law of Dharma (right conduct).

[It is because you are being faithful to your master who feeds and lodges you. You serve your patron, your master, the monkey-charmer, very diligently and honestly, to the best of your abilities, which surely is a good character. I will readily agree that you are great as far as this virtue goes, and I would applaud it. Surely, this is excellent conduct, and so I say that you monkeys are "followers of Dharma at least in one respect".]¹ (2)

[Note—¹The reference to a 'monkey-charmer' is very obvious. The poor, pet monkey performs all sorts of cheap tricks that his master orders him to do to please the crowd that had collected around to watch his antics, and the better role of a joker the monkey plays the greater is the money that is flipped towards him by the appreciative spectators by way of donation or alms. This money provides for the bread and butter of the monkey-charmer, who in turn takes care of the needs of the monkey. This is the monkey-charmer's only livelihood, and since the monkey helps his master earn his bread and support his dependants with his little pranks, he is doing a noble act by serving his lord faithfully and obediently to the best of his ability.

A monkey-charmer may have more than one monkey as pets, but he would naturally favour that monkey who is a better performer of tricks as it translates into more revenue. It is a symbiotic relationship between the monkey-charmer and the monkey, which benefits both. The charmer depends upon his monkey to earn his livelihood, and the monkey depends upon the charmer for food, lodging and safety.

Ravana cites this example to imply that Angad serves his masters, Sugriv and Lord Ram, because he derives benefit by doing so. Angad is able to enjoy the privileges of a prince because he keeps his uncle Sugriv in good humour, and he serves Lord Ram to ensure that the Lord continues to protect him against the envy of his uncle who was so jealous of his father Baali that he killed him to grab the throne of Kishkindha, and who may harbour a secret desire to get rid of Angad too.

In doing so, though he gets credit for being loyal and diligent in his service to his lords, he forgets that he is dancing, in a servile manner, to the tune of those who were instrumental in his father Baali's death. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Doha no. 11.}

Why was Angad chosen as a messenger by Lord Ram? It is because he was a 'better performer' as compared to others in the camp of Lord Ram. He was loud-mouthed, he could counter his opponent with quick wit and biting humour without waiting to consider the aptness of his reply, he was an expert debater and a colloquial speaker who could speak extempore without a break for great lengths of time, he was bold and proud, he was immune to any personal emotions that his opponent may attempt to rouse to deflect his attention while arguing his case in favour of his master (as proved by Angad remaining unruffled by Ravana's attempt to remind him of his father Baali who was killed by Sugriv with the aid of Lord Ram in order to sow the seed of revenge inside Angad's heart), and he would never accept defeat in an argument for he could cook up some or the other story so convincing that it would stymie his adversary.

Ravana means that like the monkey-charmer who favours that pet monkey of his who is able to entertain the crowd of spectator better than the others in his brood, Lord Ram chose Angad as he would certainly achieve the objective—which was to insult Ravana and humiliate him to such an extent that even if he had a secret wish to make a compromise to avoid the war it would be washed away, because Angad would make him so angry and provoke him so much with his antics and disparaging remarks that it would be impossible for Ravana to save his honour and grace by a peaceful mean, and he would be compelled to slug it out in the battle-field. And in that, surely, Angad would succeed.]

अंगद स्वामिभक्त तव जाती । प्रभु गुन कस न कहसि एहि भाँती ॥ ३ ॥
मैं गुन गाहक परम सुजाना । तव कटु रटनि करउँ नहिं काना ॥ ४ ॥

aṅgada svāmibhakta tava jātī. prabhu guna kasa na kahasi ēhi bhāmṭī. 3.
mairṁ guna gāhaka parama sujānā. tava kaṭu raṭani kara'um' nahirṁ kānā. 4.

Angad, your race is reputed to be loyal to whosoever is its lord and master. So there is no wonder that you are lavishing so much praise on your own lord (i.e. Lord Ram). (3)

I am wise, prudent, sagacious and pragmatic enough to know that this sort of behaviour is expected of you (as praising the master and the lord is a habit of the monkey race), and this is why I have not paid much attention to your incoherent babblings.

[To wit, I have excused you for your impudence and the audacity that you have shown by speaking in front of me in the rash manner that you chose to follow, because, being a monkey, I can't expect you to show basic decency and civility expected from a messenger.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Ravana is putting himself on high moral ground by playing cool and telling Angad that he appreciates his good virtue of being loyal to his Lord (Sri Ram) and praising him in front of his adversary (Ravana).

Ravana tries to put Angad on the back foot by showing that it is the latter who is at fault by not paying due respect to a sovereign to whom he has come as a messenger. It is certainly not a good thing, especially for a messenger from another king, to speak in an insulting tone to a king to whom he has brought a message from his master, for such rudeness of behaviour of the messenger shows the king who had sent him in very poor light.

Ravana had tried to hide his own uneasiness, and at the same time to manoeuvre the discussion towards civility and a more amiable environment by showing that he has not taken offence at Angad's rude answers. But Ravana failed in his intentions to calm tempers, for Angad continued with his sarcasm and acerbic tirade relentlessly, provoking Ravana to hit back vehemently. Angad's intent was to make Ravana take some step that would be against his own interest by giving the former (Angad) an excuse to completely demolish whatever pride and respect that was still left with the latter (Ravana).]

कह कपि तव गुन गाहकताई । सत्य पवनसुत मोहि सुनाई ॥ ५ ॥
 बन बिधंसि सुत बधि पुर जारा । तदपि न तेहिं कछु कृत अपकारा ॥ ६ ॥
 सोइ बिचारि तव प्रकृति सुहाई । दसकंधर मैं कीन्हि ढिठाई ॥ ७ ॥
 देखेउँ आइ जो कछु कपि भाषा । तुम्हरेँ लाज न रोष न माखा ॥ ८ ॥

kaha kapi tava guna gāhakatā'ī. satya pavanasuta mōhi sunā'ī. 5.
 bana bidhansi suta badhi pura jārā. tadapi na tēhiṁ kachu kṛta apakārā. 6.
 sō'i bicāri tava prakṛti suhā'ī. dasakandhara mairi kīnhi ḍhiṭhā'ī. 7.
 dēkhē'um' ā'i jō kachu kapi bhāṣā. tumharēm lāja na rōṣa na mākhā. 8.

[Referring to Ravana's affirmation that he is wise, prudent, sagacious and pragmatic, Angad retorted scornfully—]

Angad said with intense irony in his voice: 'Yes, your sense of wisdom, prudence, sagacity and pragmatism is real. The son of the wind god ("pavanasuta"; i.e. Hanuman) was right when he told me about it (upon his return from Lanka). (5)

When he (Hanuman) had destroyed your favourite garden known as 'Ashok Van', had killed your son (Akshaya Kumar), and had burnt your city (of Lanka)—you did not feel he has done you any harm, so wise, prudent, pragmatic and sagacious you are indeed!¹ (6)

Oh the ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara)²! I acted in such an insolent manner as I had known of your amiable nature (that you are not offended by any insinuation, no matter how insulting and abrasive your interlocutor may be). (7)

In all sooth and without gainsay, I have now witnessed myself what the Kapi (Hanuman) had said about you—that you have not a trace of shame, no anger, or a sense of resentment (at being publicly humiliated by a monkey who would destroy, with impunity, your garden as well as your city, and also kill your son, and then leave your kingdom, unchallenged and unharmed).³ (8)

[Note—¹Angad scorned at Ravana tauntingly: “Well, tell me, if you were offended by any of these things, why did you not punish him for the crime; why did you allow him to go back from Lanka, alive and unscathed? Surely, you possess such a high level of graciousness, magnanimity and benevolence as your virtues that such destructions were of no consequence to you because you wished to forgive a messenger and were averse to taking revenge or harming a creature as it would be sinful act. Is it so?

Or is it perhaps because your wisdom told you to keep quite and forgive the perpetrator as he was a messenger or too small a creature to seek revenge from, or perhaps, in your pragmatism, you decided that it would be better to keep quiet because that intruder would cause you more damage if you confronted him, and your prudence was that it was better to contain any further havoc, which you wouldn't be able to prevent from happening, by letting that monkey leave Lanka as soon as he could.”

²Ravana had ‘ten heads’, and that implies he had ‘ten necks’ and ‘ten shoulders’.

³After first using soothing words like “you have wisdom, sagacity, prudence, pragmatism”, which may have calmed down Ravana a wee bit, Angad stoked the fire of Ravana's anger once again by saying “you have no shame, and no anger or resentment either, at being insulted, and your property being damaged by an intruder”.]

जौं असि मति पितु खाए कीसा । कहि अस बचन हँसा दससीसा ॥ ९ ॥

पितहि खाइ खातेउँ पुनि तोही । अबहीं समुझि परा कछु मोही ॥ १० ॥

बालि बिमल जस भाजन जानी । हतउँ न तोहि अधम अभिमानी ॥ ११ ॥

jauri asi mati pitu khā'ē kīsā. kahi asa bacana haṁsā dasasīsā. 9.

pitahi khā'i khātē'um' puni tōhī. abahīm samujhi parā kachu mōhī. 10.

bāli bimala jasa bhājana jānī. hata'um' na tōhi adhama abhimānī. 11.

Ravana retorted with vehemence, ‘Oh you monkey (kīsā); such lowly and corrupt is your wisdom and intelligence that there is no wonder you have devoured your father.

[To wit, you are truly shameless and dumb fellow, a blot on your family, because you are not at all concerned about the death of your father, Baali, at the hands of those whose cause you have come to espouse. Woes betide upon you, oh you ungrateful and unfaithful son!]

Saying this, Ravana laughed derisively with all his ten heads (haṁsā dasasīsā). (9)

Angad shot back, ‘Yea, I would have devoured you after having devoured my father.

[To wit, since I am being accused of condoning my father's death by keeping silent about it and professing the cause of those who got him killed¹, I would have lived up to my reputation by now either killing you myself or getting you killed by them who had got my father Baali killed.]

But for the moment I would prefer to desist from doing this because a thought occurred to me. (10)

Well, I desist from slaying you lowly, sinful, haughty and arrogant fellow just because you were forgiven (for your mischief) and was promised favour by Baali (my father)².

[And therefore, by harming or killing you I would be insulting the honourable memory of my respected father. So, I prefer to overlook your impudence. Instead of thanking me for sparing your life in the honourable memory of my father, you are so foolish as to think I am sparing you because of any other reason, such as being afraid of you.] (11)

[Note—¹Angad is referring to his uncle Sugriv who had killed his father Baali in a duel in which Lord Ram took the sides of Sugriv.

The important question is this: Why did Angad prefer to keep silent about Sugriv killing his father Baali, and Lord Ram taking sides with Sugriv?

The answer is: One, Angad felt that his father was at fault for he had wrongly expelled his uncle after severely beating him for no fault of his, and even kept Sugriv's wife as a mistress^a, which in themselves were wrong things to do.

Second, Lord Ram supported Sugriv because he the Lord felt he had been wronged, and being a true friend it was his moral duty to help Sugriv^b.

Third, Angad was of a young age, and he felt that the community of the monkeys in Kishkindha was not happy with Baali with the treatment he had meted out unjustly to his innocent younger brother Sugriv. Actually Sugriv was compelled to accept the crown of Kishkindha by a joint decision of all the ministers, though he was not willing to do so, as the rightful heir was Angad, being the son of the king Baali. But Angad was of an immature age, and so he could not be made a king in the absence of his father Baali. There was obviously no choice, except to anoint Sugriv on the throne. But when Baali came back after a long time when he had finally eliminated a demon named Mayawi, he found Sugriv on the throne. Without enquiring the circumstances in which Sugriv had ascended the throne, and without giving him a chance to step down, Baali thrashed him mercilessly, chased him away from the kingdom, and kept his wife as a mistress, something that is unacceptable.

Lord Ram took the side of Sugriv for these reasons—as the Lord felt grave injustice has been done to him.

The genesis of the bitterness between Sugriv and Baali is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-13 that precede Doha no. 6.

Angad knew the whole story, and since his father was at fault he preferred to remain silent. Besides this, there was nothing else he could do. He knew that his uncle saw him as thorn by his side, someone who has the right to the throne. Lord Ram was the saviour of Angad because Baali had entrusted his son in the care of the Lord at the time of his death^c. So Angad knew very well that as long as the Lord favoured him he had nothing to fear^d.

{^aApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 6.

^bApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 7.

^cApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

^dApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 26.}

²The story of Baali and Ravana in brief is as follows: Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Vaali (also pronounced as “Baali”), had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana’s arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him.

The story of Ravana suffering humiliation at the hands of Baali and his subsequent friendship with him is narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 34; Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.]

कहु रावन रावन जग केते । मैं निज श्रवन सुने सुनु जेते ॥ १२ ॥

बलिहि जितन एक गयउ पताला । राखेउ बाँधि सिसुन्ह हयसाला ॥ १३ ॥

खेलहि बालक मारहि जाई । दया लागि बलि दीन्ह छोड़ाई ॥ १४ ॥

kahu rāvana rāvana jaga kētē. maim nija śravana sunē sunu jētē. 12.

balihi jitana ēka gaya'u patālā. rākhē'u bām̐dhi sisunha hayasālā. 13.

khēlahim bālaka mārhim jā'ī. dayā lagi bali dīnha chōṛā'ī. 14.

Well, tell me Ravana, how many Ravanas are there in this world? I have heard of a few of them, and now let me tell you about some of them. (12)

There is one Ravana who had gone to the nether world to vanquish king Bali. On that occasion, the children had caught hold of him and (to play with him they had) tied him in a horse-stable. (13)

The boys played with him as if he was a novelty, a toy-horse, often kicking him merrily, in jest (to derive pleasure when he screeched and groaned). At that time, Bali took pity on Ravana and got him released from captivity¹. (14)

[Note—¹This story in brief is this: Once Ravana went to the nether world (or the subterranean world where he saw the brilliant city of Bali. The gates of Bali’s palace was guarded by Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Ravana overlooked the Lord and forcibly entered the palace of Bali, where he found him playing a board game. Bali saw Ravana standing from the corners of his eyes, but neglected him. The dice with which Bali was playing slipped from his hand and fell at a distance. Treating Ravana as one of his other attendants, Bali asked him to fetch the dice. Ravana tried all his might but could not even move the dice a bit. On the contrary, his fingers got crushed under the weight of the dice and he cried in pain, bleeding profusely. Then, one of the ordinary lady attendants of Bali went and brought back the dice, releasing Ravana’s fingers also. When Bali heard Ravana’s cries, he chided him in most humiliating way, and ordered him to be ejected out of the palace. Outside, Bali’s guards, soldiers etc. caught him and enslaved him. They used to feed him with left-over food and assigned him the job of cleaning the royal horses’ stable, where Ravana had to collect dung and throw it out. The children of the royal guards found in him a toy to play with, and they enjoyed kicking and mocking at him.

Fed up with this agony and incarceration, once when he went out to dump his collection of horse dung he pleaded with Lord Vaaman, who was standing guard at the gates, to have mercy on him and help him escape. At this, Vaaman flung him with the tip of his big toe, and Ravana flew into the sky like a mosquito, landing in Lanka. He felt glad as if he has been born again.

This story is narrated in: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 102-116.]

एक बहोरि सहसभुज देखा । धाड़ धरा जिमि जंतु बिसेषा ॥ १५ ॥

कौतुक लागि भवन लै आवा । सो पुलस्ति मुनि जाइ छोड़ावा ॥ १६ ॥

ēka bahōri sahasabhuja dēkhā. dhā'i dharā jimi jantu bisēṣā. 15.
kautuka lāgi bhavana lai āvā. sō pulasti muni jā'i chōṛāvā. 16.

Then I have heard of another Ravana who was once seen by the thousand-armed king named Sahastrabahu. Thinking Ravana to be a strange creature (with his ten heads and twenty arms), he (Sahastrabahu) rushed forward and caught hold of him. (15)

Out of curiosity, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana home (just like a person would bring home some new specimen he discovers somewhere, to keep him as a show-piece in his palace). At that time, sage Pulastya had come to Ravana's rescue by going to Sahastrabahu and getting him freed¹. (16)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22 where Hanuman too cites this episode concerning Sahastrabahu and Ravana.

This story is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-57; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.

Briefly it is as follows: Sahastrabahu, meaning 'someone with a thousand arms', was the son of Kritvirya and the king of Mahishmati situated on the banks of river Narmada. By the blessings of sage Dattatreya he could get a thousand arms when he so desired. One day when he was enjoying himself with his ladies and mistresses in the river, Ravana had too gone there to offer worship to Lord Shiva. Ravana's attendants had collected flowers for offering to Lord Shiva. In the meantime, Sahastrabahu, who was showing off his majesty to impress the women, had used his thousand arms to block the flow of water in the river, which therefore flooded the banks and flowed upstream. The flowers that Ravana's attendants had collected for worship were washed away, which gravely annoyed Ravana as it disrupted his worship. On learning the cause of this flood, Ravana immediately went to challenge Sahastrabahu and started a fierce battle with his soldiers. Upon learning that Ravana has destroyed the entire army, Sahastrabahu himself came to face him. A severe battle ensued. As soon as the chief commander of the demon army, named Prahasta, fell, the rest of the demons fled; and then followed a one-to-one duel between Ravana and Sahastrabahu. These two mighty warriors used massive war-maces to hit each other. Finally, Sahastrabahu hit Ravana so hard that he tottered and swooned, and was so dazed that he sat down to recover himself. Seizing the moment, Sahastrabahu captured Ravana and held him tight in his thousand arms, using these

arms like ropes to ensnare him so firmly that Ravana could not wriggle out. After this, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana to his capital city and imprisoned him like an ordinary prisoner of war. Later on, sage Pulastya went to plead with Sahastrabahu, and he not only succeeded in getting Ravana released but also in forging a friendship between the two. {This version is according to Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33.}

दो०. एक कहत मोहि सकुच अति रहा बालि कीं काँख ।
इन्ह महुँ रावन तैं कवन सत्य बदहि तजि माख ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

ēka kahata mōhi sakuca ati rahā bāli kīm kām̐kha.
inha mahum̐ rāvana taim̐ kavana satya badahi taji mākha. 24.

[Angad continued with his taunts—] I feel hesitant and reluctant to speak of one other of such Ravana who was kept tucked under the arm pit of Baali (my father)¹.

Now, I prithee, please tell me which of the above Ravana I have mentioned are you? Leave aside deceit and pretensions, and be honest in informing me about your true identity; about who you actually are amongst the Ravana I have cited herein above?' (Doha no. 24)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 22 where Hanuman too cites this episode concerning Baali and Ravana.]

चौ०. सुनु सठ सोइ रावन बलसीला । हरगिरि जान जासु भुज लीला ॥ १ ॥
जान उमापति जासु सुराई । पूजेउँ जेहि सिर सुमन चढ़ाई ॥ २ ॥
सिर सरोज निज करन्हि उतारी । पूजेउँ अमित बार त्रिपुरारी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunu saṭha sō'i rāvana balasīlā. haragiri jāna jāsu bhuja līlā. 1.
jāna umāpati jāsu surāī. pūjē'um̐ jēhi sira sumana caṛhāī. 2.
sira sarōja nija karanhi utārī. pūjē'um̐ amita bāra tripurārī. 3.

[Stung by Angad publicly raking up the darker and humiliating side of his past, Ravana felt exasperated and provoked. He decided to counter Angad by highlighting his astounding achievements and exceptional valour by listing all his stupendous feats that had no parallel in history, one by one, the deeds of his which had amazed the whole world and hold it in thrall of Ravana, with awe and fear.]

Ravana lashed back at Angad with a sharp tone, 'Listen you stupid rascal (sunu saṭha). I am a Ravana with exceptional strength, courage, power and valour, the

abilities of whose strong arms and the singularly brave deeds that he had done are well known to Lord Shiva as I had lifted the mountain on which the Lord has his abode (i.e. Mt. Kailash)¹. (1)

I am the Ravana whose courage and bravery are known to Lord Shiva, the husband of goddess Uma (*umāpati*), whom I had worshipped by offering my heads in lieu of flowers². (2)

I have worshipped Lord Tripurari (i.e. Lord Shiva)³ by offering my heads number of times. (3)

[Note—¹Ravana refers to an incident in the past when he had lifted Mt. Kailash along with Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati in order to bring them to his city of Lanka. This episode is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 36-40, 84-89; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-56.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 179.

²This incident is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 26-39, 84-89.

³The word “*tripurārī*” is an honourable name of Lord Shiva for the following reasons: (i) The word indicates that Lord Shiva is the Lord of the whole world consisting of three divisions, viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether; (ii) He had slayed a demon by the name of Tripura, hence called “Tripurari”.]

भुज बिक्रम जानहिं दिगपाला । सठ अजहूँ जिन्ह कें उर साला ॥ ४ ॥

जानहिं दिग्गज उर कठिनाई । जब जब भिरउँ जाइ बरिआई ॥ ५ ॥

जिन्ह के दसन कराल न फूटे । उर लागत मूलक इव टूटे ॥ ६ ॥

bhuja bikrama jānahim digapālā. saṭha ajahūṁ jinha kēm ura sālā. 4.

jānahim diggaja ura kaṭhināī. jaba jaba bhira'um jā'i bari'āī. 5.

jinha kē dasana karāla na phūṭē. ura lāgata mūlaka iva ṭūṭē. 6.

Oh you wicked fellow (*saṭha*)! The Dikpals (custodians of the world; the junior gods)¹ know the valour and the strength of my arms, because their hearts are still burning and feeling hurt by the terror I had struck in them². (4)

Not only that; the many Diggajs (legendary elephants who support the earth by holding it aloft from underneath it)³ know how tuff and impenetrable my chest is, for whenever I went to clash with them [5], they tried to strike me and pierce my heart with their long and strong tusks, only to discover that their sharp tusks failed to pierce my chest but themselves broke up into small fragments [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹There are said to be 10 Dikpals (also called Diggals), the junior gods, who are assigned the task of caring for the part of the world under their care:

According to the Purans and Ram Purvatapiniyopanishad, canto 4, verse no. 38-39, there are ten Dikpals who are the Gods who act as the guardians or custodians or protectors of the ten directions of the world. These legendary figures support the world from all the directions of the compass. They have been described in Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse nos. 38-39. Let us see what this Upanishad has to say—

“Canto 4, verse no. 38 = These ten Dikpals are the following—Indra who is the king of Gods and who has a thousand eyes on his body, and is therefore called ‘Sahastraaksha’, Agni or the Fire God, Yam or the God of Dharma (i.e. the God responsible to ensure that the great tenets of righteousness and proper conduct are observed by the creatures, and to punish those who violate these laws), Niritiya (also known as Nairitya), Varun or the Water God, Anil or the Wind God, Indu or the Moon God, Ishan or Lord Shiva, Brahma the creator, and Anant or Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its hoods and upon whom the supreme Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean (the word also refers to Vishnu himself in his infinite form as the Viraat Purush) (38).”

According to some versions, there are eight Dikpals. In this version, only the Brahma who is the patron deity of the zenith, and Anant or Vishnu who takes care of the nadir direction are removed.

Hence, out of the ten Dikpaals, only eight are counted. These are the custodians or protectors of the eight directions as follows—Indra (the king of Gods) takes care of the east, Yama (the God of death) takes care of the south, Varun (Water God) takes care of the west, Kuber (the Gods’ treasurer) takes care of the north, Agni (the Fire God) takes care of the south-east, Surya (the Sun God) takes care of the south-west, Vayu (the Wind God) takes care of the north-west, and Ishan (Shiva) takes care of the north-east.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 182.

³The Diggajs: There are said to be 8 ‘Diggaj’ who support the earth from eight directions or corners. These Diggajs are believed to be strong and muscular ‘elephants’ stationed at eight strategic points in eight directions of the earth to support it from rolling or toppling over. The word ‘Diggaj’ itself means anyone who is very strong and muscular.

According to the Purans, these eight directions and their respective Diggajs are the following—(i) in the north, the Diggaj (elephant) is known as ‘Saarvabhoum’; (ii) in the north-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Suprateek or Saptateek’; (iii) in the east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Airaawat’; (iv) in the south-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pundareek’; (v) in the south, the Diggaj is known as ‘Vaaman’; (vi) in the south-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Kumud’; (vii) in the west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Anjan’; and (viii) in the north-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pushpa-danta’.

However, according to Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 40, verse nos. 14, 18, 20 and 22, when king Sagar’s sons went to dig the earth in search of the horse of the sacrifice that had gone missing, they saw only four Diggajs as follows—(i) in the east they saw the Diggaj named ‘Virupaaksha’, (ii) in the south, the Diggaj named ‘Maha-padma’, (iii) in the west, the Diggaj named ‘Saumnas’ (pronounced as Saw+um+nus), and (iv) in the north, the Diggaj named ‘Bhadra’.

These Diggajs are referred to in Tulsidas’ epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 254 as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that

precede Doha no. 260 in the context of Lord Ram breaking the bow. In the first instance, when Laxman became angry, these Diggajs shifted from the place out of fear, and in the second instance Laxman alerted them to be careful and hold the earth properly so that it does not topple over when Lord Ram prepared to lift and break Lord Shiva's bow in order to marry Sita.]

जासु चलत डोलति इमि धरनी । चढ़त मत्त गज जिमि लघु तरनी ॥ ७ ॥
सोइ रावन जग बिदित प्रतापी । सुनेहि न श्रवन अलीक प्रलापी ॥ ८ ॥

jāsu calata ḍōlati imi dharanī. carhata matta gaja jimi laghu taranī. 7.
sō'i rāvana jaga bidita pratāpī. sunēhi na śravana alīka pralāpī. 8.

I am that Ravana who makes the earth shake whenever he walks on its surface¹ just like a boat that rocks on the water at the time a wild elephant steps into it. (7)

Mind you, I am that world famous Ravana of whom I have told you just now.

Oh you loud-mouthed and vain fellow who talks in an incoherent and delirious way about irrelevant things that have no substance in them (alīka pralāpī)! Say, have you never heard of me and my glories (that you babble about nonsense things)!? (8)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 182.]

दो०. तेहि रावन कहँ लघु कहसि नर कर करसि बखान ।
रे कपि बर्बर खर्ब खल अब जाना तव ग्यान ॥ २५ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi rāvana kaham' laghu kahasi nara kara karasi bakhāna.
rē kapi barbara kharba khala aba jānā tava gyāna. 25.

How durst thou call that Ravana small, inept and inconsequential, and instead choose to praise the glories of a human being?

Oh you uncivilised, lowly, wicked and ignorant monkey (kapi barbara kharba khala)! Now I have realised how much knowledge and intelligence you have!

[To wit, now I understand that you are good for nothing, a complete idiot who does not even know what he is speaking about.]' (Doha no. 25)

चौ०. सुनि अंगद सक्रोध कह बानी । बोलु सँभारि अधम अभिमानी ॥ १ ॥
सहसबाहु भुज गहन अपारा । दहन अनल सम जासु कुठारा ॥ २ ॥
जासु परसु सागर खर धारा । बूड़े नृप अगनित बहु बारा ॥ ३ ॥
तासु गर्ब जेहि देखत भागा । सो नर व्योँ दससीस अभागा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

sunī aṅgada sakōpa kaha bānī. bōlu samḃhāri adhama abhimānī. 1.
 sahasabāhu bhuja gahana apārā. dahana anala sama jāsū kuṭhārā. 2.
 jāsū parasu sāgara khara dhārā. būrē nṛpa aganita bahu bārā. 3.
 tāsū garba jēhi dēkhata bhāgā. sō nara kyōm dasasīsa abhāgā. 4.

When Angad heard what Ravana had to say, he became extremely enraged and struck back vehemently at Ravana, ‘Mind your words and what you say, oh you fallen and boastful fellow (adhama abhimānī). (1)

[Now, Angad would cite an incidence where the great sage Parashuram—known for his fiery anger and quick temper, as he used to cut-off the head of anyone with whom he was annoyed, with his famed battle-axe—had come, fretting and fuming, to take revenge upon Lord Ram for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva which culminated in his marriage with Sita, but he had to finally surrender before the Lord as he was unable to vent his wrath upon him, surely because of Lord Ram’s majesty as well as some supernatural powers and divine aura that he possessed which prevailed upon Parashuram to make him submissive and docile, and finally yield before the Lord. This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

He (a reference to sage Parashuram) whose battle-axe was like a wild fire that could burn the dense forest symbolized by the thousand arms of Sahastrabahu¹, --- (2)

--- And countless great warrior kings had drowned in the rapid current of the ocean symbolized by the sharp edges of whose battle-axe², --- (3)

--- Even his (i.e. sage Parashuram’s) pride of being an invincible warrior before whom no one could stand his ground (for the sage’s wrath was fiery as the fire, and his battle-axe was like the mighty ocean during a fierce storm that could capsize the largest of ships)—well even his pride was chased away (i.e. it was vanquished; subdued; neutralised) when he saw him (Lord Ram).

[To wit, when sage Parashuram tried his best to raise his battle-axe to strike at Lord Ram and his brother Laxman to punish them, his strength failed him; his arms would not rise with the axe. This surprised the sage, and he wondered what may have caused him to fail to vent his ire. Surely there must be some mysterious reason which he initially failed to comprehend, but which gradually dawned upon his mind. By-and-by he realised who Lord Ram actually was, that he was not a human prince but the Supreme Lord himself in a human form, and with this realisation he immediately surrendered before the Lord and regretted for his angry behaviour.]³

Oh you unfortunate ten-headed Ravana (dasasīsa abhāgā)! Is such a person a human being as you think and claim him to be?

[To wit, don’t you have any intelligence in you to understand what is obvious? Are you so stupid? You call me stupid, but I think it is you who is one such. Well, tell me, if Lord Ram is an ordinary human being as you profess him to be, then would he have escaped the wrath of sage Parashuram who was famous for not sparing anyone whom he decided to punish? Parashuram had himself boasted of it when he said that he had eliminated countless kings who offended him by killing them in the battle-field, with his battle-axe. Say, would he have spared Lord Ram, especially when he had come with the express purpose to punish him for breaking Lord Shiva’s bow⁵? Since Parashuram failed to harm the Lord—and he had himself wondered that there is

surely some mystical reason why he is unable to harm the Lord, why his arms fail him in raising his axe against the Lord—surely then there must be some reason behind it. Are you so big a fool that you are unable to add two and two together to arrive at an obvious conclusion, which is so evident that even a blind man would see it, that Lord Ram is surely and definitely not a human being, but a manifested form of the Supreme Being.] (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 272.

The story in brief is as follows: There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’. Once he approached the Ocean and asked who was stronger than him. The Ocean told him that sage Jamdagni’s son Parashuram was a fit match for him and would welcome him in battle. Such was Sahastraarjun’s sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as ‘Kamdhenu’ or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni’s brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. {This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat’s Aashwamedhik Parva.}

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriyas to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

A slight variation of this story appears in Mahabharat, Vanparva. According to this version, when the thousand-armed king known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ had taken away Jamdagni’s all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu, Parashuram rushed to cut all the arms of Sahastraarjun as punishment. Sahastraarjun’s kith and kin came back to the hermitage of Jamdagni when Parashuram was not there, and took revenge by killing the sage. Parashuram’s mother grieved and wailed woefully. When Parashuram came back and discovered what had happened, he promised his mother that he would take revenge, and vowed to kill all the Kshatriya kings on the surface of the earth to avenge Sahastraarjun’s killing of his father. So in this way he had also fulfilled the wishes of his mother.

Sage Parashuram had avenged his father’s death by killing the Kshatriya kings because one of the members of this race, king Sahastraarjun, had killed his father sage Jamdagni.

In Mahabharat, Shantiparva, Canto 49, verse nos. 45-47 it is mentioned that it was Sahatraarjun's son who had stolen the Kamdhenu cow, and not Sahastraarjun himself.

It ought to be noted that 'Sahastraarjun' is also known as 'Sahastrabaahu' because he had a thousand arms.

Now, after unnecessarily killing so many innocent Kshatriya kings, who had committed no offence, just to avenge his father's death at the hands of Sahastraarjun, sage Parashuram was severely criticized by the community of Brahmins, which made the sage contrite and full of guilt. So, with a somber and disgusted mood, he went to the forest to do penance. At that time, sage Vishwamitra's grandson named Paraivasu came to him and teased him, saying, 'A fire sacrifice was done recently in which so many countless Kshatriya kings had come. But you did not kill any of them, thereby disobeying the promise you had made to your mother and have also violated your own vows. This is a sin in itself.' Peeved and instigated, Parashuram rose immediately and went berserk, killing and hacking all the kings and their kith and kin at random. Their pregnant wives somehow escaped by hiding here and there. After this, Parashuram performed a Horse Sacrifice known as the 'Ashwamedh Yajya', and gave the entire land (earth) that he had snatched from the kings to sage Kashyap as donation or gift during this sacrifice.

Sage Kashyap was wise, and he was worried that if some way out is not found then one day Parashuram will create such a situation by repeatedly killing kings that there would be no one to take care of the creatures who inhabit the planet, because the main function of the Kshatriya kings was to look after the welfare of the subjects of their kingdoms and protect the earth from marauding savages.

So Kashyap told Parashuram, 'Now that you have given me this earth as a gift, it belongs to me, and henceforth you have no right to kill any of its inhabitants (including of course the kings). You go to the shore of the southern ocean and do Tapa there.' After this, Parashuram lived on the shore of the southern ocean during the day, and left the earth during the night.

This version of the story is clearly mentioned in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 25-26, and Canto 76, verse nos. 13-14.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

राम मनुज कस रे सठ बंगा । धन्वी कामु नदी पुनि गंगा ॥ ५ ॥

पसु सुरधेनु कल्पतरु रूखा । अन्न दान अरु रस पीयूषा ॥ ६ ॥

rāma manuja kasa rē saṭha baṅgā. dhanvī kāmu nadī puni gaṅgā. 5.
pasu suradhēnu kalpataru rūkhā. anna dāna aru rasa pīyūṣā. 6.

[Chiding Ravana for calling Lord Ram an ordinary human, Angad uses some obvious analogies in the following four verses to drive home his point—that Lord Ram is not an ordinary man but a divine Being.]

Oh you obstinate and arrogant rascal (saṭha baṅgā)! How come Lord Ram is a human being? Tell me, is Kamdeo (the patron god of passion) an ordinary warrior who holds a bow¹? Is the river Ganges an ordinary river²? [The obvious answer is a firm ‘no’, that they aren’t so.] (5)

Is it not foolish to call any sundry animal as being a ‘Sura-dhenu (the holy cow of the gods)³, or to say that the evergreen tree known as ‘Kalpa-taru’ has dried up⁴?

Similarly, is giving food as alms (to the hungry) equivalent to an ordinary charity⁵, and is the ambrosia of life known as Amrit an ordinary juice (or liquid)⁶? (6)

[Note—¹Kamdeo is the mythological god of love and passion. He holds a mystical bow symbolized by hidden passions in a creature, and he shoots arrows laced with passion, love and lust to subjugate the prey, the target, represented by the beloved whom the lover, the holder of the symbolic bow and the shooter of the arrow, wishes to capture.

Kamdeo’s bow is made of a creeper bearing colourful flowers, and the flowers are the arrows themselves. Kamdeo does not hunt his prey by using hard bow or sharp arrows made of metal. So, it is wrong to equate him with an ordinary hunter or a warrior who would use conventional bow and arrow to shoot down the target.

²River Ganges is regarded as a holy river descending from the heaven; it is the river of the gods. Therefore, it is not an ordinary terrestrial river like the rest of them. Hence, to call Ganges as merely a river will be undermining its holy character, and therefore wrong.

³Sura-dhenu is also known as ‘Kamdhenu, the holy cow of the heaven which fulfils all wishes if worshipped and served with faith. So to compare it with an ordinary cow or any other four-footed animal would be nothing but stupidity.

⁴The Kalpa-taru is the tree of heaven. It is an evergreen tree that grants everything one desires from it. It never dries up. So to say that the Kalpa-taru is dry is height of nonsense.

⁵Food sustains life; it is the basis of life; it has a divine element in it. No other gift is as precious as giving food to the needy. So therefore, to equate ‘food’ with other ordinary forms of gifts or alms such as cloth, material goods etc., is foolish.

⁶Amrit is the ambrosia that grants eternity; it has mystical powers to heal. So it cannot be likened to any other kind of juice or liquid.]

बैनतेय खग अहि सहसानन । चिंतामनि पुनि उपल दसानन ॥ ७ ॥

सुनु मतिमंद लोक बैकुंठा । लाभ कि रघुपति भगति अकुंठा ॥ ८ ॥

bainatēya khaga ahi sahasānana. cintāmani puni upala dasānana. 7.

sunu matimanda lōka baikunṭhā. lābha ki raghupati bhagati akunṭhā. 8.

Is the son of Vintaa (“**bainatēya**”; i.e. Garud, the legendary bird who is a mount of Lord Vishnu) an ordinary bird¹?

Is the Sheshnath (the legendary celestial serpent who holds the universe on his thousand hoods) an ordinary serpent²?

And oh the ten-headed³ Ravana, is ‘Chintamani’ (a unique gem that eliminates all worries) an ordinary stone⁴? (7)

Oh you dull-witted fellow with an abysmally low intellect (**matimanda**)! Listen to me: Is Vaikuntha (the eternal heaven; the abode of Lord Vishnu; from where there is no coming back to this mortal world) an ordinary place or habitat⁵?

Is having devotion for Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) an ordinary reward or benefit that one can expect to have in this world⁶? (8)

[Note—¹It is erroneous to call Garud an ordinary bird. It is derogatory to do so.

²Likewise, it is absolutely inaccurate and unacceptable to liken the Sheshnath with an ordinary serpent.

³Angad has called Ravana as a ‘ten-headed’ one to mean that a person with one head would not say such foolish things, but you have ten instead of just one head, which means you ought to be ten times more intelligent and wise than others, yet you are so dumb as to think and talk of such nonsense.

⁴The Chintamani is a rare gemstone which removes all sorts of wants and worries in a person who possesses it. So it is surely not an ordinary gemstone.

⁵Vaikuntha is the heaven where the soul finds eternity. It is a place where there is beatitude and bliss. It is the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Brahm, the Supreme Being. Hence it cannot be compared to any other habitat, whether in this mortal world or even to other lower levels of heaven.

⁶No, it isn’t. Having ‘Bhakti’ or devotion for the Supreme Being, manifested as Lord Ram, is a very special spiritual blessing that only a few fortunate persons are able to avail.]

दो०. सेन सहित तव मान मथि बन उजारि पुर जारि।

कस रे सठ हनुमान कपि गयउ जो तव सुत मारि ॥ २६ ॥

dōhā.

sēna sahita tava māna mathi bana ujāri pura jāri.

kasa rē saṭha hanumāna kapi gaya'u jō tava suta māri. 26.

Oh you stupid and wicked fellow (**saṭha**)! Is Hanuman an ordinary monkey who had trashed and crushed your (false sense of) pride and ego along with the (imagined) might of your (so-called invincible) army, besides ruining your favourite garden (called the Ashok Van), burning your city (of Lanka), and killing your son (Akshaya Kumar)¹? (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹To wit, you claim that you had vanquished the Diggals and the Diggajs very easily, and they are terrified of you (Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 25), and the earth trembles like a rocking boat on a rough sea when you move about in anger (Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 25), well tell me then, where was all your valour and strength and courage and the might of your arms, of which you boast so much, and of which you are so proud, at that time when Hanuman had caused so extensive damage to Lanka, trounced your army, crushed your pride and self-esteem, destroyed your garden, and worse, killed even your son?

Well, why couldn't you stop him; why couldn't you punish him; why did you let him go unharmed from Lanka; where were your famed valour and strength and courage and might of arms at that time? Was it ever possible that Hanuman would have mustered courage to do what he did, and be successful in doing it all alone, inspite of the overbearing presence of your mighty self as well as your mighty army that surrounded him from all sides, if he was an ordinary 'monkey' as you think him to be? How dumb-witted and block-headed are you as to not see what is obvious and staring you in the face?]

चौ०. सुनु रावन परिहरि चतुराई । भजसि न कृपासिंधु रघुराई ॥ १ ॥

जौं खल भएसि राम कर द्रोही । ब्रह्म रुद्र सक राखि न तोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu rāvana parihari caturāī. bhajasi na kṛpāsindhu raghurāī. 1.

jauṁ khala bha'ēsi rāma kara drōhī. brahma rudra saka rākhi na tōhī. 2.

[Angad continued—] Listen Ravana, to my (good and friendly) advice. Say, why don't you worship and adore Lord Ram ("raghurāī"; the Lord of the Raghu's line of kings of Ayodhya), who is like an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpāsindhu), after abandoning your stubborn nature, your obstinate hypocrisy, and your pretensions of being very clever and wise (parihari caturāī)¹? (1)

Oh you rascal (khala)! [I warn you that—] If you remain opposed and hostile to Lord Ram, then no one would be able to protect and save you, not even the creator Brahma nor Lord Rudra (Lord Shiva's that angry form which brings an end to creation)². (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 200.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 23, where a similar warning has been given to Ravana by Hanuman.]

मूढ़ बृथा जनि मारसि गाला । राम बयर अस होइहि हाला ॥ ३ ॥

तव सिर निकर कपिन्ह के आगें । परिहहिं धरनि राम सर लागें ॥ ४ ॥

ते तव सिर कंदुक सम नाना । खेलिहहिं भालु कीस चौगाना ॥ ५ ॥

mūrha br̥thā jani mārasi gālā. rāma bayara asa hō'ihī hālā. 3.
tava sira nikara kapinha kē āgēm̐. parihahim̐ dharani rāma sara lāgēm̐. 4.
tē tava sira kanduka sama nānā. khēlihahim̐ bhālu kīsa caugānā. 5.

Oh you utter fool (mūrha)! Don't brag and unnecessarily talk boastfully in a vain manner. If you are hostile to Lord Ram (and are determined to be so) then your fate will be that --- (3)

--- Your heads would be cut off by Lord Ram's arrows, and they will fall to the ground in front of the monkeys (and bears, that constitute the Lord's army) --- (4)

--- And the bears and the monkeys (bhālu kīsa) will use your fallen heads as balls to play a game of football. [To wit, the bears and monkeys would kick your severed heads all around the battle-field like two teams play a game of football in a sports stadium.] (5)

जबहिं समर कोपिहि रघुनायक । छुटिहिं अति कराल बहु सायक ॥ ६ ॥
तब कि चलिहि अस गाल तुम्हारा । अस बिचारि भजु राम उदारा ॥ ७ ॥
सुनत बचन रावन परजरा । जरत महानल जनु घृत परा ॥ ८ ॥

jabahim̐ samara kōpihi raghunāyaka. chuṭihahim̐ ati karāla bahu sāyaka. 6.
taba ki calihī asa gāla tumhārā. asa bicāri bhaju rāma udārā. 7.
sunata bacana rāvana parajarā. jarata mahānala janū ghr̥ta parā. 8.

When Lord Ram (raghunāyaka) becomes angry in the battle-field and shoots volleys of many sharp arrows (at you) --- (6)

--- Tell me, will your boast and bluster work then; will you be able to save yourself by vain bravery and false valour?

Think of it. Consider this matter seriously before it is too late. Be wise and prudent to realise that it will be in your own interest to pay homage to Lord Ram, who is gracious, charitable, magnanimous and benevolent by his very nature (rāma udārā)¹. (7)

When Ravana heard these words (of Angad), he flared up vehemently in anger, as if oil was poured in an already lighted fire. (8)

[Note—¹Angad basically advises Ravana to abandon his animosity and hostility with Lord Ram, to make amends and make friendship with him. Ravana ought not to have any doubts if Lord Ram would forgive him for the evil things he had done in the past, because the Lord is large-hearted and very kind and gracious; he is benevolent and magnanimous. So he will welcome Ravana without reservations, and the Lord will not do any thing that would embarrass Ravana in the least.

But if Ravana continues with his foolishness and stubbornness to go ahead to fight Lord Ram, then he is surely and definitely doomed.

There are other places in the Text of 'Ram Charit Manas' where these glorious virtues of Lord Ram are highlighted—e.g. in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that

precedes Doha no. 57, Ravana's spy named Suka also tells him exactly the same thing.]

दो०. कुंभकरन अस बंधु मम सुत प्रसिद्ध सक्रारि ।
मोर पराक्रम नहिं सुनेहि जितेउँ चराचर झारि ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

kumbhakarana asa bandhu mama suta prasid'dha sakrāri.
mōra parākrama nahim sunēhi jitē'um' carācara jhāri. 27.

[Ravana shouted back at Angad. He angrily said—] 'I have a famous brother by the name of Kumbhakaran (literally one whose ears are large like a big pitcher or jar)¹, and an equally famous son (named Meghanad) who had vanquished Indra (the king of gods)².

Have you not heard of my valour and achievements that I have conquered all the gods as well as every other creature in this creation³? (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹ Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 180.

² Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182.

The story of Meghanad (so called because his voice was as loud and resounding as the clap of thunder) vanquishing Indra is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 78-81; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 50-54. Since Meghanad had conquered Indra, he is also called 'Indrajeet', one who has won Indra.

This story in brief is this: Once, after conquering Varun (God of water) and Yama (God of hell), Ravana attacked Indra (the king of Gods). Indra captured Ravana and took him as a prisoner. When Meghanad heard of his father's imprisonment by Indra, he attacked heaven and not only freed his father Ravana but took Indra as a prisoner and brought him to Lanka. The creator Brahma then went to Lanka and prevailed upon Meghanad to free Indra by granting him (Meghanad) many boons to make a deal for freedom of Indra.

³ Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-13 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

चौ०. सठ साखामृग जोरि सहाई । बाँधा सिंधु इहइ प्रभुताई ॥ १ ॥
नाघहिं खग अनेक बारीसा । सूर न होहिं ते सुनु सब कीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saṭha sākhāmṛga jōri sahā'ī. bām'dhā sindhu iha'i prabhutā'ī. 1.
nāghahim khaga anēka bārīsā. sūra na hōhim tē sunu saba kīsā. 2.

Ravana scornfully tried to prove Angad's glorification of Lord Ram as completely contrary to facts by saying, tauntingly, 'You blockhead (*saṭha*)! Is collecting a motley crowd of 'monkeys' (here the term is used in a derogatory sense) and getting a ramshackle bridge built over the surface of the ocean (to cross it) called valour, bravery, and a gallantry deed¹? (1)

Why, so many ordinary birds can easily cross the same ocean by simply flying over it, and none of these humble creatures do a great deed of bravery or gallantry by doing so. So therefore, what is the great deal in it (i.e. in Lord Ram crossing the ocean on a rickety bridge put in place by monkeys throwing boulders and rocks in the water, blocking its flow)²? (2)

[Note—¹Ravana continued to use derogatory remarks for Lord Ram and undermine his greatness by arguing that certain events that recently happened certainly go to prove that the Lord was just an ordinary human being like the rest of them, and not the divine Being as he is portrayed to be by his loyal and sycophantic messengers, now Angad and previously Hanuman.

All of Angad's assertions about Lord Ram's glory, majesty and greatness are hollow, and nothing but a biased effort at exaggeration and bending of facts to suit one's view of the world, and to gloss over the dark reality by painting things with a colourful brush that lacks even the colour that is imagined to be painted.

The term "monkey" is obviously used in a derogatory sense here, to mean jokers and foolish creatures who make a lot of vain noises, and who would jump and hop to please their masters.

²To wit, Ravana asked Angad: "Tell me, what great achievement has been accomplished in getting across the ocean with the help of a bridge put in place by "monkeys"? There are so many birds that cross the ocean almost daily, and it is natural to them to do so. So will anyone call a bird brave for doing some gallantry deed for merely flying across the surface of the ocean, which is a matter of habit for them?

If your Lord, whom you praise so much in lavish terms and are in some much awe of, actually had some divine and mystical powers, as you claim him to possess, then why couldn't he just stand on the shore of the ocean, raise his two hands in the direction of Lanka, and order the ocean to part in the middle to form a pathway in this direction, by which he and his army could simply walk across? Or else, why couldn't he use his so-called fiery and invincible arrows to just dry up the ocean or kill its deity, forcing the ocean to surrender, instead of pleading for a way across it, as he had actually done?

Tell me, why could he not simply tell everyone to close their eyes for a while, wave his arms in a circle like a magician swings his wand to invoke some magical charm, and create the bridge by magic, using his mystical powers, so that when everyone opened their eyes they would see the bridge already built!?

Well, well; don't try to gloss over facts and turn them on their heads just to support things of your imagination, things that are conjured up by your hallucinating mind, things which are just that—colourful imaginations of a delirious mind—and nothing else.

To wit, you fellows have been so conditioned to believe that your master, Lord Ram, is a divine Being, some supernatural Power; so you go around the world parroting the things you have been taught to believe, that you have become habituated

to believe, without using your own brains to see whether what you are saying makes any sense or not. That is why I call your crowd a collection of ‘monkeys’, a jostling crowd of cheap jesters and silly pranksters!”]

मम भुज सागर बल जल पूरा । जहँ बूड़े बहु सुर नर सूर । ३ ॥
 बीस पयोधि अगाध अपारा । को अस बीर जो पाइहि पारा ॥ ४ ॥
 दिगपालन्ह मैं नीर भरावा । भूप सुजस खल मोहि सुनावा ॥ ५ ॥

mama bhuja sāgara bala jala pūrā. jaham̐ būṛē bahu sura nara sūrā. 3.
 bīsa payōdhi agādha apārā. kō asa bīra jō pā'ihī pārā. 4.
 digapālanha mair̐ nīra bharāvā. bhūpa sujasa khala mōhi sunāvā. 5.

Mind you; my strong arms are also like the mighty ocean, and they are filled with an immense reservoir of water symbolising the immensity and the greatness of my gallantry, strength, valour and powers. Countless gods and humans, who were brave, powerful, valiant and gallant in their own right, had been drowned in this ocean¹.

[To wit, I have vanquished, subdued and crushed all the powerful forces of this creation by the might of my arms. No one worth his name, who would like to call himself a brave, courageous and valiant warrior, has escaped me and whom I have not conquered.] (3)

I have twenty such arms, and you can imagine the combined strength and power that they together possess. Well, where in this world is that brave warrior, who may boast of his valour and gallantry, that he would be able to measure up to the combined strength and majesty of my all the twenty arms, who could stand his ground before me and my might? [Surely there is none.]² (4)

I have got this ‘ocean’ (symbolized by my arms) filled with water by forcing the mighty Dikpals (the many gods who are the custodians of the world) into submission³.

And here you are, a wretched fellow, making me listen to false glories of a human king (i.e. of Lord Ram)⁴! (5)

[Note—¹Here, Ravana compares his arms to the ocean, and their immense strength to the immeasurable volume of water that is present in the physical ocean.

²The meaning of the analogy of the ‘ocean’ that Ravana uses is evident. He means that if Lord Ram could not overcome the obstacle created by an ordinary ocean, if he could not cross an ordinary reservoir of water known as the ocean that so many birds cross almost on a daily basis, how could the Lord imagine that he would be able to overcome (cross) another mighty ‘ocean’, symbolized by the combined might of Ravana’s powerful arms, that is twenty times more formidable and difficult to overcome (to get across) than the ordinary water-filled reservoir that the world prefers to call an ocean? To wit, it’s impossible; it’s nothing but wild imagination.

³“I have continuously vanquished one god after another, adding one feather after another to my glory, adding up to my tally of victories and gallantry deeds. The more conquests I make, the more power I add to my arms, because more number of gods are under my orders, and they would be forced to fight with me as my allies in any

conflict. This means each victory over gods adds to my strength and power as a king and ruler of the world.”

⁴“Here I am who had forced the mighty gods into submission, and you are compelling me to listen to your vain lecture lauding the imaginary glories of an ordinary human king whom you believe to be the supreme Lord. Woe to you and to your intelligence. I indeed pity you and your sick wisdom.”]

जौं पै समर सुभट तव नाथा । पुनि पुनि कहसि जासु गुन गाथा ॥ ६ ॥
तौ बसीठ पठवत केहि काजा । रिपु सन प्रीति करत नहिं लाजा ॥ ७ ॥
हरगिरि मथन निरखु मम बाहू । पुनि सठ कपि निज प्रभुहि सराहू ॥ ८ ॥

jaurṁ pai samara subhaṭa tava nāthā. puni puni kahasi jāsu guna gāthā. 6.
tau basīṭha paṭhavata kēhi kājā. ripu sana prīti karata nahim lājā. 7.
haragiri mathana nirakhu mama bāhū. puni saṭha kapi nija prabhuhi sarāhū.
8.

If your Lord, whom you repeatedly praise so much in glowing terms, is really as brave, strong, powerful and courageous as you claim him to be (or make him out to be), why then, tell me, is he sending a messenger. Ain't he ashamed of himself and his valour for trying to make peace with an arch enemy?¹ (6-7)

Oh you stupid monkey (saṭha kapi)! First look here at my robust and powerful arms that had moved even the mighty heavenly abode of Lord Shiva, known as 'Mt. Kailash', and then praise your (weak and imbecile) Lord (Sri Ram)². (8)

[Note—¹“Is your so-called brave, powerful and bold Lord not ashamed to send an emissary to try to make peace with someone who has abducted his wife, and who refuses to give her back? Is this not enough an evidence of his cowardice and false pretensions of valour? How great a fool you are not to understand this?

Why is your Lord, of whom you say that he is very brave and powerful, sending a peace emissary to his arch enemy; isn't he ashamed to strike a deal with someone who has stolen his wife? Why does he not straightforward come and fight with me and take away his wife by trouncing me in an honourable fight, instead of attempting a shameful truce? Surely it indicates he is afraid of facing me in the battle-field, and so is trying to find a face-saving formula.”

Angad answers this sarcastic remark later on in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 30 which we shall be reading soon.

²“Indeed, if you look at my robust arms and understand how strong and powerful they are, had you known that I had easily lifted Mt. Kailash where Lord Shiva lives, which obviously is not a joke, surely you would not have boasted about the glory of your own Lord (Sri Ram). So, either you don't know who I actually am or about my achievements, or you are a completely good-for-nothing blockhead.”]

दो०. सूर कवन रावन सरिस स्वकर काटि जेहिं सीस ।

हुने अनल अति हरष बहु बार साखि गौरीस ॥ २८ ॥

dōhā.

sūra kavana rāvana sarisa svakara kāṭi jēhiṁ sīsa.
hunē anala ati haraṣa bahu bāra sākhi gaurīsa. 28.

Where is another brave and courageous person in this world who can compare himself with Ravana because he had voluntarily, and cheerfully, offered his own heads as a sacrifice in the sacred fire¹? Lord Shiva, the husband of Gauri (goddess Parvati; “gaurīsa”), is a witness of this remarkable heroic deed of his. (Doha no. 28)

[Note—¹This incident is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 49-50.]

चौ०. जरत बिलोकेउँ जबहिं कपाला । बिधि के लिखे अंक निज भाला ॥ १ ॥
नर केँ कर आपन बध बाँची । हसेउँ जानि बिधि गिरा असाँची ॥ २ ॥
सोउ मन समुझि त्रास नहिं मोरें । लिखा बिरंचि जरठ मति भोरें ॥ ३ ॥
आन बीर बल सठ मम आगें । पुनि पुनि कहसि लाज पति त्यागें ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jarata bilōkē'um̐ jabahiṁ kapālā. bidhi kē likhē aṅka nija bhālā. 1.
nara kēm̐ kara āpana badha bām̐cī. hasē'um̐ jāni bidhi girā asām̐cī. 2.
sō'u mana samujhi trāsa nahim̐ mōrēm̐. likhā birañci jaraṭha mati bhōrēm̐. 3.
āna bīra bala saṭha mama āgēm̐. puni puni kahasi lāja pati tyāgēm̐. 4.

[Ravana continued—] ‘At the time when my severed heads (that I had voluntarily offered to the fire sacrifice to please the creator Brahma) were being roasted in the sacrificial fire, I saw that Brahma (the creator of the world, and the god who determines the destiny of all living beings) had subtly written on my forehead¹ that I shall die at the hands of a human being. When I read it, I laughed to myself as it would make a liar of Brahma himself, because it would prove that Brahma’s words were false and inconsequential². (1-2)

Even though I had read it yet I wasn’t alarmed, for I was sure that Brahma had written this by mistake because he is old³, and one who is advanced in age usually commits errors⁴. (3)

Oh you stupid and blockhead of a fellow (saṭha)! How durst you repeatedly sing praises of another warrior before me by abandoning all traces of shame and remnants of self-respect that you might have⁵?’ (4)

[Note—¹It is believed that the destiny of all creatures is written by the creator Brahma on an individual’s forehead at the time of birth. This ‘writing’ is like an edict etched or engraved on stone, and it cannot be either changed or erased.

²Here Ravana is twisting facts to suit him. Actually it was Ravana himself who had asked the creator Brahma to exempt the humans from the list of those from whom he wished to have protection—such as from the gods, spirits, other creatures in the world, including the demons etc.

This episode is narrated in: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 177; (b) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 49-52; (c) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 10-15; and (d) Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 10-26½.

The story in brief is this: When Brahma was pleased by Ravana's sacrifice, in which he had offered his own heads as offerings to the sacred fire, and appeared before him to ask him to seek boons of his choice, he (Ravana) had demanded invincibility and immunity from death at the hands of almost all living beings of virtually all denominations who he thought could overcome and kill him. Brahma thought to himself that this is impossible, because everyone who has taken birth in this mortal world must die; even the gods of heaven, including Brahma himself, has a fixed time of lifespan. No one except the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm', who is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, is eternal, imperishable and infinite.

Brahma thought over the matter quickly, and he quietly summoned Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and speech, and as quietly instructed her to exercise her mystical powers immediately for the sake of the good of this creation by casting her spell of delusions over Ravan's mind and intellect. So, Ravana's wisdom got warped, and he invited his own doom by thinking that if all the great powers in this world, such as the gods, both senior and junior, and the demi-gods such as Yakshas (spirits), Naagas (the lords of the subterranean world) etc, as well as the demons who had similar strength and powers as these entities, in short all the worthwhile powers-that-be in this creation could harm him any longer, how does the human race, whose members are by nature physically weak and scared of facing even ordinary wild animals in the forest, matter?

So, in his overconfidence and arrogance, that after Brahma's boons—and once he had conquered the gods after being protected by these boons—there would be no one left in this creation who would dare face him, he exempted the humans from the list of those from whom he wished to acquire immunity from death, or from whom he had any kind of fear. He regarded the humans as inconsequential and irrelevant like a small piece of twig or blade of grass that could be easily trampled upon, crushed and squashed under his mighty foot which would squeeze the valour and strength and power out of everyone of any worth in this creation, such as the gods and the demons.

Put simply, Ravana thought that if he conquered the powerful gods of heaven, there would be no fear from the human race because these humans themselves seek the blessing and protection of gods in whatever they do. So if their benefactors and patrons and protectors are conquered, the naturally docile and inherently coward human race will feel helpless and unprotected, and would therefore its members, the humans, would durst never oppose Ravana or pose any kind of threat to him, nor create any problem for him.

This exemption of the humans from the list of those from whom Ravana sought protection and immunity from any harm was like him putting the nail to his own coffin, for this little chink in his armour, which he himself made, laid the foundation of his ultimate death. Later on Lord Vishnu would assume the human form of Lord Ram and exploit this loophole in Ravana's defences to get rid of him in the Epic War of Lanka.

This episode of Lord Vishnu assuring the gods and mother earth that he would come down to earth as a human being, in the form of Lord Ram, to eliminate the scourge of Ravana, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 188.

³Ravana acknowledges that alarm bells are ringing inside his heart; that he fears that the exemption to the human beings that he granted at the time when Brahma was giving him boons has now come to haunt him as a ghost, a spectre of the Death God.

But he tries to hide his fear by deceiving himself, making himself believe that perhaps Brahma had made some errors in putting it in ‘writing’—that he will die at the hands of a human being—while fixing his fate and penning the document of his destiny. It was an error on the part of Brahma to do so, because Ravana had merely ‘exempted’ the human being from the list of those from whom he demanded protection, but that does not mean he said ‘let me be killed by a man’. Of course not, for it was not, and would never be, his intention to die at the hands of a humble creature like a man when he wanted immunity from death from all the mighty powers—that-be in this world. It would be ridiculous to expect, and a height of nonsense to believe, that Ravana would invite his own death by asking Brahma in specific terms that ‘a man could kill me’ when he had sought a blanket immunity from death from all the mighty and powerful entities of creation, such as the gods, the demons, the spirits, and the rest of the creatures, small and big.

⁴Brahma is depicted as an aged patriarch of creation, a great-grandfatherly figure. So Ravana says that probably Brahma had made a mistake in ‘writing’ something down as being asked by Ravana himself, when the fact was that he had merely said that he ‘exempted’ the humans from the list of those from whom he seeks protection. That does not mean that he sought ‘death from humans’.

⁵Ravana tries to shame Angad and put him on the defensive by emphasising that the latter does not know the might of the former that he chooses to sing laurels of a human being, here meaning Lord Ram.

As we have observed earlier in this discussion, Brahma had instructed goddess Saraswati to cast her magic spell that created delusions in Ravana’s mind and intellect. Hence, he continued to remain in a world of illusions, a world of his own imagination, thinking that Lord Ram is a human being in spite of being warned to the contrary on various occasions.]

कह अंगद सलज्ज जग माहीं । रावन तोहि समान कोउ नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

लाजवंत तव सहज सुभाऊ । निज मुख निज गुन कहसि न काऊ ॥ ६ ॥

सिर अरु सैल कथा चित रही । ताते बार बीस तैं कही ॥ ७ ॥

सो भुजबल राखेहु उर घाली । जीतेहु सहसबाहु बलि बाली ॥ ८ ॥

kaha aṅgada salajja jaga māhīm. rāvana tōhi samāna kō'u nāhīm. 5.

lājavanta tava sahaja subhā'ū. nija mukha nija guna kahasi na kā'ū. 6.

sira aru saila kathā cita rahī. tātē bāra bīsa taim kahī. 7.

sō bhujabala rākhēhu ura ghālī. jītēhu sahasabāhu bali bālī. 8.

Quoth Angad (as a sharp rejoinder as a step to the final showdown, employing the same sarcastic and contemptuous tone as used by Ravana) to lambaste Ravana, ‘Oh Ravana; surely there is no one in this world who has more shame and greater self-respect than you have! (5)

Indeed, to be modest and humble is your inherent nature, and truly you never boast of your achievements with your own mouth! (6)

Surely then, it is perhaps for this reason (that you are modest and never boast of your achievements) that you have repeatedly spoken, twenty times¹, of the tale concerning your heads (that you had cut repeatedly) and the mountain (i.e. Mt. Kailash that you had lifted)² which you had remembered.

[To wit, since these were the only two achievements you had, and none else whatever which you could cite or recall, you have repeatedly spoken about them umpteen number of times. Surely this is being modest; surely also you have a lot of self-respect that you wish to keep reminding yourself, and remind others as well, about these fantastic successes that no one else in this creation had achieved.] (7)

And why have you concealed in your bosom about the failure of the same strength of your arms that had failed you when you had faced and were humiliated by Sahastrabaahu (the one with a thousand arms)³, Bali (the king of the subterranean world)⁴ and Baali (Angad’s father)⁵?

[To wit, why couldn’t you employ your mighty arms by which you had lifted Mt. Kailash, or the valour and the courage with which you had cut-off your heads, at the time when you were subjected to abject humiliation at the hands of the three great warriors mentioned here? You prefer to speak repeatedly about lifting Mt. Kailash and offering of heads to the fire sacrifice, then why not even once of how you fared in your face-off with these three great warriors I have named above?] (8)

[Note—¹“Speaking twenty times about anything” is a figure of speech to mean that a person repeatedly tells the same old thing over and over again, making a mockery of himself and giving the impression of a vain man who talks ridiculous things. It looks like a big joke upon himself.

This is to answer Ravana’s taunt that Angad is repeatedly praising Lord Ram before him—apropos: verse no. 4 herein above.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 25; and (b) Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

³Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-16 that precede Doha no. 24.

⁴Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 24.

⁵Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24.]

सुनु मतिमंद देहि अब पूरा । काटें सीस कि होइअ सूर ॥ ९ ॥

इंद्रजालि कहूँ कहिअ न बीरा । काटइ निज कर सकल सरीरा ॥ १० ॥

sunu matimanda dēhi aba pūrā. kāṭēm sīsa ki hō'i'a sūrā. 9.
indrajāli kahum' kahi'a na bīrā. kāṭa'i nija kara sakala sarīrā. 10.

Listen oh you blockhead and one with an abysmally low intellect (*matimanda*)! Answer me: Does anyone become a great warrior, and acquire fame and honour, by getting his head cut off?

[To wit, it is something to be highly ashamed of and extremely derogatory for a gallant and courageous warrior to speak of his own head being cut off. It is the most dishonourable and ignoble of things to ever happen to any man of dignity and respect. But the irony is that you, Ravana, boast of it; you speak as if it is something very great to have happened to you, instead of being ashamed of it.] (9)

Look, a magician performing tricks too cuts off his head with his own hands as part of his act, but does anyone call him a great warrior¹? (9)

[Note—¹Angad has used this logic of a magician cutting off the head of an actor, say his assistant, on stage while performing his usual tricks to entertain the audience, to prove that Ravana's boast of cutting his heads is no great deal. Everyone knows that the head cutting by the magician is illusionary, but during the course of the act it appears to be real-life.

Similarly, Ravana seems to living in a fool's paradise if he feels that the world is very impressed by this act of cutting off his own head. Probably he had cut them in an act of illusion to cheat Brahma to grant him boons. Yes, it is possible that he may have done so because demons are known to have magical powers by which they could do things others couldn't.]

दो०. जरहिं पतंग मोह बस भार बहहिं खर बृंद ।
ते नहिं सूर कहावहिं समुझि देखु मतिमंद ॥ २९ ॥

dōhā.

jarahim pataṅga mōha basa bhāra bahahim khara bṛnda.
tē nahim sūra kahāvahim samujhi dēkhu matimanda. 29.

Oh you coxcomb, blockheaded fellow (*matimanda*), think for yourself. So many moths get attracted towards a flame (of a candle or lamp), because of their love for its brilliant light, and get burnt as a consequence; and donkeys carry burden on their backs (thinking that their master loves them and has preferred them over others to serve him, and it's a sort of tribute to their strength and stamina)¹.

Ponder over the matter and tell me: are they (the moths and the donkeys) doing some valiant deed, are they heroes to be acclaimed and sung for their marvellous achievement?¹ (Doha no. 29)

[Note—¹To wit, would anyone not like to call the moths fools to get themselves thus burnt, and the donkeys laughable for breaking their backs and wearing themselves out for nothing that would actually benefit them? Neither of them, the moth or the donkey, are doing something great that would invite honour and applause. Rather, both of them, the moth and the donkey, are making a fool out of themselves, the moth

by going to the flame and dancing around it to die by getting roasted alive, and the donkey by trudging along the path, tiring out its legs and breaking its back, bearing heavy load on its back. Say, if the moth chirps and the donkey brays proudly that they have been valiant, and had done a gallant and glorious deed, wouldn't one laugh at their stupidity and call them utterly dumb?

Similarly, no case is made out in Ravana's favour, quoth Angad, to showcase his valour and glory that deserve any kind of applause and honour by the two proofs he has given, one of cutting his heads, and the second of lifting Mt. Kailash. It is just like moths voluntarily jumping in the fire to burn themselves because the creator had destined their death in this ignominious manner, and the donkeys lifting burdens because they are meant to do so by the creator who made them beasts of burden.

Angad uses this analogy of the moth and the donkey to deflate Ravana's inflated ego and ridicule him for his false self-praise.]

चौ०. अब जनि बतबढ़ाव खल करही । सुनु मम बचन मान परिहरही ॥ १ ॥
 दसमुख मैं न बसीठीं आयउँ । अस बिचारि रघुबीर पठायउँ ॥ २ ॥
 बार बार अस कहइ कृपाला । नहिं गजारि जसु बधे सृकाला ॥ ३ ॥
 मन महुं समुझि बचन प्रभु केरे । सहेउँ कठोर बचन सठ तेरे ॥ ४ ॥
 नाहिं त करि मुख भंजन तोरा । लै जातेउँ सीतहि बरजोरा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

aba jani batabarḥāva khala karahī. sunu mama bacana māna pariharahī. 1.
 dasamukha mairṁ na basīthīṁ āya'umṁ. asa bicāri raghubīra paṭhāya'umṁ. 2.
 bāra bāra asa kaha'i kṛpālā. nahīṁ gajāri jasu badhēm sṛkālā. 3.
 mana mahumṁ samujhi bacana prabhu kērē. sahē'umṁ kaṭhōra bacana saṭha
 tērē. 4.
 nāhīṁ ta kari mukha bhanjāna tōrā. lai jātē'umṁ sītahi barajōrā. 5.

[After countering Ravana's boastful assertions of his gallantry and glory, Angad told him bluntly why he had come to his court.]

Angad said, 'Oh you wicked fellow (khala)! Don't prolong the vain arguments any further; stop futile wrangling, and listen to me. Abandon your haughtiness and arrogance. [Stop useless loud talking and wasting your time and energy; cool down and be practical.] (1)

Oh ten-mouthed Ravana (dasamukha)!¹ Mind you, I have not come as a humble messenger to pitifully plead with you. [Don't think that I have come to request you for some concession because we are scared of you, or we are in awe of your might, that we don't want to fight with you. Perish the thought if, per chance, you have it. Don't be deluded into thinking that we are cowards, and when we discovered how mighty and powerful you are after landing in Lanka, by the sight of your mighty army, we are trying to wriggle out of a sticky situation in which we have landed by putting up a brave face, but internally are sore afraid of you. So we are making feverish attempts to settle the dispute and avoid the war, and it is for this reason our Lord Ram has sent me². No, no, not at all. The reason for my coming here is quite different. It is this—]

I have been sent by the brave Lord of Raghus (“raghubīra”; i.e. Lord Ram) because he thought [2]; why yes indeed, the gracious and compassionate Lord (krpālā) has repeatedly said that “A lion does not get any glory by killing a jackal³”! [3]. (2-3)

Keeping in mind the words of my Lord (Ram), I am constrained, you wicked fellow (saṭha), to tolerate your sharp, nasty and impertinent words (sahē'um' kathōra bacana). (4)

Had it not been for that reason⁴, I would have smashed your face (and all your ten mouths with it), and then I would have forcibly taken Sita back with me (to restore her to Lord Ram). (5)

[Note—¹The use of the word “dasamukha”, meaning ten mouths, is significant. It means Ravana was speaking very loudly and rambling on in a confusing manner, speaking with all his ten mouths at the same time, making it difficult to comprehend as to what he was saying. Angad ridiculed him for speaking thus, for it made a joker out of him.

Speaking with ten mouths simultaneously also means Ravana was ten times more boastful and haughty as compared to anyone else.

²Angad refers to the earlier taunt of Ravana when the latter asked him: “Why is your Lord, of whom you say that he is very brave and powerful, sending a peace emissary to his arch enemy; isn't he ashamed to strike a deal with someone who has stolen his wife? Why does he not straightforward come and fight with me and take away his wife by trouncing me in an honourable fight, instead of attempting a shameful truce? Surely it indicates he is afraid of facing me in the battle-field, and so is trying to find a face-saving formula.” {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 28.}

³Here, Ravana is likened to a ‘jackal’, and Lord Ram to the ‘lion’. Angad means that Lord Ram wishes to avoid slaying Ravana because it would be a shameful thing for him to do so. So Angad was sent to find out a way if this killing of Ravana could be avoided in an honourable way, because the Lord thought that Ravana's killing would be too mean a deed for him to do, for Ravana had no stature and standing, by any measure, when compared to Lord Ram. It is an established principle that one gets glory and acclaim only when one defeats his enemy who is of the same strength, has the same stature as a nobleman and warrior, and occupies the same social status and moral standing as himself. To fight and defeat someone lowly in any measure of way will bring nothing except infamy and ridicule upon the conqueror or the victor; his victory would be worse than his defeat at the hands of a contender of equal stature.

⁴Angad poured boiling oil on injured Ravana's self-respect when he mocked at him, saying sarcastically: “Oh you haughty rascal! Had it not been improper for a great warrior to kill a lowly fellow as you are, just like it is improper for a lion to kill a jackal as my Lord Ram had said, or if it would not have violated my dear Lord Ram's injunction against doing it, I would have crushed you and viciously smacked your faces, and then I would have taken Sita back to Lord Ram even while you would have been wiggling in pain and making feeble sounds of agony while licking your wounds like a wounded jackal.”]

जानेऊँ तव बल अधम सुरारी । सूनें हरि आनिहि परनारी ॥ ६ ॥
 तैं निसिचर पति गर्ब बहूता । मैं रघुपति सेवक कर दूता ॥ ७ ॥
 जौं न राम अपमानहि डरऊँ । तोहि देखत अस कौतुक करऊँ ॥ ८ ॥

jānē'um̐ tava bala adhama surārī. sūnēm hari ānihi paranārī. 6.
 taim̐ nīsicara pati garba bahūtā. maim̐ raghupati sēvaka kara dūtā. 7.
 jaur̐ na rāma apamānahi ḍara'ūm̐. tōhi dēkhata asa kautuka kara'ūm̐. 8.

[Berating Ravana and ridiculing him further, Angad continued—]

Oh you sinful and fallen enemy of the gods (adhama surārī)! Verily, I have come to realise how strong, courageous, powerful and valiant you are indeed: for you had stolen another person's wife when you found her alone¹! (6)

[There is no comparison between you and me. Do you know why? Well, I shall tell you—] Oh the king of demons (nīsicara)! You are very haughty, egoist and arrogant. I, on the other hand, am a (humble) messenger of him (Sugriv) who himself is a humble servant of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram²). (7)

If I had not been afraid of doing anything that would amount to causing an insult to Lord Ram for violating his injunctions, for it is outrageous for me to even think of anything of the sort, then mind you, I would have done something so exceptional and fantastic that it would have amazed you a lot. (8)

[Note—¹Angad's observation is obviously laced with heavy sarcasm. Only a jackal would steal meat from a lion's prey when the lord of the jungle is not paying attention. If Ravana was as brave and powerful as he claims himself to be, why didn't he fight with Lord Ram face-to-face and defeat him to claim the Lord's wife as a trophy if he was indeed bent in bringing her to Lanka, instead of hiding and stealthily abducting her while her husband was away hunting. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-16 that precede it.}

²To wit, all of us who serve Lord Ram are modest, humble, unpretentious and gracious. My lord is Sugriv, and he is the king of the monkey race like you are the king of the demon race. But unlike you, fortunately Sugriv is not haughty and arrogant, nor is he a pretentious and boastful person who speaks in vain. We are all humble servants of our supreme Lord, Sri Ram. We have learnt to practice the virtues of modesty and humility by being with Lord Ram and serving him, for the Lord does not like these negative traits in his followers and companions.]

दो०. तोहि पटकि महि सेन हति चौपट करि तव गाउँ ।
 तव जुबतिन्ह समेत सठ जनकसुतहि लै जाउँ ॥ ३० ॥

dōhā.

tōhi paṭaki mahi sēna hati caupaṭa kari tava gā'um̃.
tava jubatinha samēta saṭha janakasutahi lai jā'um̃. 30.

[Do you wish to know what I would have done? Listen then—]

I would have, oh you wicked rascal (saṭha), dashed you to the ground (tōhi paṭaki mahi), killed your entire army (sēna hati), and after destroying your village (place; Lanka; “caupaṭa kari tava gā'um̃”), I would have taken all your women (in a procession) to Lord Ram, with the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita) leading them from the front (tava jubatinha samēta saṭha janakasutahi lai jā'um̃). (Doha no. 30)

चौ०. जौं अस करौं तदपि न बड़ाई । मुएहि बधें नहिं कछु मनुसाई ॥ १ ॥
कौल कामबस कृपिन बिमूढ़ा । अति दरिद्र अजसी अति बूढ़ा ॥ २ ॥
सदा रोगबस संतत क्रोधी । बिजु बिमुख श्रुति संत बिरोधी ॥ ३ ॥
तनु पोषक निंदक अघ खानी । जीवत सब सम चौदह प्रानी ॥ ४ ॥
अस बिचारि खल बधउँ न तोही । अब जनि रिस उपजावसि मोही ॥ ५ ॥

caupāṭi.

jauṁ asa karaum̃ tadapi na baṛāṭi. mu'ēhi badhēm̃ nahim̃ kachu manusāṭi. 1.
kaula kāmabasa kṛpina bimūrḥā. ati daridra ajasī ati būrḥā. 2.
sadā rōgabasa santata krōdhī. biṣnu bimukha śruti santa birōdhī. 3.
tanu pōṣaka nindaka agha khānī. jīvata sava sama caudaha prānī. 4.
asa bicāri khala badha'um̃ na tōhī. aba jani risa upajāvasi mōhī. 5.

In all sooth, I desist from doing all this (as I said I would have done in Doha no. 30 herein above) because I shall gain no fame by doing it; I am reluctant to do what I would have liked to do for it is no great deal to do things that aren't up to the standard. Say, what gallantry is there, what glory is to be gained by killing someone who is already on the verge of death; what bravery is shown by slaying a dying person, for he will die nevertheless? (1)

[I shall now list certain categories of persons killing whom is a highly shameful act.] Those who follow decadent forms of worship (kaula)¹, those who are pervert and lustful (kāmabasa), those who are great misers and greedy (kṛpina), those who are extremely foolish and ignorant (bimūrḥā), those who are excessively poor and poverty-stricken (ati daridra), those who are tainted with ill-fame and scarred by ignominy because of some infamous misdeed (ajasī), those who are very old (ati būrḥā) [2], ---

--- Those who are always sick (sadā rōgabasa), those who remain always angry (santata krōdhī), those who are opposed to Lord Vishnu (“biṣnu bimukha”; i.e. those who don't believe in Lord God; atheists), those who defy and are hostile to the Vedas (scriptures) as well as saintly persons (śruti santa birōdhī) [3], ---

--- Those who are so selfish, foolish or ignorant that they are only interested in taking care of their own gross mortal body (i.e. who are so stupid that they are not bothered

about the welfare of their soul, which is their ‘true self’ instead of the body; and are so selfish that they do they think about the welfare of others in the society) (*tanu pōṣaka*), those who habituated to find faults with others (and never see anything good in them) (*nindaka*), and those who a veritable mine of sins and evilness (*agha khānī*).

These above fourteen categories of people are as good as dead bodies even though they are still alive, and therefore it is not worth the while to kill any of them². [Angad likens Ravana with these fallen people, and says he is reluctant to kill him for this reason.] [4] (2-4)

Oh you wicked fellow (*khala*)! That is why I am not killing you. Don’t provoke me any further and don’t stoke my anger any longer (because I may lose my patience).’ (5)

[Note—¹The word “*kaula*” refers to those who indulge in morally bad practices in the name of worshipping their deity, such as drinking liquor, killing other creatures on the excuse of making animal sacrifice, eating meat of the sacrificed poor animal pretending that it is sanctified food, and indulging in sexual orgies in the guise of saying they are on a high because they are possessed by some spirit. Killing such people is in itself a sinful deed, for they are so full of evil that spilling their blood would spoil one’s own hands.

²It is because such people are so deep a mine of evil and sinfulness, or a fountainhead from where negativity emanates and spreads forth in the surrounding world, that they are like stinking dead bodies. A dead body starts decaying soon and becomes so harmful that if one remains for a long time near it, one would show signs of some serious illness, such as nausea and vomiting, because of the foul stink emanating from the decaying body, and the whole atmosphere gets so polluted that infectious diseases are caused if the corpse is not disposed off soon.

The idea is that the people belonging to the categories listed here are no better than maggots in the society; they are like a corpse which only creates problems instead of being of any good to others. How mad and ugly would it look for a man if goes to dismember a dead body, to kill his enemy who has already turned into a corpse!

Angad says that even if he thought of finding some way of killing Ravana—and later on explaining his deed by finding some excuse to convince his Lord Ram that the killing of Ravana had become imperative in a particular situation—still he would not commit this evil deed as it would be a very lowly thing for him to do. He likens Ravana with all the fallen creatures listed here.]

सुनि सकोप कह निसिचर नाथा । अधर दसन दसि मीजत हाथा ॥ ६ ॥

रे कपि अधम मरन अब चहसी । छोटे बदन बात बड़ि कहसी ॥ ७ ॥

कटु जल्पसि जड़ कपि बल जाकें । बल प्रताप बुधि तेज न ताकें ॥ ८ ॥

sunī sakōpa kaha nisicara nāthā. adhara dasana dasi mījata hāthā. 6.
rē kapi adhama marana aba cahasī. chōṭē badana bāta baḍi kahāsī. 7.

kaṭu jalpasi jaṛa kapi bala jākēṁ. bala pratāpa budhi tēja na tākēṁ. 8.

[Hearing the contemptuous and scornful way Angad rebuked Ravana (in full demon court), the latter became furious (for Angad's words seemed like molten lead being poured into the ears of Ravana).]

Ravana, the lord of the demons (nisicara nāthā), was filled with excessive wrath and bitterness, bit his lips with his teeth and wringed his hands in utter indignation, and thundered with a fiery tone, --- (6)

‘Oh you lowly and vile monkey (rē kapi adhama), woe betide you, for it seems certain that you wish to die (marana aba cahasī). You are small and inconsequential, but you have crossed all limits of decency and decorum by speaking with a big mouth. (7)

Oh you dumb-witted and vulgar monkey (jaṛa kapi)! He (Lord Ram), on whose strength you have so boastfully uttered such sharp and nasty words (kaṭu), has no real strength, glory, intelligence and majesty at all.’ (8)

दो०. अगुन अमान जानि तेहि दीन्ह पिता बनबास ।

सो दुख अरु जुबती बिरह पुनि निसि दिन मम त्रास ॥ ३१ (क) ॥

जिन्ह के बल कर गर्ब तोहि अइसे मनुज अनेक ।

खाहिं निसाचर दिवस निसि मूढ़ समुझु तजि टेक ॥ ३१ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

aguna amāna jāni tēhi dīnha pitā banabāsa.

sō dukha aru jubatī biraha puni nisi dina mama trāsa. 31 (a).

jinha kē bala kara garba tōhi a'isē manuja anēka.

khāhiṁ nisācara divasa nisi mūrḥa samujhu taji ṭēka. 31 (b).

[Now, Ravana justifies his assertion made in the last verse herein above, implying that Lord Ram is of no consequence for him.]

[Ravana continued—] ‘His (Lord Ram's) father (king Dasrath of Ayodhya) had sent him to forest exile because he felt that his son was worthless and had no good qualities in him, that he was unfit to ascend the throne and rule the kingdom, and that he would bring only infamy to the family (if he is anointed as a king).

On the one hand he (Lord Ram) is smarting from the grave insult and disrepute that this disinheritance by his own father as brought to him, added to it is the misery from intense grief caused by losing his wife, and his misfortunes are further compounded by the knowledge of the immensity of my valour, majesty, strength and powers which have instilled a mortal fear of me in his bosom¹. (Doha no. 31-a)

The demons are accustomed to devouring, on a routine basis, every day and night, so many human beings like the one whom you praise so much. [This is a reference to Lord Ram.]

Oh you complete fool (mūrha)! Understand it², and leave aside your stubbornness (which is misleading you by clouding your reasoning and intellect).’ (Doha no. 31-b)

[Note—¹Ravana told Angad: “Listen you fool. All the misfortunes that have befallen your Lord must have sapped his energy and killed his desire to live an honourable life. Is it not a matter of shame that one’s father throws him out of the house; is it not a further matter of shame that his wife is stolen by someone and he is unable to protect her? This most unfortunate person, who is already suffering from excessive grief and pain caused by an injury to his self-respect, would first try his best to recover his wife, so he makes desperate attempts to trace her. He goes here and there frantically, and even gets a lead about her whereabouts. Then he reaches the place where he is informed his beloved wife is kept. But then he faces an insurmountable obstacle, for to get her back he has to overcome her captive who is so powerful and strong that the poor fellow dares not confront him out of fear of his own life.

This in a nut-shell is the story of your famed Lord! All the misfortunes and miseries and grief that has overwhelmed him must have by now sapped all his energy and weakened his resolve; he must have lost all courage and strength to bear any more of it. Surely and certainly, he must have lost his will to fight me to reclaim his wife.

Initially he may have gathered courage to wander in the forest to search for her in the hope of finding her somewhere, and I acknowledge that he persevered enough to collect a ramshackle army of untrained monkeys and bears to build a bridge across the ocean and land in Lanka. But though he had managed to keep a brave face externally, internally he is full of doubt and uncertain of himself when he came to know of me and my reputation, that it was I who had taken away his wife, and that he has to fight with me to get her back. At this very thought he must have balked; the idea must have seemed an impossible objective for him to achieve.

Thus, having so lost his courage and confidence internally, he wishes now to find a face-saving formula, and that is why he sends a messenger to explore the possibility of getting his wife back without having to face me in the battle-field. He is so obsessed with the fear of me that he won’t have the courage to stand his ground in the battle-field.

And you (Angad) are so big a blockhead that you can’t piece two and two together to make four. Oh you fool; why don’t you see through the things, and why are wasting your energy trying to advocate for a lost cause.”

²“Don’t you know anything about the demon race? Humans are our staple food, and tell me yourself is anyone afraid of what he eats? But still you go on and on in a rambling manner heaping praises on a human being, without realizing that the human race is a staple food for the demons. We chomp them like carrots and radish; we munch at them for snacks and meals. Are you so great a fool not to understand that the demon army, which is ferocious by its nature, would become fiercer when it is hungry, and when I unleash my starved demon warriors on you fellows, what will happen then? If we, the demons, don’t give two hoots for the human race, which is the most advanced and powerful in the hierarchy of all living beings, what would we care for monkeys and bears? Why don’t you consider these things?

Listen; your father Baali and I were friends, and that is why I don’t wish to push you into the jaws of death. But it looks to me that you are being drawn to it by your own reckoning, by being unreasonable and obstinate, and unwilling to understand anything. Wake up to the reality and stop espousing a lost cause.”]

चौ०. जब तेहिं कीन्हि राम कै निंदा । क्रोधवंत अति भयउ कपिंदा ॥ १ ॥

हरि हर निंदा सुनइ जो काना । होइ पाप गोघात समाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāĩ.

jaba tēhiṁ kīnhi rāma kai nindā. krōdhavanta ati bhaya'u kapindā. 1.
hari hara nindā suna'i jō kānā. hō'i pāpa gōghāta samānā. 2.

When he (Ravana) used disparaging word critical of Lord Ram and his glory, when he used crass language for Lord Ram, when he showed his grossness, the monkey chief (“kapindā”; Angad) lost his patience; he became furious and shook with anger. (1)

This is because to listen criticism of, and hear derogatory words used for Lord Hari and Lord Har (Vishnu and Shiva respectively; the two Gods of the Trinity) invites the blot of committing a grave sin that is equivalent to killing of a cow¹. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is the second God of the Trinity and is the protector and caretaker of this creation, while Lord Shiva is the third God who is responsible for the conclusion of this creation. Lord Ram is believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. So when Ravana used insulting words for the Lord, compelling Angad to hear them, the latter felt he was forced to commit a grave sin against his wish, and he had never ever imagined in his life that one day he would be forced by circumstances to be made a party to such a sacrilegious deed. This infuriated him immeasurably.]

कटकटान कपिकुंजर भारी । दुहु भुजदंड तमकि महि मारी ॥ ३ ॥

डोलत धरनि सभासद खसे । चले भाजि भय मारुत ग्रसे ॥ ४ ॥

kaṭakaṭāna kapikunjara bhārī. duhu bhujaḍaṇḍa tamaki mahi mārī. 3.
ḍōlata dharani sabhāsada khasē. calē bhāji bhaya māruta grasē. 4.

The great monkey chief ground his teeth so viciously that a sound of crushing stones was heard (kaṭakaṭāna) even as he waved his arms angrily in the air, and clinching his fists he struck the ground violently with them. (3)

This caused a tremor that shook the earth, and as a result of this sudden jolt the courtiers present there fell to the ground. They were so overcome with great terror that they ran away madly from the court as if driven by a strong gust of wind symbolising fear¹. (4)

[Note—¹The scene is reminiscent of a sudden storm with high wind speed that fells things and sweeps them away along its path. As soon as Angad hit the ground angrily with his clenched fists, there was a tremor, and the demon courtiers were caught off guard. They slipped from their seats if they were sitting, and lost foothold on the ground if they were standing. They lost balance and fell down; then fearing an earthquake that would crush them under the debris of the demolished court building,

they shrieked in fear and ran helter-skelter. The air in Ravana's court was already grave and heavy, but this sudden development led to total chaos.]

गिरत सँभारि उठा दसकंधर । भूतल परे मुकुट अति सुंदर ॥ ५ ॥
कछु तेहिं लै निज सिरन्हि सँवारे । कछु अंगद प्रभु पास पबारे ॥ ६ ॥

girata saṁbhāri uṭhā dasakandhara. bhūtala parē mukuṭa ati sundara. 5.
kachu tēhiṁ lai nija siranhi saṁvārē. kachu aṅgada prabhu pāsa pabārē. 6.

The ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) almost fell down to the ground, but he managed to quickly recover himself just in time. Nonetheless, his crowns tumbled over from his head and fell to the ground¹.

[To wit, though Ravana managed to get up himself, yet his crowns slipped from his heads and fell to the ground.] (5)

Ravana could pick up some of these crowns, while the rest were kicked by Angad like balls in the direction of where Lord Ram was.

[To wit, Ravana failed to replace all his ten crowns on his head, so Angad got an opportunity and kicked the remaining crowns² like one kicks at a ball. He kicked these crowns so violently that they flew in the air like balls flying in the direction of Lord Ram's camp.] (6)

[Note—¹This was the second instance of Ravana's crowns falling to the ground. The first was when Lord Ram had shot an arrow in the direction of the citadel of Lanka where Ravana and his entourage were watching some musical performance; at that time too all his crowns had tumbled to the ground. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Angad got a cue from this incidence, and he decided to serve his dear Lord Ram by doing something better, which was to place Ravana's crowns directly at the Lord's feet as a token of the demon's king abject surrender. And Angad thought his action would be alright also, and the Lord would not mind it because he himself had fell Ravana's crowns earlier. This will bring Angad closer to Lord Ram and become his favourite just as Hanuman's gallant deeds had done for him.

There was another strategic military reason for Angad's actions. He wished to break whatever confidence and remnants of morale the demon army still possessed after the events when Lanka was burnt by Hanuman, by making their seemingly invincible and powerful king Ravana swoon and lose his balance and fall down in front of their very eyes. When an army's confidence and morale is low, the battle is three-fourths won by the enemy; if the demon army led by Ravana loses its courage and will to fight with vigour and confidence of attaining victory, then the fate of the war was deemed to be decided in favour of the monkey army led by Lord Ram.]

²And how many crowns did Angad kick? The answer is 'four'. See verse no. 8 herein below.]

आवत मुकुट देखि कपि भागे । दिनहीं लूक परन बिधि लागे ॥ ७ ॥

की रावन करि कोप चलाए । कुलिस चारि आवत अति धाए ॥ ८ ॥

āvata mukuṭa dēkhi kapi bhāgē. dinahīm lūka parana bidhi lāgē. 7.
kī rāvana kari kōpa calā'ē. kulisa cāri āvata ati dhā'ē. 8.

When the monkeys and bears in the camp of Lord Ram saw these crowns flying towards their camp and landing on the ground with a loud thud, they were all alarmed and ran here and there to escape being hit by these missiles. They wondered, 'Oh God, is this a shower of comets or meteors or asteroids raining down from the sky in the middle of the day! (7)

Or, are these four shining missiles¹ shot by Ravana at us, for they seem to come with great speed from the direction of his court.' (8)

[Note—¹The crowns were shining as they were made of polished gold and studded with gems.

That they were four in number shows that Ravana had managed to pick up and replace only six of his fallen crowns back on his head, and the remaining four out of the total ten were kicked by Angad.]

कह प्रभु हंसि जनि हृदयँ डेराहू । लूक न असनि केतु नहिं राहू ॥ ९ ॥
ए किरिट दसकंधर केरे । आवत बालितनय के प्रेरे ॥ १० ॥

kaha prabhu haṁsi jani hṛdayaṁ dērāhū. lūka na asani kētu nahim rāhū. 9.
ē kirīṭa dasakandhara kērē. āvata bālitanaya kē prērē. 10.

The Lord (Sri Ram) smiled in amusement, and reassured his troops, 'Don't be at all afraid of these things. They are neither a comet nor a meteor, nor a asteroid or a missile; they aren't either Rahu or Ketu. [There is nothing to be afraid of; so don't panic. They are not some bad omen symbolized by comets or falling stars, and they are neither some kind of weapon shot by Ravana to harm us.] (9)

These are Ravana's crowns, and they have come here because Angad has kicked them in our direction.' (10)

दो०. तरकि पवनसुत कर गहे आनि धरे प्रभु पास ।

कौतुक देखहिं भालु कपि दिनकर सरिस प्रकास ॥ ३२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

taraki pavanasuta kara gahē āni dharē prabhu pāsa.
kautuka dēkhahim bhālu kapi dinakara sarisa prakāsa.32 (a).

The son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) immediately jumped up and grabbed these crowns; then he brought them and kept them near Lord Ram (i.e. at his feet).

The crowns were shining with a brilliance that was reminiscent of the splendour of the sun. All the monkeys and bears gathered around and watched them with amazement¹. (Doha no. 32-a)

[Note—¹It was a rare spectacle for them to behold. All the warriors of the Lord's army had one objective, which was to defeat the Lord's enemy Ravana, and when they saw their enemy's crowns come rolling all by themselves and placed at the feet of their own Lord Ram, it was surely a very astonishing and welcome sign—for it marked the defeat and surrender of their enemy, because when a king is defeated in battle, and the victor wishes not to slay him, then the crown of the vanquished is placed at the feet of the vanquisher as a token of surrender and acceptance of defeat by the former.

So, the monkeys and bears rejoiced that their enemy has already surrendered in a symbolic way. This was very a very encouraging sign and a definite morale-booster for the Lord's army prior to the actual action in the battle-field, as much as it was discouraging, a crusher of morale and the breaker of the spirit of the demon army.

The monkeys and bears were fascinated at the sight of not one, not two, not three—but 'four shining crowns' lying at the feet of their revered Lord Ram. It was a way of prophesising to them that their victory in the forthcoming war is four times as assured and certain as any other circumstances under which they may have fought and won any other war earlier on in their lives. The omens were in their favour; the gods were in their favour.]

उहाँ सकोपि दसानन सब सन कहत रिसाइ ।

धरहु कपिहि धरि मारहु सुनि अंगद मुसुकाइ ॥ ३२ (ख) ॥

uhām̐ sakōpi dasānana saba sana kahata risā'i.
dharahu kapihi dhari mārahu suni āṅgada musukā'i. 32 (b).

Meanwhile, back in the court of the demons, Ravana became exasperated and yelled angrily at everybody present, 'Catch hold of this monkey and kill him.'

Angad smiled wryly and sneered when he heard this frustrated outburst of Ravana (because he realised that the endgame was very near). (Doha no. 32-b)

चौ०. एहि बधि बेगि सुभट सब धावहु । खाहु भालु कपि जहँ जहँ पावहु ॥ १ ॥

मर्कटहीन करहु महि जाई । जित्त धरहु तापस द्वौ भाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

ēhi badhi bēgi subhaṭa saba dhāvahu. khāhu bhālu kapi jaham̐ jaham̐ pāvahu.

1.

markaṭahīna karahu mahi jā'i. ji'ata dharahu tāpasa dvau bhā'i. 2.

[Besides ordering his demon warriors to immediately slay Angad, he also instructed them to rush forward aggressively and devour all the rest of the monkeys and bears wherever they found them, to vent their anger at the invaders and start decimating them that very instant.]

Ravana ordered his demon warriors, ‘Oh my brave and competent warriors (subhaṭa)! Rush forth immediately in all the directions, and grab and devour any and all monkeys and bears that you may find anywhere. (1)

Go forthwith and proceed to make the earth free of the monkey race (by killing one and all of them; don’t spare any single fellow)! Go and catch hold of the two hermit brothers (Lord Ram and his brother Laxman) (as soon as you can, and bring them all tied up in shackles)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Ravana let loose his ferocious demons like a pack of wild wolves let loose among pigeons, or at least he thought so, for he wanted them to go berserk and ferociously tear apart the enemy without mercy, sparing none. Yes indeed, he thought that his demon warriors would go amok and smash the monkey army as they had been doing during his many campaigns around the world, especially when he had conquered the gods in heaven and chased away their mighty army.

But he had misjudged the might and strength of his enemy this last time. He had thought that they would be like easy fodder before the ferocious demons lunging at them with their drawn mouths from which sharp teeth protruded like those of a hungry lion ready to pounce upon its prey. The demons were accustomed to this sort of hunting their prey, but till now they had faced only those creatures who were humble and docile, who became terrified at the very sight of demons approaching them, creatures whose blood chilled at the very thought of a demon, who trembled when they heard the name of a demon, so there was no question of them mustering courage to fight back: such was the great and enviable fame of the demons, that they found no opposition whatsoever and no challenge worth the name to their authority and sway anywhere in the world, for no living being dared to do it.

This had made Ravana mad with an extreme sense of false pride that had filled him with extravagant haughtiness, excessive arrogance and unwarranted over-confidence in his abilities, thinking that there was no one to challenge him in this world. This had also made his demons think that they can have their way till the end of creation. And this false sense of security and majesty paved the way for their downfall.]

पुनि सकोप बोलेउ जुबराजा । गाल बजावत तोहि न लाजा ॥ ३ ॥

मरु गर काटि निलज कुलघाती । बल बिलोकि बिहरति नहिं छाती ॥ ४ ॥

puni sakōpa bōlē'u jubarājā. gāla bajāvata tōhi na lājā. 3.

maru gara kāṭi nilaja kulaghātī. bala bilōki biharati nahim chātī. 4.

The prince (“jubarājā”; i.e. Angad) retorted sharply, ‘Aren’t you ashamed to speak vainly with a big mouth (that has large jaws). (3)

Oh you vile and shameless fellow who does not have even rudimentary modesty in him, and who will go down in history as the destroyer of his own race and family (nilaja, kulaghātī)! Cut your own neck and die. [Well, you have been boasting that you had severed your head ten times to offer them to the fire sacrifice. Why don’t you

repeat your fantastic deed once again? Let me see it and be convinced of its veracity. Go ahead and cut off your ugly heads here and now!]

Even after witnessing my strength and courage, why has your bosom not cracked (i.e. why hadn't you had a heart attack out of awe and fear of me)¹? (4)

[Note—¹Angad lashed out vehemently at Ravana, severely chiding and ridiculing him scornfully: “Why, you are a totally dumb fellow; it's certain you have no trace of dignity and honour worth the name in you. Can't you see that I don't have any fear of you inspite of being alone in your assembly, and why don't you realise that surely there must be some cause for my bravery. And haven't you just a while ago witnessed how your crowns were kicked by me and sent flying into the sky. Can't you understand the sort of courage I have when I have so bluntly and boldly answered you on your face, back and forth, even while your so-called brave demons, renowned for their fierceness, watched helplessly. And despite of all this, you continue howling, madly and vainfully.”

रे त्रिय चोर कुमारग गामी । खल मल रासि मंदमति कामी ॥ ५ ॥

सन्यपात जल्पसि दुर्बादा । भएसि कालबस खल मनुजादा ॥ ६ ॥

rē triya cōra kumāraga gāmī. khala mala rāsi mandamati kāmī. 5.
san'yapāta jalpasi durbādā. bha'ēsi kālabasa khala manujādā. 6.

Oh you stealer of women (triya cōra)! Oh you fallen one treading on a sinful path (kumāraga gāmī)! You are indeed a blockhead to the hilt (mandamati). You are verily an embodiment and a treasury (rāsi) of vices such as wickedness, perversion, lust, lasciviousness, and other moral depravities (khala mala --- kāmī). (5)

You are under the influence of a severe fever that causes delirium (san'yapāta) because it makes you talk incoherently and babble senselessly (jalpasi durbādā).

Oh you rascal demon (khala manujādā)! It is very clear that you are under the spell of the god of death (bha'ēsi kālabasa) by the way you speak.

[To wit, it seems your death is near because your delirious talk clearly indicates it. When a person is suffering from high fever and is about to die, he starts talking nonsense as you are doing now.] (6)

याको फलु पावहिगो आगें । बानर भालु चपेटन्हि लागें ॥ ७ ॥

रामु मनुज बोलत असि बानी । गिरहिं न तव रसना अभिमानी ॥ ८ ॥

गिरिहहिं रसना संसय नाही । सिरन्हि समेत समर महि माहीं ॥ ९ ॥

yākō phalu pāvahigō āgēm. bānara bhālu capēṭanhi lāgēm. 7.
rāmu manuja bōlata asi bānī. girahim na tava rasanā abhimānī. 8.
giriham rasanā sansaya nāhīm. siranhi samēta samara mahi māhīm. 9.

Nevertheless, it doesn't matter for the time being, for you will get the punishment you deserve a little later on when you will be bashed and pilloried by hordes of monkeys and bears (who would take turns in kicking and slapping you). (7)

Oh you haughty and arrogant fellow (*abhimānī*)! “Lord Ram is a human being¹”—why does your tongue not fall down from your mouth when you pronounce such insinuating words, I wonder? (8)

But oh yes, there is no doubt that your tongues will fall down together with your heads (at the appropriate time) when they are chopped off in the battle-field (by Lord Ram's arrows). (9)

[Note—¹Angad refers to what Ravana had said in Doha no. 31 herein above.]

सो०. सो नर १यो दसकंध बालि बध्यो जेहिं एक सर ।

बीसहुँ लोचन अंध धिग तव जन्म कुजाति जड़ ॥ ३३ (क) ॥

sōraṭhā.

sō nara kyōm dasakandha bāli badhyō jēhim ēka sara.

bīsahum' lōcana andha dhiga tava janma kujāti jaṛa. 33 (a).

Tell me, oh you one with ten shoulders (bearing ten necks and ten heads; *dasakandha*), why, and how come, he (Lord Ram), who has slayed Baali with a single arrow, a human being¹?

Oh you stupid blockhead who is born in a vile race (*tava janma kujāti jaṛa*)! Fie to you and your evil birth (*dhiga tava janma*)! Can't you see this obvious thing with your twenty eyes²? (Sortha no. 33-a)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

Why is this thing, killing of Baali with a single arrow, so significant that Angad cites it to justify his assertion that someone, a reference to Lord Ram, who could kill Baali with a single shot is surely not an ordinary human being list the rest? The answer is this: Baali had a boon that when he is attacked by anyone, half of his opponent's strength would come to him, leaving his adversary weakened by half. That is why his brother Sugriv failed to subdue him in the duel they fought.

Lord Ram watched the proceedings quietly from behind a tree and observed that Sugriv was being beaten mercilessly by Baali, and the latter lost half of his strength to Baali due the boon, leaving him severely wounded and on the verge of collapse. Earlier, the Lord had promised Sugriv that he would extend his support to him if he decides to reclaim his lost rights, rights that were snatched by his elder brother Baali from him. When the Lord realised his friend Sugriv was losing, he was compelled to intervene to keep his promise. But the problem was Baali's boon; if the Lord faced him directly then half of the Lord's strength would have gone automatically to Baali. So therefore he had to shoot the arrow incognito from behind the tree.

That was not all. Since Baali was protected from being killed by any human being who attacked him directly, and humans usually attacked with a weapon that

could be shot from the front, e.g. an arrow, so it also meant that a man's arrow would not kill him if he was shot by any weapon used by his attacker from a distance.

Angad uses this rationale to assert that Baali's death with one arrow shows that the shooter of that arrow was not an ordinary human warrior, for under ordinary circumstances Baali would have automatically attracted half of his attacker's strength by the virtue of the boon he had.

But why did Baali fail to attract Lord Ram's half strength into himself whereas he could do it with all other opponents? It's probably based on the principle of a stronger energy field attracting a weaker one towards its self, or being neutralised when faced with a field stronger energy than its own. It could be like magnetic field, or electric field or any other kind of field of energy. Baali possessed an exceptionally strong and powerful field of spiritual energy and dynamism that attracted and pulled towards itself the field of his opponent which was weaker than his.

To wit, Baali's strong spiritual field and the dynamic waves of energy generated by his 'consciousness', known as the Atma, were vibrant and powerful enough to neutralise those of his adversary. In the case of Lord Ram, however, the reverse was true, because the Lord was a personified form of the cosmic energy that is inherent in super Consciousness that Lord Ram embodied. Hence, instead of Angad attracting Lord Ram's strength, it happened the other way round.

Baali had himself acknowledged the divinity of Lord Ram, first to his wife Tara when she tried to dissuade him to fight with Sugriv as he had the Lord's protection, and later on during the last moments of his life when he surrendered his soul to the Lord and sought his refuge and blessings so that he can attain deliverance and beatitude. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (a) Doha no. 7; (b) Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

²Ravana had 'ten heads', and therefore obviously he had 'twenty eyes', for each head had two eyes.

Angad meant that even a person with two eyes would be able to see what is obvious, but Ravana was so extremely stupid and dumb-witted that he could not see it with 'twenty eyes', which means using ten heads, which carried these twenty eyes, applying their wisdom and intelligence simultaneously. To wit, Ravana was so big a fool that he could not deduce the right things even though he possessed ten heads working together to help him do so. In effect, he was dumber than others with just one head and two eyes. It was a scathing attack on Ravana's personality and majesty; it showed that he had an abysmally poor wisdom; it was an assessment of Ravana's level of intelligence that downgraded it to the lowest possible standard for this faculty that one can imagine.]

तव सोनित कीं प्यास तृषित राम सायक निकर ।

तजउँ तोहि तेहि त्रास कटु जल्पक निसिचर अधम ॥ ३३ (ख) ॥

tava sōnita kīm pyāsa tr̥ṣita rāma sāyaka nikara.

taja'um̐ tōhi tēhi trāsa kaṭu jalpaka niscara adhama. 33 (b).

Oh you fallen demon with a bitter tongue that bites when it speaks (kaṭu jalpaka niscara adhama)! [To wit, your tongue is poisonous like a snake's, and it is equally stinging.]

Nevertheless, I leave you alone (i.e. I spare you from death at my hands) because Lord Ram's arrows are thirsty for your blood, and I don't want to deprive them of their favourite drink which they wish to have to their hearts' content. (Sortha no. 33-b)

चौ०. मैं तव दसन तोरिबे लायक । आयसु मोहि न दीन्ह रघुनायक ॥ १ ॥
 असि रिस होति दसउ मुख तोरौं । लंका गहि समुद्र महुँ बोरौं ॥ २ ॥
 गूलरि फल समान तव लंका । बसहु मध्य तुम्ह जंतु असंका ॥ ३ ॥
 मैं बानर फल खात न बारा । आयसु दीन्ह न राम उदारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

mair̥ tava dasana tōribē lāyaka. āyasu mōhi na dīnha raghunāyaka. 1.
 asi risa hōti dasa'u mukha tōraur̥. laṅkā gahi samudra maham̐ bōraur̥. 2.
 gūlarī phala samāna tava laṅkā. basahu madhya tumha jantu asaṅkā. 3.
 mair̥ bānara phala khāta na bārā. āyasu dīnha na rāma udārā. 4.

I have the ability to clobber you and break all your teeth, but I am constrained from doing it because Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) has not given me such orders. (1)

I am so annoyed by you and seething with anger that otherwise I would have willingly yanked off all your ten (hideous) heads, and uproot your city of Lanka from its very foundation, and then dump it into the ocean. (2)

In all soothfastness, Lanka is like a fruit of the wild fig tree (gūlarī phala) in which you demons move about like tiny worms. (3)

I (as you repeatedly like to address me) am a 'monkey', and being a 'monkey' it is very easy for me to bite through this fruit and eat (destroy) it (as is the wont of monkeys)¹. But unfortunately, the magnanimous Lord Ram hasn't given me permission to do so (so I have to restrain myself).² (4)

[Note—¹Angad told Ravana bitterly: "Look you vile fellow. You stupid ones are like so many worms that infect the fruit of the wild fig tree. And you enjoy calling me a 'monkey'. Well and good; I would have proved you right that I was indeed a 'monkey', for monkeys are in the habit of jumping from tree to tree and destroying their fruits by nibbling some, biting others, chewing this fruit, and munching and spitting out the next, eating a few and breaking the rest from their branches, and then throwing them to the ground to destroy the whole garden, orchard, grove or forest. I would have thoroughly enjoyed in this pastime, but you are lucky because I don't have permission from Lord Ram to indulge in this pleasure. I have come here on serious business, and not to play games with you. Mind you, don't provoke me any further, don't compel me to lose my patience, because who knows that I may begin to show my true colour as a 'monkey'. Then, god forbid, whatever is left of Lanka would be obliterated for good, as I would sweep it and dump it into the ocean to clean the ruin left behind by my good friend Hanuman."

²Angad said: “You know Ravana; I would have clobbered you and pinned you to the ground. But my Lord Ram is very benevolent and has a kind heart for he does not want me to hurt you, but give you ample time and space to think things over and make timely amends. The magnanimous Lord does not wish to precipitate things and give you a chance to say that you weren’t given an opportunity to rectify your mistakes and take corrective actions. So the Lord prohibited me from taking any physical action that may hurt you, though I am on the edge of tolerance now, and a little more provocation from you will compel me to go over this edge.”

By-and-by it so happened that no matter how much Angad tried to convince Ravana to abandon his bellicose attitude and hostility towards Lord Ram by making peace with the Lord and returning Sita to him, Ravana bluntly refused, and the atmosphere progressively became extremely bitter and acrimonious. Finally, when Angad determined that it was absolutely futile to make further arguments as Ravana was stubborn and obstinate, he decided to do something singularly memorable and remarkable before returning to Lord Ram.

So Angad decided that though he could not thrash Ravana and crush his pride in physical terms yet he must do it in a symbolic way. He planted his foot on the ground and challenged Ravana to move it with the condition that if the latter succeeded in doing so he would be deemed to be the winner, and if he failed to move Angad’s foot then he loses the war in a symbolic way. As it was destined by destiny and was the fiat of fate, Ravana failed to move Angad’s foot even by a fraction of a measurement. Angad thus managed to crush Ravana’s self-respect and esteem completely.

To wit, though Angad did not physically clobber Ravana and thrash him viciously in public as he would have very much liked to do, but couldn’t because of Lord Ram’s restraining orders, yet he did satisfy his boiling anger by doing something far worse by making Ravana kneel down before him and touch his feet in order to move them, for it was a token-gesture of submission, because for a great warrior loss of his honour, dignity and self-respect in full public gaze is far worse than physical death. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35.}]

जुगुति सुनत रावन मुसुकाई । मूढ़ सिखिहि कहँ बहुत झुठाई ॥ ५ ॥

बालि न कबहुँ गाल अस मारा । मिलि तपसिन्ह तैं भएसि लबारा ॥ ६ ॥

juguti sunata rāvana musukāī. mūrha sikhihi kaham̐ bahuta jhuthāī. 5.
bāli na kabahum̐ gāla asa mārā. mili tapasinha taim̐ bha'ēsi labārā. 6.

Hearing this horny but witty retort of Angad, Ravana sneered sarcastically, saying, ‘Oh you dumb fellow (mūrha)! Tell me, from where have you learnt to speak such bundle of lies. [Say, how have you learnt to speak such big lies?] (5)

Baali (your noble father) had never boasted so much, and he had never chattered in vain with a loud mouth (as you do). Surely, you have acquired this nasty habit of boastful bluster, speaking lies and vain talking due to your company with those hermits (Lord Ram and Laxman)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Ravana in effect told Angad that he should mind the reputation of his noble father Baali by reminding him of the latter. Ravana hinted to Angad that since he holds Baali in high esteem and treats him as one of his friends, he is willing to treat Angad also favourably, as the son of a close friend. If Angad says he refrains from hitting Ravana and destroying Lanka because he has no such express mandate from his Lord, Ram, then Ravana says that he too refrains from hitting and punishing Angad severely for all the insults and insinuations he had cast upon him (Ravana) just because he remembers his old friend Baali and restrains from hitting his friend's only son (Angad), but it should not be taken as his weakness. Rather, Angad must realise that his father was Ravana's friend, and in deference to his father's memory he must at least be polite enough to say 'sorry' to Ravana.

Ravana wished to provoke Angad's anger and stoke his emotions by making him remember his dead father Baali repeatedly, on one pretext or the other, so that he is incited to revolt against Sugriv, his uncle and the king of the monkey kingdom, and Lord Ram, who had befriended Sugriv and sought his help to launch a campaign on Lanka to retrieve his stolen wife Sita from the clutches of the demon king Ravana.

Ravana wished to tell Angad thus: "Why don't you understand that on the one hand here I am your father's dear friend who will be more committed to care for your future since you are orphaned, and on the other hand there is your selfish uncle Sugriv, and his protector Lord Ram, who had caused his death. Why can't you (Angad) judge for himself and weigh the two options to see that his good lies in joining me (Ravana), instead of living in perpetual fear under the reign of your jealous uncle? You call me a fool; but it is you who is a fool. Wake up from delusions and join hands with me against the enemy of your father."

Ravana's comments also throw light on the state of society at that time. It shows that people usually held hermits in low esteem, as ones who spoke of impossible things and falsely boasted of their spiritual achievements.]

साँचेहुँ मैं लबार भुज बीहा । जौं न उपारिउँ तव दस जीहा ॥ ७ ॥

समुझि राम प्रताप कपि कोपा । सभा माझ पन करि पद रोपा ॥ ८ ॥

जौं मम चरन सकसि सठ टारी । फिरहिं रामु सीता मैं हारी ॥ ९ ॥

sām̐cēhum̐ mair̐m labāra bhuja bīhā. jaur̐m na upāri'um̐ tava dasa jīhā. 7.

samujhi rāma pratāpa kapi kōpā. sabhā mājha pana kari pada rōpā. 8.

jaur̐m mama carana sakasi saṭha ṭārī. phirahir̐m rāmu sītā mair̐m hārī. 9.

Angad yelled back at Ravana, saying, 'Yes truly, oh you one with twenty arms (bhuja bīhā), I would have been a boaster who talks in vain if I couldn't tear out all your ten tongues.

[But mind you, you vile fellow; I have already told you why I refrain from doing it to prove that you are wrong in your assessment of me and my abilities. Haven't I told you that I desist from it only because my revered Lord Ram hasn't instructed my to harm you physically; I can't disobey him.¹]' (7)

Remembering Lord Ram's greatness, majesty and glory, Angad decided that enough was enough. [To prove to Ravana that he was not boasting till now—] He planted his foot firmly on the ground, and threw a challenge. (8)

[What was the challenge?] Angad proclaimed: ‘Oh you wicked and vile fellow (saṭha)! If you can move my foot, then Lord Ram shall return (back from Lanka) and I would be deemed to have lost Sita!’² (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-5, 8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 34.

²Angad was sent by Lord Ram as his emissary to negotiate Sita’s release. As an ambassador of the Lord, Angad was vested with the authority to decide the matter and adopt a course of action according to the situation, subject to the condition that the main objective was not defeated, which was to ensure that the path was cleared for Sita’s release from Ravana’s captivity.

Angad concluded that Ravana was not open to negotiations; he was not ready to listen, he was not ready to yield his ground because of his obstinate nature and a false sense of invincibility, and therefore he was not ready to make any compromises. What added fuel to the fire was Ravana’s persistent insinuations and use of derogatory language for Angad as well as Lord Ram. Angad decided that, if after hearing all the nasty things that Ravana blurted out like lava pouring out of a crater of a volcano, if he went away without doing some outstanding deed of bravery and exemplary courage, something that would completely demoralise the demons as a race and humiliate Ravana excessively, then it would not be his dignified departure from the meeting. He wanted to do some spectacular thing, but though he would have preferred pulling down Ravana physically from his throne and giving him a sound thrashing, yet he couldn’t do it because, as he himself asserts, it would violate Lord Ram’s injunction not to harm Ravana physically.

So Angad decided on a stratagem that would bring Ravana to his knees without even touching him, and without him being aware of what he was about to do. Hence, Angad planted his foot on the ground and asked Ravana to move it if he can. In order to move Angad’s feet, obviously Ravana would have to kneel down before him and touch his foot, which would be a visual treat for the whole demon court—that their mighty king who had made the greatest of gods kneel before him has today knelt before a ‘monkey’. Verily indeed and without gainsay, what a ridiculous situation would it be; what a sight to behold it would be—the mighty and invincible Ravana, whom the gods feared, bending over on his knees and holding the foot of Angad in a symbolic gesture of abject surrender and humiliating submission!

Angad betted that if Ravana refused to accept this challenge, then it would be equivalent to his accepting defeat in the war even before it actually began, and the consequent acknowledgment that Sita had to be given to Lord Ram because it was for her release that the war was to be fought. If however Ravana accepted the challenge thrown by Angad, then the latter’s objective would be fulfilled—which was to make the mighty king of the demons bow before him!

And as to taking such a serious risk as betting the whole outcome of the war and the fate of Sita on one single premise of success or failure at moving Angad’s foot by Ravana, Angad was so confident of Lord Ram’s mystical powers and his divinity, as well as his own loyalty and devotion for the Lord, that he was absolutely sure that when he throws a challenge by invoking the grace and blessings of Lord Ram then there is no power in this creation which would make him regret that he made a wrong decision, no power that would defeat him in his own challenge, to make him seem ridiculous and a vain person.

Lord Shiva, the principal narrator of this magnificent Story, has himself asserted that there was no wonder that Angad was confident that Ravana would be unable to move his legs in this challenge for he knew the mystical powers that Lord Ram possessed, as he was the almighty Supreme Lord of creation who can, if he so wishes, transform a humble twig into a powerful and strong weapon known as Vajra, and vice versa. Hence, any action taken in the name of the Lord can't fail, no matter what happens, especially when the objective is noble and righteous. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 35.}]

सुनुहु सुभट सब कह दससीसा । पद गहि धरनि पछारहु कीसा ॥ १० ॥
 इंद्रजीत आदिक बलवाना । हरषि उठे जहँ तहँ भट नाना ॥ ११ ॥
 झपटहिं करि बल बिपुल उपाई । पद न टरइ बैठहिं सिरु नाई ॥ १२ ॥

sunahu subhaṭa saba kaha dasasīsā. pada gahi dharani pachārahu kīsā. 10.
 indrajīta ādika balavānā. haraṣi uṭhē jaham̐ taham̐ bhaṭa nānā. 11.
 jhapaṭahim̐ kari bala bipula upāī. pada na ṭara'i baiṭhahim̐ siru nāī. 12.

Exasperated and peeved beyond measure, Ravana ordered his demon warriors angrily, 'Listen all of you excellent warriors (sunahu subhaṭa saba)! Hold this monkey by his legs and dash him to the ground.' (10)

Indrajeet (i.e. Meghanad, Ravana's son) along with other great demon warriors gladly rose from their seats to accept the challenge and carry out Ravana's orders. [They relished the thought of getting an opportunity of beating Angad black and blue to vent their anger which they had suppressed till now.] (11)

All of them, singly and together, lunged at Angad with all their muscle and might, making many deft attempts to try to move his foot, but they failed miserably and completely. Defeated, dejected and crestfallen, they returned to their respective seats and sat down with lowered heads (full of shame). (12)

पुनि उठि झपटहिं सुर आराती । टरइ न कीस चरन एहि भाँती ॥ १३ ॥
 पुरुष कुजोगी जिमि उरगारी । मोह बिटप नहिं सकहिं उपारी ॥ १४ ॥

puni uṭhi jhapaṭahim̐ sura ārātī. ṭara'i na kīsa carana ēhi bhāmṭī. 13.
 puruṣa kujōgī jimi uragārī. mōha biṭapa nahim̐ sakahim̐ upārī. 14.

[These two verses quote Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, who too had narrated this Story to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu. Their discourse is included in Ram Charit Manas in its Uttar Kand (i.e. the last Canto no. 7), from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Doha no. 125.]

Sage Kaagbhusund said to Garud, the enemy of serpents (uragārī), 'The tormentors of the gods ("sura ārātī"; i.e. the demons), after some pause to gather courage, once

again dashed towards Angad to try and move his foot, and it was repeated a number of times, but each time they failed miserably.

Verily oh Garud, the enemy of the serpents, Angad's (literally the 'monkey's'; "kīsa") foot did not budge from its position even a fraction just like an incompetent person (who is indulgent in affairs of the gross world and overcome with delusions) is unable to uproot the tree of attachment and infatuation¹. (13-14)

[Note—¹A person who remains engrossed in the world and finds enjoyment in its sensual pleasures cannot get over his worldly desires and his attachment with the things of the world. He is incompetent to do so. Only a person who is spiritually realised and enlightened will see the futility of this pursuit, leading him to develop renunciation.

Similarly, though the demon warriors made several attempts to fell Angad and fling him by his legs, they failed; these sinful demons were unable to defeat Lord Ram's devotee and break his resolve.

A similar scene prevailed long back in Janakpur during the Bow-breaking ceremony organised for Sita's marriage. At that time too none of the assembled kings and princes succeeded in moving Lord Shiva's bow. They too had rushed to try and lift the bow, singly as well as in a group, they too had tried repeatedly and failed, and they too returned to their seats with lowered head and sat down crestfallen. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251.}

दो०. कोटिन्ह मेघनाद सम सुभट उठे हरषाड़।

झपटहिं टरै न कपि चरन पुनि बैठहिं सिर नाड़ ॥ ३४ (क) ॥

भूमि न छाँड़त कपि चरन देखत रिपु मद भाग।

कोटि बिघ्न ते संत कर मन जिमि नीति न त्याग ॥ ३४ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

kōṭinha mēghanāda sama subhaṭa uṭhē haraṣā'i.

jhapatahim ṭarai na kapi carana puni baiṭhahim sira nā'i. 34 (a).

bhūmi na chāṁṛata kapi carana dēkhata ripu mada bhāga.

kōṭi bighna tē santa kara mana jimi nīti na tyāga. 34 (b).

Countless numbers of excellent demon warriors, who were like Meghanad (Ravan's son) in their valour, strength, courage, marital skills and gallantry, cheerfully got up from their seats and lunged forward excitedly towards Angad, but no matter how hard they tried and what tactic they employed yet none of them were able to move his feet. At last, they returned to their seats and sat down (with a sullen face, a lowered head and a broken spirit that comes with abject defeat that was not at all expected, leaving all the demon warriors despondent, gloomy, dejected, crestfallen and ashamed of themselves). (Doha no. 34-a)

It was a profound mystery and a cause of great wonder for the demons that the monkey's legs did not move a bit from the earth on which they were planted. When the enemy ("ripu"; i.e. Ravana and his demons) observed all this development, its pride, ego and haughtiness ran away (i.e. was crushed and vanquished)¹.

Angad's feet did not move, but remained firmly planted on the ground, just like the case of a saint who remains steady in following his principles, and whose mind and heart (Mana) do not abandon the path of righteousness and auspiciousness, a path that is right and correct, inspite of all the provocations, adversities and hurdles he faces in life². (Doha no. 34-b)

[Note—¹To wit, when Ravana and all others saw that they could not move Angad's feet even for a fraction of measurement from the ground inspite of employing all their might, force and skill, their ego and pride were crushed; they felt utterly humiliated at their inability to move a leg of as humble a creature as a 'monkey'. To add salt to their wounds, this humiliation and defeat was made starker because they had pooled their strength and force to move a single challenger's legs, and surely the pushing, pulling and hauling must have been done with great energy and zeal, but yet they failed miserably. However the demons tried and tried, Angad's legs did not budge from their position on the ground.

The demons who prided themselves with possession of stupendous strength and powers against which not even the might of the gods survived, were, for the first time in their lives, faced with a situation that proved to them that there were forces stronger and mightier than them in this creation, and that for the first time they were up against a formidable adversary who presented a grave danger to their very existence, an adversary who was far more superior and powerful than them.

Hence their ego was crushed; their pride bit dust; their haughtiness was blown away like dried leaven in a storm; their strength and valour crumbled like nine-pins; and their morale sank in a deep dark pit of hopelessness, gloom and dejection.

²An exactly similar idea is expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, e.g. in (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; and in (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38.]

चौ०. कपि बल देखि सकल हियँ हारे । उठा आपु कपि कें परचारे ॥ १ ॥
गहत चरन कह बालिकुमारा । मम पद गहें न तोर उबारा ॥ २ ॥
गहसि न राम चरन सठ जाई । सुनत फिरा मन अति सकुचाई ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

kapi bala dēkhi sakala hiyaṁ hārē. uṭhā āpu kapi kēm paracārē. 1.
gahata carana kaha bālikumārā. mama pada gahēm na tōra ubārā. 2.
gahasi na rāma carana saṭha jāī. sunata phirā mana ati sakucāī. 3.

Seeing the Kapi's (Angad's; literally "monkey's") stupendous strength (which defied the combined strength of all the mighty demon warriors who had tried to move his leg), everyone felt defeated and gloomy in their hearts.

Meanwhile, Ravana now himself got up from his seat in a flurry (unable to contain his anger and frustration at his warriors who had put his honour to shame) to hold Angad by his legs and dash him to the ground¹. (1)

At the moment when Ravana caught Angad's foot (in an attempt to lift it), the latter sharply scorned at him and taunted: 'Look, you will not save yourself (and gain nothing) by holding my feet. (2)

Oh you big fool (saṭha)! Why don't you go and hold Lord Ram's feet instead!?'

Hearing these scornful words of Angad that were said with a grave tone, Ravana felt extremely peeved and ashamed of himself; he then somehow recovered himself from the shock and returned to his seat, ashen-faced and despondent². (3)

[Note—¹Surely enough, when Ravana saw what had happened, he must have burnt with anger inside himself. He must have cursed his warriors vehemently, and called them vile names. It was the greatest humiliation of his life, and he was unable to restrain himself. He was so overpowered by wrath and felt so much provoked and frustrated by the developments that his natural wisdom and prudence abandoned him, for he could not properly analyse the situation and what it meant. He ought to have pondered why none of the demon warriors could move Angad's feet; definitely there must be a mystery behind it, and the situation was very serious, and therefore it had to be handled very diplomatically and skilfully so that whatever was left of his honour could be salvaged.

When Death stares in one's face, when Providence frowns upon an unfortunate creature, when his Time seems to be up, then all his intelligence and wisdom and sense of judgement go for a toss. So, instead of exercising restraint and showing prudence by avoiding to put himself directly in harm's way and getting embroiled in a situation that would eliminate a last chance at face-saving, Ravana unfortunately decided, in a fitful frenzy of anger that eclipsed his wisdom, to jump into the same horrifying pit which had just a moment ago trounced all his predecessors, leaving them all scarred, defeated and humiliated like never before, without considering about the consequences of his rash decision.

²Angad had achieved his objective; Ravana hadn't foreseen it coming. At last, Angad succeeded in making Ravana—who had never ever bowed before anyone, but who had instead made the whole world bow before him—kneel down and touch his feet in order to move it from the ground.

This situation was akin to a defeated person kneeling down and praying for mercy by touching the feet of another person who had vanquished him; it is a token gesture that symbolises surrender and submission by someone who has been defeated by his opponent.

Ravana fell into this trap himself. Whatever little grace and honour and self-respect and dignity and majesty that were still available to him were now gone for good. Anger and delusions had clouded his mind so much that he couldn't think rationally. When Angad reminded him that he had fallen into the trap, with his taunting words, "you will not benefit by touching my feet, rather you should have gone to touch Lord Ram's feet", Ravana suddenly realised what grave mistake he had made. He regretted intensely and immensely at his own reckless actions, but by now it was too late to make any amends. The colourful balloon of honour, majesty, valour and pride had been punctured irreparably, and it cannot be inflated again to regain its earlier glory.

Ravana returned to his throne with a lowered head and a sulking countenance. His frame appeared like an old demon past his prime. He dragged his legs to take him to his seat. All the others in the assembly had their heads low, and even if some of these demons had raised their heads and eyes slyly to watch Ravana's daring, when they saw what happened they immediately fixed their eyes on the ground before them once again to pretend they had not witnessed Ravana's humiliation. Why? Because

these demons knew Ravana's nature, that he would vent his anger and frustration at them, and in all probability if his eyes caught any one of them looking up at him then he would get that demon's eyes gouged out.

To wit, a deathly silence descended on the court of the demons. The developments so terrified and horrified all the demons that they were out of their wits; not one of them moved from his seat, as they remained sitting stone-still like so many statues that don't breathe.]

भयउ तेजहत श्री सब गई । मध्य दिवस जिमि ससि सोहई ॥ ४ ॥

सिंघासन बैठेउ सिर नाई । मानहुँ संपति सकल गँवाई ॥ ५ ॥

bhaya'u tējahata śrī saba gaī. madhya divasa jimi sasi sōhaī. 4.
siṅghāsana baiṭhē'u sira nāī. mānahum̐ sampati sakala gaṁvāī. 5.

Ravana's faces¹ that normally glowed with radiance that comes naturally to a person with exceptional power, majesty and self-confidence attained by great achievements and countless successes that he had obtained in life, which in their wake bring great glories and honours to him, had now turned dark and gloomy with a thick shadow of despondency, despair and hopelessness hanging over them. His faces lacked their original shine and glory just like the case of the moon which loses its radiance and charm when viewed during the day time². (4)

He (Ravana) sat down on his throne with drooping heads (and lost spirits) as if he had lost all his wealth and possessions³. (5)

[Note—¹Remember: Ravana had 'ten faces'.

²The moon looks so attractive and splendid during the night, but the same moon seems a faded image of its self when seen during the day time. Why so? It is because during the day the splendour, radiance and brilliance of the sun suppresses the shine of the moon, making it appear faded and overcast.

The analogy is remarkable here: Angad's trouncing of Ravana and his success in the mission for which he was sent by Lord Ram was reflected by the radiance and glow effusing from his proud face like the brilliant shine of the sun, while the gloomy thoughts clouding the mind of Ravana and the dejection of his spirits are indicated by the dark shadows of loss, despair and hopelessness showing on his faces as if they were veiled by dark clouds that reminded an observer of the moon which loses its shine in the presence of the brilliant midday sun.

³The countenance of Ravana was like that of a warrior who has lost the battle, or of a tradesman who has lost all his tools and assets. He had never tasted such humiliation in his life; for a great warrior of his stature there could have been nothing worse and more humiliating than being unable to meet such a simple challenge as the requirement of moving an adversary's legs. It was a ridiculous and a hilarious way of accepting defeat for as great a warrior as the king of the demon race whose mere name struck terror in the hearts of the entire world. It was the greatest ignominy and infamy that could have ever come to Ravana because he personally failed to meet Angad's simple challenge of moving his feet, something that required no great skill,

power, gallantry and valour like it is required to face a challenge in the battle-field. So it was shame compounded many times over.

Even the burning of Lanka and the killing of his son Akshaya Kumar by Hanuman earlier had not caused such extreme distress in Ravana as this symbolic defeat for not being able to move Angad's foot, because this defeat was his personal defeat, it undermined his personal prestige, dignity and honour unlike on the previous occasion when he was spared this ignominy on the ground that his personal abilities and powers were not challenged and tested.

Verily, there is nothing worse for a warrior in his life, there is no greater loss that he can ever fear from in his life than to abjectly lose a challenge thrown by his opponent in the way Ravana miserably lost Angad's singularly simple-looking challenge of moving his foot from the ground, which by means was required any show of great marital art and valour.

For a warrior king, his self-respect, honour, dignity, majesty, strength and powers, as well as a grand reputation that he always wins a challenge and no one can defeat him, are his greatest assets and a matter of pride for him; if they are gone he has lost everything.

Ravana's shame was further compounded in the background of his boasting about his stupendous strength and astounding powers and great attainments and exalted position in this world just a few moments ago, for this inability to move Angad's foot blew away all his boast and bluster about his might and majesty like dry leaves in a storm. He felt crestfallen and humiliated like a defeated warrior, or a tradesman who has lost everything in a deal he was confident he would win hands down, but which, unfortunately for him, went sour.

Had he been more modest and restrained in his approach then perhaps his loss of face wouldn't have been so marked, but now it was in sharp contrast with his own tall claims. So therefore, Ravana's gloom and dejection are understandable.]

जगदातमा प्रानपति रामा । तासु बिमुख किमि लह बिश्रामा ॥ ६ ॥
 उमा राम की भृकुटि बिलासा । होइ बिस्व पुनि पावइ नासा ॥ ७ ॥
 तृन ते कुलिस कुलिस तृन करई । तासु दूत पन कहु किमि टरई ॥ ८ ॥

jagadātamā prānapati rāmā. tāsu bimukha kimi laha biśrāmā. 6.
 umā rāma kī bhṛkuṭi bilāsā. hō'i bisva puni pāva'i nāsā. 7.
 ṛṇa tē kulisa kulisa ṛṇa kara'ī. tāsu dūta pana kahu kimi ṭara'ī. 8.

[Lord Shiva, the principal narrator of this magnificent Story, observed—] ‘Verily indeed, Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Soul of this creation (jagadātamā) and the Lord of Life (prānapati). How can anyone who is opposed to such an exalted and divine Lord ever expect to have peace for himself¹? (6)

Oh Uma (Shiva's consort and the listener of this Story)! The whole world can be created or destroyed by the mere movement of Lord Ram's eyebrows. Verily, it can be created anew and ended repeatedly by the Lord's mere wish indicated by the movement of his brows implying that he wants change.² (7)

He (Lord Ram) who can transform a humble twig (or a soft blade of grass) into Vajra (something exceptionally hard and strong, such as rock, stone or diamond), and vice versa, say how is it possible to sway the vow and determination made by his chosen messenger?³ (8)

[Note—¹These few verses are sort of a pause in the flow of the current narrative as they refer to the observations made occasionally by Lord Shiva, who was the primary narrator of this glorious Story of the Ramayan, to his consort Uma who was listening to this narration.

Hence, it was Lord Shiva who said: “Well, Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being and the merciful Lord of the world; so say how anyone can hope to find happiness and peace if he opposes his own Lord?”

²To wit, since Lord Ram is the Supreme Being he is also the creator and lord of this universe. Therefore it is he alone who decides how long he wishes to keep this creation in its present shape. Should he decide to bring an end to his playful and creative activity, which in the first place had brought this creation into existence, he can do so as he is the only Lord and Master of this universe, one who had envisioned this creation, and to give effect to his ideas he then put the different elements together to give shape to this world, and when he so decides, by-and-by, to create a new world of a new kind, he would simply first end his earlier creation and start afresh.

The phrase “he can create and end the world by merely moving his eyebrows” is a symbolic way of saying that everything depends upon his wishes. If he frowns upon something he would end it; if he raises his brows it means some change is inevitable.

³A messenger, an ambassador, or an emissary represents his Lord and Master who has sent him. He has the same authority and discretionary powers as his Principal whom he represents. Anything the emissary does and any decision that he takes is deemed to be done by his Lord and Master, and the latter must honour all that his emissary does on his behalf. This is the accepted principle of state diplomacy. It can’t be a one-sided game—that the Master would honour his emissary’s actions if they are pleasing to him, and dishonour the actions if they displease him.

Therefore, whatever Angad did, whether right or wrong, were deemed to have been done by Lord Ram, because Angad represented the Lord and was acting on his behalf. Hence, Angad’s challenge—that if Ravana could move his foot then the latter would deem to have won the war, and as a consequence he would lose Sita and go back—had the same weight as a challenge thrown by Lord Ram himself by default.

The word used by Angad when he threw the aforementioned challenge was actually “I”. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 34.}

This is very significant in the context of what is said currently. It proves that when Angad challenged Ravana and staked the outcome of the war on it, he was well aware of the fact that he is doing it not in his personal capacity but as the one who physically represents Lord Ram by default. Angad embodied the authority and the powers to make decision that Lord Ram possessed because the Lord had himself vested Angad with them. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 17.}

This is why Ravana failed to move Angad’s foot, for otherwise it would have been equivalent to defying Lord Ram’s sacrosanct supremacy and authority in this

world as its Supreme Lord. Ravana was not pitted against 'a member of the monkey race whose name happened to be one Angad', but he faced the authority and the might and the power of the 'Supreme Being whom Angad represented in physical form'. Therefore, the prospect of Ravana ever being able to move Angad's legs was simply unimaginable, simply unthinkable and simply impossible; the very idea that Ravana could move Angad's foot is simply incongruous, simply incredulous, and simply outrageous.]

पुनि कपि कही नीति बिधि नाना । मान न ताहि कालु निअराना ॥ ९ ॥
रिपु मद मथि प्रभु सुजसु सुनायो । यह कहि चल्यो बालि नृप जायो ॥ १० ॥

puni kapi kahī nīti bidhi nānā. māna na tāhi kālu ni'arānā. 9.
ripu mada mathi prabhu sujasu sunāyō. yaha kahi calyō bālī nrpa jāyō. 10.

Even at this late stage, the Kapi (i.e. Angad) tried to advise Ravana in various ways to be reasonable and stop his belligerence. But as his (Ravana's) death was nearing, he refused to listen to anything¹. (9)

[Finally Angad gave up his attempts.] After crushing the pride, arrogance, honour, dignity and self-respect of the enemy and making him hear the glories of Lord Ram, Angad prepared to leave the demon court and go back to the Lord. But before his departure, he said, --- (10)

[Note—¹This verse shows that after what had just happened, i.e. after the failure of all the demons to move Angad's foot, he remained in the demon court for some more time, making a last effort to somehow make Ravana mend his ways. Angad hoped that after such a great humiliation as he had just faced, Ravana would come to his senses and realise that things are going against him, that the tide of time is not in his favour. But unfortunately, like a man destined to die refuses to take medicines, Ravana obstinately refused to listen anything Angad had to say.

From Ravana's perspective it was expected that he would not listen anymore to Angad. After the humiliation and insult that Ravana suffered at the instance of Angad, it was impractical to expect the former that he would now heed to what the latter proposed, no matter how earnest Angad might have been, as it would be like Ravana putting salt with his own hands on his raw wounds. No one of any rudimentary self-respect and trace of dignity in him would accept a proposal from his adversary in an ugly, dishonourable and undignified situation in which Ravana found himself vis-à-vis Angad.]

हतौं न खेत खेलाइ खेलाई । तोहि अबहिं का करौं बड़ाई ॥ ११ ॥
प्रथमहिं तासु तनय कपि मारा । सो सुनि रावन भयउ दुखारा ॥ १२ ॥
जातुधान अंगद पन देखी । भय व्याकुल सब भए बिसेषी ॥ १३ ॥

hataum na khēta khēlā'i khēlā'ī. tōhi abahim kā karaum barā'ī. 11.
prathamahim tāsū tanaya kapi mārā. sō suni rāvana bhaya'u dukhārā. 12.

jātudhāna aṅgada pana dēkhī. bhaya byākula saba bha'ē bisēṣī. 13.

I will not boast of anything (like you have been doing) until the time when I play around with you (kicking and punching you repeatedly) in the battle-field, before finally ending the game by killing you¹.’ (11)

When Ravana heard for the first time that his son had been killed by the Kapi (Angad)², he was overwhelmed with grief and felt extremely sad. (12)

Meanwhile, all the demons present on the occasion were greatly alarmed and felt immensely distressed due to fear when they heard Angad’s vow (that he will kick Ravana around the battle-field till he dies)³. (13)

[Note—¹Angad said to Ravana: “My friend, I am not in the habit of talking much bluster and make tall claims like you. So it would not look good for me to say what I shall be doing to you in the battle-field to compensate for what I couldn’t do now. Didn’t I say a while ago that I would have liked to clobber you and bash all your ten heads and then dash you to the ground, and then throw your city of Lanka into the ocean had it not been for the restraint imposed upon me by Lord Ram, for he hasn’t given his permission to do any such thing? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 34.}

You seem to take me lightly; you think I am boasting; you think I am a pretentious and vain fellow who lies and talks too much as you are accustomed to doing. Ain’t it? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 34.}

Well, wait for some time till the war actually starts, and then you will see for yourself in the battle-field how boastful and pretentious I am. I promise you an exciting game when we two will face each other. At that time, play well and hard, for we have to prove ourselves; do you know what I shall be doing? I shall be chasing you around the battle-field just like a footballer chases the ball towards the goal, all the while kicking the poor ball with the tip and side of his boots. And do you know what or where the goal is where I will drive you? Well, it’s to your death. But remember, it’s going to be a painful death, and a humiliating one to boot. Do you know why? Would it not be a shameful thing for the ‘mighty Ravana’, whose mere name chilled the blood of the gods in their veins, to run around terrified in the battle-field, screaming and yelping in pain, breathless and panting, as he is chased by a humble ‘monkey’ by the name of Angad who would be breathing down his neck, kicking and punching him left and right, backward and forward, till the ‘goal’ is reached, when one final vicious kick by Angad will end the game for all times to come for Ravana?

My dear Ravana. What you’ve witnessed till now was just a glimpse of what is yet to come. You see, both of us are great warriors, and a good warrior worth his name and honour of his family is one who would like a level playing field with his opponent to decide who among the two is the winner in a duel. Your demon court is not surely a level playing field, for here you are a king sitting on a kingdom’s throne, and I a mere messenger who stands before you to convey a message from my Lord Ram. The battle-field, on the other hand, is a completely different proposition, for it is an arena where there are the two challengers on the ground at the center, and they are surrounded by cheering spectators standing around them in a circle. Well, when we meet next in the battle-field, the demon army will be cheering for you, and I will be

cheered by my friends in the Lord's army. It will be the time for us to showcase our respective skills and valour.

So now come on, brace yourself for the real game; girdle yourself for the real challenge. Moving my foot was an impossible task for thee here in the middle of your power center in your own palace, so I wonder what would thou doest when this power center would be an open field.

Mind you comrade; don't collapse out of exhaustion in the battle-field; keep your wits together and don't baulk when you see me in front of you then. Remember: all those whom you had kicked around and trounced all your life will be watching this game, and so be careful not to give them a chance to purse their lips in merriment and whistle at you, and hoot you at the top of their voices at the cost of your discomfort. So get ready to play hard-ball with me.

Your life has truly come full circle; first it was my father Baali who had trounced you, then in the interim period that followed that incident you had managed to reach for the sky in fame and glory, and now it's the time for Baal's on, that's me, to repeat what my father had done to you to show you your place under the sun by trouncing you once again and ending this game for good.

Goodbye for now; go and have a good night's sleep and relax. Get up refreshed tomorrow morning, for I shall be meeting you again in the arena of the battle-field."

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 18. We note that all those demons who had witnessed the death of Ravana's son at the hands of Angad preferred to keep quiet because they feared a backlash from Ravana if he heard this bad news. They feared that Ravana was sure to punish all those demons who did not oppose Angad as he was kicking and dashing his son to death. So no one wanted to become a witness to this event.

Nevertheless, sooner or later the news had to reach Ravana through his spies. But by this time Angad had already crushed the dignity and pride and self-respect of all the mightiest of demons in Ravana's court, along with Ravana himself.

It may have been possible that the spy who took the news of death of Ravana's son to the court reached at a time when the high-pitched drama involving Angad was unfolding; so he preferred to keep quiet as the moment was not good for breaking this bad news. When he saw that Angad has left the court and a pall of gloomy silence has descended upon the assembly, he quietly went to Ravana and disclosed that his son had been killed by Angad before he came in his presence.

Ravana was already reeling from the thunderbolt that had struck him a moment ago, and this bad news of his son's death was like hitting a body that is already lying unconscious after being struck hard by the thunderbolt. He squirmed uncomfortably a bit, took a deep breath, and it was some time before the gravity of the bad news sank in his heart and affected his conscious mind. But he was, by this time, so shocked and smarting by the latest developments that his senses were dulled and rendered so unresponsive that he merely sulked and grieved instead of showing external signs of vicious anger or making an emotional outburst or expressing any outrage at the news that his son was killed by an intruder while none of the demons present at the time ventured to protect him. This was unpardonable.

Ordinarily, Ravana would have lost his temper and ordered immediate slaying of all the demons who were assigned the task of escorting his son as he went around the city. But this was no ordinary time. The wounds inflicted by Angad on Ravana's honour, majesty, pride and self-respect were so deep and grave that the news of his

son's death was like another wound by the side of the others. Ravana was already suffering so intensely from grief and distress and despondency arising out of abject humiliation and insult and defeat that one more bad news didn't much aggravate anything for him.

He didn't yell and scream at the demon who broke the news of his son's death. He merely sulked further and sank deeper in grief.

Meanwhile, this verse clearly indicates that after warning Ravana of his fate in the battle-field, Angad had left the demon court to go back to Lord Ram. The spy, who brought the news of death of Ravana's son and was quietly waiting till the current proceedings of the court ended, then approached Ravana, and after excusing himself politely, he whispered the bad news in his ears.

Ravana sighed in distress and grieved at his son's death. What could he do? Misfortunes were lashing at him in endless waves, one after another, each graver than the previous one.

³In this testing time, each demon was concerned about his personal fate; everyone was submerged in his own gloomy thoughts so much that the bad news of the death of Ravana's son passed unnoticed, without arousing a tumult. At the most it was another sign of what was in store for all of them in the context of Angad's prophesy—that portended complete rout of the demon army and death to their chief commanders, including their king Ravana.

But this news—of death of another of Ravana's sons at the hands of Angad—was nothing new as previously another son of Ravana, named Akshaya Kumar, had also died in a similar way when he was killed by Hanuman. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 18.}

Therefore, this bad news did not cause much of a commotion in the court, as by this time Ravana as well as his courtiers had become accustomed to hearing worse news.]

दो०. रिपु बल धरषि हरषि कपि बालितनय बल पुंज ।

पुलक सरीर नयन जल गहे राम पद कंज ॥ ३५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

ripu bala dharaṣi haraṣi kapi bālitanaya bala puñja.

pulaka sarīra nayana jala gahē rāma pada kañja. 35 (a).

After having completely crushed the strength, power and valour (as well as the majesty, the dignity and the honour) of the enemy (Ravana), the Kapi—who was an embodiment of strength, courage and gallantry (bala puñja) and a son of Baali (“kapi bālitanaya”; i.e. Angad)—went back and submitted himself humbly at the feet of Lord Ram.

Buoyed by success, his (Angad's) body was thrilled; his eyes were filled with tears (of joy); and he felt exceedingly exhilarated (at being able to fulfil the mandate given to him by the Lord)¹. (Doha no. 35-a)

[Note—¹When Hanuman had returned from Lanka after successful completion of the mission assigned to him—which was to find the whereabouts of Sita—a similar sight

was witnessed; for Hanuman too had submitted himself humbly before the feet of Lord Ram, and his body was thrilled and exhilarated. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 32 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}]

{After Mandodari had failed in her three previous attempts to somehow persuade Ravana to abandon his haughtiness and ego that would lead to his ruin, and instead wake up to the realities and make peace with Lord Ram by sending his abducted wife Sita back to him, she felt awfully exasperated and frustrated as well as desperate. She decided to shame Ravana by debunking his boast and bluster of invincibility and infallibility with a list of his failures and weaknesses, asking him where was his valour and strength and courage during those moments where he had to bite dust and put himself to public shame and humiliation. She intended to point out to him that all his claim of invincibility and infallibility, of possessing matchless power and strength fall flat and sound hollow boast when considered in the backdrop of the listed events. She wished to boldly tell him how weak, fragile and ill-prepared he actually is, how deluded he has become by living in an illusionary world of his own dreams which he has managed to conjure up in his imagination just to satisfy is misplaced ego and a sense of false self-pride.

But unfortunately Ravana would not listen to any entreaty and reasoning as he was grabbed by the claws of the God of Death.

In the following verses we read how Mandodari makes a last-ditch effort to make her husband relent and avoid the bloody war with Lord Ram.}

साँझ जानि दसकंधर भवन गयउ बिलखाइ ।

मंदोदरीं रावनहि बहुरि कहा समुझाइ ॥ ३५ (ख) ॥

sām̐jha jāni dasakandhara bhavana gaya'u bilakhā'i.

mandōdarīm rāvanahi bahuri kahā samujhā'i. 35 (b).

[After Angad, Lord Ram's messenger, had humiliated Ravana in full court and called his bluff of invincibility and infallibility for all the naught it was worth, the demon king was crestfallen and utterly dejected. He dismissed his court, and as it was twilight hours he retired to his palace.]

As evening fell, the ten-headed demon king Ravana went to his palace in a completely disconsolate and somber mood.

[Mandodari was highly upset by the recent developments, and when she observed that her husband Ravana was extremely perturbed she realized that the situation was truly very grave.]

As soon as Ravana entered the palace, Mandodari made another attempt to try and persuade him to abandon his arrogance, and make peace with Lord Ram. (Doha no. 35-b)

चौ०. कंत समुझि मन तजहु कुमतिही । सोह न समर तुम्हहि रघुपतिही ॥ १ ॥

रामानुज लघु रेख खचाई । सोउ नहिं नाघेहु असि मनुसाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kanta samujhi mana tajahu kumatihī. sōha na samara tumhahi raghupatihī.

(1)

rāmānuja laghu rēkha khacāī. sō'u nahim nāghēhu asi manusāī. 2.

She said, ‘My dear husband (kanta)! Ponder earnestly about the developments and think seriously about them in your mind. You ought to abandon your perversity as a confrontation between you and Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) is quite out of the place, for it would bring no glory to you, but only ignominy and shame. (1)

Lord Ram’s younger brother (Laxman) had marked a small circle (around Sita) which you dared not cross (at the time you abducted her)—such is your valour and courage, isn’t it¹? (2)

[Note—¹After all her previous attempts had failed, Mandodari decided to shame her husband by calling his boast a bluff in a final effort to make him realize his weaknesses, fears and failures by citing some instances that highlight his Achilles’ heel.

It seems in all probability that Mandodari chose to put her husband to embarrassment and disgrace by rebuking him and listing all the events that show him in a very poor light as being totally incompetent, impotent and cowardly inspite of his boast and bluster is because Ravana had rebuked her earlier by saying that she, being a woman, has eight faults or shortcoming or weaknesses in her character that are natural to her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 16.

Mandodari had felt intensely disgusted at Ravana’s above remark at that time because it was totally unwarranted, as her attempt to persuade him to avoid a war with Lord Ram was good intentioned and meant to avoid a calamity befalling her husband, and nothing more. She never meant to insult him or undermine his status as a great warrior whose valour and abilities were undoubted. But after Ravana’s chiding her and calling her weak in character, she decided to turn the tables on him—to prove to him that it was he who had so many weaknesses, instead of her.

The first instance she cites is of the moment when Ravana had gone to kidnap Sita at Panchavati. At that time, Laxman had made a circle on the ground by the tip of his arrow before leaving the hermitage on the insistence of Sita who had compelled him to go in the direction in which Lord Ram had gone pursuing the golden deer in order to help his brother. Laxman had infused this circle with magical charm that if anyone tries to overstep it and come inside he would be burnt. Sita would be safe within it.

Ravana did not dare to cross this cursed circle to grab Sita, so he employed a ruse of assuming the form of a mendicant and asking her for alms which she could give him only by stepping outside the circumference of the circle because Ravana was standing a little away from it. So, as soon as she stepped out of the circle to give him alms, Ravana grabbed her and ran away like a scared animal who has dared to steal a lion’s kill in his absence and fears for his own life.

This incident of Laxman drawing a circle around Sita and Ravana not having the courage to cross it is mentioned in a little known book titled “Hanumanna Naatak”, in its Canto 8, verse no. 36, and Canto 9, verse no. 9.]

पिय तुम्ह ताहि जितब संग्रामा । जाके दूत केर यह कामा ॥ ३ ॥
 कौतुक सिंधु नाघि तव लंका । आयउ कपि केहरी असंका ॥ ४ ॥
 रखवारे हति बिपिन उजारा । देखत तोहि अच्छ तेहि मारा ॥ ५ ॥
 जारि सकल पुर कीन्हेसि छारा । कहाँ रहा बल गर्ब तुम्हारा ॥ ६ ॥

piya tumha tāhi jitaba saṅgrāmā. jākē dūta kēra yaha kāmā. 3.
 kautuka sindhu nāghi tava laṅkā. āya'u kapi kēharī asaṅkā. 4.
 rakhavārē hati bipina ujārā. dēkhata tōhi accha tēhim mārā. 5.
 jāri sakala pura kīnhēsi chārā. kahām̐ rahā bala garba tumhārā. 6.

My dear (piya)! Do you hope that you can win him (Lord Ram) in a war whose humble messengers had done such marvelous deeds that were recently witnessed by all of us, and which defy imagination? (3)

A monkey (i.e. Hanuman) playfully (i.e. effortlessly) leapt across the mighty ocean and entered Lanka fearlessly as if he was a lion (moving boldly and fearlessly in the forest). (4)

Once here, he had laid to ruin your forest and killed its guards. When your son Akshay Kumar was sent by you to capture him, he too was killed even while you watched. (5)

Not only this, he (Hanuman) had burnt your city of Lanka to ashes¹. Tell me, where was your strength and power, of which you boast so much, at that time; what were you doing?

[Tell me, couldn't you stop Hanuman and prevent the devastation that he had unleashed right under your nose? What to talk of preventing the calamity that befell our city, you could not even punish Hanuman for what he did, for he went away from Lanka unharmed with no single demon warrior having the guts to stop him from escaping. And you could not garner the courage to summon those demon guards who were assigned the duty of protecting the borders of the kingdom, and ask for at least an explanation from them.] (6)

[Note—¹These events are narrated in detail in the fifth Canto called 'Sundar Kand' of Ram Charit Manas.]

अब पति मृषा गाल जनि मारहु । मोर कहा कछु हृदयँ बिचारहु ॥ ७ ॥
 पति रघुपतिहि नृपति जनि मानहु । अग जग नाथ अतुल बल जानहु ॥ ८ ॥

aba pati mṛṣā gāla jani mārāhu. mōra kahā kachu hṛdayam̐ bicārahu. 7.
 pati raghupatihi nṛpati jani mānāhu. aga jaga nātha atula bala jānāhu. 8.

Now my dear husband, do not boast unnecessarily and stop talking bluster; enough is enough. You must pay heed to my advice even now as it is still not too late to make amends. (7)

Oh my husband (pati)! Do not treat the Lord of the Raghus (“raghupati”; Lord Ram) as an ordinary human prince, but regard him as the ‘Lord of the whole world¹’, and one who has immense supernatural powers at his disposal. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.]

बान प्रताप जान मारीचा । तासु कहा नहिं मानेहि नीचा ॥ ९ ॥
जनक सभाँ अगनित भूपाला । रहे तुम्हउ बल अतुल बिसाला ॥ १० ॥
भंजि धनुष जानकी बिआही । तब संग्राम जितेहु किन ताही ॥ ११ ॥

bāna pratāpa jāna māricā. tāsu kahā nahim mānēhi nīcā. 9.
janaka sabhām¹ aganita bhūpālā. rahē tumha'u bala atula bisālā. 10.
bharjī dhanuṣa jānakī bi'āhī. taba saṅgrāma jitēhu kina tāhī. 11.

Marich was fully aware of the might and prowess of his (Lord Ram's) arrows¹. When you had gone to him (Marich) to ask him to help you abduct Sita, he had tried to tell you the reality and dissuade you from being rash, but you treated him with utter contempt and disdain, not listening to his sane advice which was intended for your own welfare². [What was the result? Marich lost his life for no fault of his. You brought Sita to Lanka, and this led to Hanuman coming here and killing our son Akshay Kumar and setting the city of Lanka on fire. Is it not enough to make you alarmed?] (9)

In the royal court of king Janak, all the great kings and princes of the world had assembled, and you, who claim to possess huge strength and immense powers, were present there too (weren't you)³. (10)

In that assembly, he (Lord Ram) had broken the bow (of Lord Shiva) and wed the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita)⁴. Why didn't you challenge him at that time and defeat him in order to claim the hands of Sita right then and there?⁵ (11)

[Note—¹When Marich and Subahu and other demons had gone to disrupt sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice which Lord Ram and Laxman were protecting, the Lord had killed all the other demons but spared Marich's life by shooting him with a headless arrow which struck Marich with such a force that he was immediately flung to a far away island in the middle of the ocean. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 292.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 292.

Aren't you ashamed of yourself? All other assembled kings and princes had at least shown the courage to rise in revolt against Janak, although they were subdued immediately because sage Parashuram had intervened angrily to protest the breaking of the bow. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 268.}

But you had chosen to escape silently without letting anyone know that you are gone. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 256.}

Tell me, where was your valour and courage and dare devilry then? Had you challenged Lord Ram for a duel at that time and defeated him, you would not only have got Sita as a trophy but would also have gained immense fame and world-wide recognition. Tell me, what stopped you from doing it? Instead of claiming Sita as your rightful prize, you stole her slyly like a thief. Is this how a brave warrior acts; is this the character of a brave soul that you pretend to be? Verily, the actual way you behaved shows you in a very poor light, more like that of a coward and a scoundrel than any warrior worth his name.]

सुरपति सुत जानइ बल थोरा । राखा जिअत आँखि गहि फोरा ॥ १२ ॥
सूपनखा कै गति तुम्ह देखी । तदपि हृदयँ नहिं लाज बिसेषी ॥ १३ ॥

surapati suta jāna'i bala thōrā. rākhā ji'ata ām̐khi gahi phōrā. 12.
sūpanakhā kai gati tumha dēkhī. tadapi hr̥dayam̐ nahim̐ lāja bisēṣī. 13.

The son of the king of Gods (i.e. Jayant, who was the son of Indra) believed that he (Lord Ram) did not have much strength and powers. But though Jayant committed a grave impropriety yet the Lord spared his life by just blinding him in one eye¹. (12)

You have witnessed the miserable fate that Supernakha had suffered², and yet you aren't ashamed of anything. (13)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

Briefly it is this: Jayant doubted the might of Lord Ram, so he assumed the form of a crow and went to prick Sita with his sharp beak. When Lord Ram saw blood oozing out of the wound, he picked a blade of grass and shot it at Jayant. No one in the world dared to shelter him against Lord Ram's arrow. Finally he was advised by sage Narad to go and plead for mercy with Lord Ram. The Lord took pity upon him and said that since his arrow can't go in vain so it would take out one eye of Jayant and spare his life. Thus, the 'crow' was left blinded in one eye.

²This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 22.

Mandodari severely chides Ravana, saying sarcastically, “Supernakha happens to be your sister, and when she came wailing to you to complain that her nose and ears had been cut by Lord Ram, why did you not immediately go and attack him to take revenge and settle scores? Why couldn’t you avenge her insult directly instead of taking recourse to deceit and falsehood by becoming a mendicant to steal Lord Ram’s wife instead? Is your cowardly, lowly, stupid and mean act not enough to put you to shame?”]

दो०. बधि बिराध खर दूषनहि लीलाँ हत्यो कबंध ।

बालि एक सर माख्यो तेहि जानहु दसकंध ॥ ३६ ॥

dōhā.

badhi birādha khara dūṣanahi līlām̐ hatyō kabandha.
bāli ēka sara māryō tēhi jānahu dasakandha. 36.

He (Lord Ram) had slayed, without the least effort as if it was a sporting activity for him, the demons named Viradha¹, Khar, Dushan² and Kabandha³. Not only this, he had slayed Baali⁴ (king of Kishkindha and the elder brother of Sugriv) with a single arrow.

Tell me oh Ravana (“dasakandha”; literally someone with ‘ten shoulders’, implying ‘ten heads’, one head over one shoulder)—don’t you know about these developments? Aren’t you yourself aware that these deaths cannot be caused by an ordinary person; hasn’t this thought crossed your mind and caused a lot of alarm to you⁵? (Doha no. 36)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20; and Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8; and Sortha no. 33-a.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 22 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-36 that follow it.]

चौ०. जेहिं जलनाथ बँधायउ हेली । उतरे प्रभु दल सहित सुबेला ॥ १ ॥

कारुनीक दिनकर कुल केतू । दूत पठायउ तव हित हेतू ॥ २ ॥

सभा माझ जेहिं तव बल मथा । करि बरूथ महुँ मृगपति जथा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jēhiṁ jalanātha bamḍhāya'u hēlā. utarē prabhu dala sahita subēlā. 1.
 kārunīka dinakara kula kētū. dūta paṭhāya'u tava hita hētū. 2.
 sabhā mājha jēhiṁ tava bala mathā. kari barūtha mahum̐ mṛgapati jathā. 3.

He (Lord Ram) had tied the ocean by constructing a bridge across it as if it were a sport for him (i.e. he achieved this stupendous feat of building a bridge across the turbulent surface of the mighty ocean, a feat never ever done heretofore, without the least effort)¹, and then landed in Lanka at Mt. Subel with his formidable army². [Were you asleep then; what were you doing? Why couldn't you stop him from building the bridge first, and then why couldn't you muster courage to stop him from landing in Lanka and pitching the camp for his huge army on Mt. Subel, right under your nose?]
 (1)

That merciful Lord (kārunīka) who is the flag-bearer of the glory of the Solar race (dinakara kula kētū) had been so kind and gracious that he chose to send a messenger of peace to your court keeping in mind your interests and welfare.

[To wit, Lord Ram decided to give a chance to peace by sending Angad as his messenger to you to explore the possibility of making peace and avoiding a war because he is so merciful that he did not wish to willingly become an instrument of your ruin, and instead forgive you for all your mischief in case you realized your mistakes and were willing to relent and make amends.]² (2)

In the middle of the full court that emissary had crushed your strength and trampled upon your honour fearlessly⁴ just like a brave lion enters a herd of elephants and vanquishes their pride by killing one of them⁵. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 5.

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

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 17 where Lord Ram makes his intentions clear, at the time of sending Angad as his emissary to Ravana, that he wants to act in a way that would be conducive for the good and welfare of the demon king although the latter was his enemy and was definitely at fault. The Lord instructs Angad that he should explore the possibility if any strategy can be devised by which whatever is done could be for the welfare and good of Ravana.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32—to Doha no. 35-a.

Briefly it so happened that Angad, who was sent by Lord Ram to see if something could be done to avoid the war and peace could be restored, and Ravana had a heated argument, each trying to out wit and embarrass the other and talk him down. Their interaction started on a softer note but soon degenerated into a no-holds barred acerbic verbal spat, with both of them shooting volleys of disparaging remarks and scolding taunts at each other, casting aspersions at each other's self-esteem, character, honour and integrity. Tempers rose sharply and the angry verbal dual became exceedingly bitter, sarcastic, caustic, acrimonious and hostile in nature by

degrees, with both Ravana and Angad leaving no stone unturned at insulting and out-witting each other.

What started, therefore, as a formal dialogue between Angad and Ravana to explore the possibility of ending hostility by a negotiated settlement of outstanding issues, gradually descended into a dirty cesspool of nasty tit-for-tat involving personal attacks and disparaging comments on each other's character and integrity, leading to a rapid rise in temper, abrasiveness and impertinence of the words used, and the contemptuous tone in the speech employed in the exchange.

This melodramatic episode, with its singularly theatrical histrionics not found elsewhere in the entire story of the Ramayan, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 35.

At the climax however, when Angad realized that Ravana is not amenable as the latter was exceptionally stubborn and arrogant, as well as in the throes of death and destined for destruction, which had eclipsed his wisdom and blinded his reasoning, he became exasperated so much so that he finally decided to end this meeting by completely demolishing Ravana's pride and esteem, and proving to him that his time was up, and that all his talk of might and power and strength and invincibility was mere bluster and nothing but hollow sound of a drum, a sound that is louder from a drum which is equally large, with a big hollow in the inside.

Thus, before leaving Ravana's court Angad did two things that completely demolished the remnants of Ravana's esteem and dignity in full view of the demon court. The first deed was this: Angad thumped the ground with his clenched fists so violently that there was a minor quake and Ravana lost his balance. All his ten crowns toppled down and fell to the ground; some of these crowns were picked up by Ravana and put on his head, while some were kicked by Angad as if he was kicking a football, and these landed in front of Lord Ram who was sitting in his camp on Mt. Subel. This first deed of Angad to humiliate Ravana is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 32-a along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it.

As if it was not sufficient enough to embarrass and humiliate his adversary Ravana and put him to abject shame in the front of his royal court, Angad did another remarkable thing of bravery and courage that cast a pall of gloom and despair to descend on the entire assembly, leaving Ravana morally defeated and emotionally depressed and dejected and forlorn like a vanquished warrior who has lost all hopes of victory. Angad stamped his foot on the ground with an open challenge to Ravana to move it. The bet was that if Ravana could move Angad's foot then it would be deemed that Ravana has won and Lord Ram has lost, and on the other hand if Ravana could not move Angad's foot then he must concede defeat and surrender. Ravana and many of his demon warriors failed to move Angad's foot, either individually or exerting all their energy and might together. This event signified Ravana's total defeat and his complete moral subjugation; it demoralized him and subjected him to abject humiliation like the one he had never experienced before in his career. This second deed of Angad to humiliate Ravana is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35-a.

⁵The analogy is apt here because Ravana was surrounded by so many of his brave demon warriors whereas Angad was all alone. The lion is not afraid by a herd of elephants; it would pounce on the back of one of them to kill his prey even as other elephants may watch in vain.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 19.]

अंगद हनुमत अनुचर जाके । रन बाँकुरे बीर अति बाँके ॥ ४ ॥
तेहि कहँ पिय पुनि पुनि नर कहहू । मुधा मान ममता मद बहहू ॥ ५ ॥

aṅgada hanumata anucara jākē. rana bām̐kurē bīra ati bām̐kē. 4.
tēhi kaham̐ piya puni puni nara kahahū. mudhā māna mamatā mada bahahū.
5.

It is such an aggravated irony of a doomed fate that you are unable to see the reality that stares right in your face, and you have become blind to it. Why, don't you know that Hanuman and Angad are exceptionally able, strong and brave warriors who have no match in this world, who are so dauntless in battle?

The gentleman whom they serve so diligently, loyally, faithfully and obediently, how stupid it is for you to treat that person (i.e. Lord Ram) as an ordinary human being¹? Why do you wish to carry the burden of guilt on your head; why are you so driven by a false sense of pride and made irrational by arrogance that you can't see what is obvious.

[To wit, why don't you understand that there must be something unique and great in Lord Ram that these two mighty warriors Angad and Hanuman chose to serve him and seek his refuge? They don't raise their heads before Lord Ram, and do what they are told to do without as much as asking 'why'. Then say, why don't you come to terms with reality and end your hostility with Lord Ram?] (4-5)

[Note—¹Any great warrior worth his name would not like to serve anyone so humbly and obediently, without as much as even raising his head before the master or lord they serve or ask any question or requesting to be told the rationale behind any instruction issued by the master to him, like the way Angad and Hanuman serve Lord Ram.

Surely both Angad and Hanuman must have observed something unique in Lord Ram that convinced them he was not an ordinary human being but someone who possessed supernatural powers, someone who is divine and great, someone who is endowed with some extraordinarily great mystical powers.

So here Mandodari severely chides her husband Ravana why is he not able to see tell-tale signs that are self-evident. After all, did Ravana not see the prowess of Hanuman when he had killed his son Akshay Kumar and had fearlessly burnt Lanka and equally fearlessly went back from the city, with no one daring to stop him? Then once again, Angad his trounced his pride and crushed his honour and self-esteem in full view of the court, and like Hanuman he too went back unchallenged.

Are these not enough signs of their fearlessness, boldness, courage, valour, prowess, strength, invincibility and dare devilry that have surpassed even the combined might of the whole demon army that prides itself for these grand virtues that make for a great warrior?

Surely then there must be something special in Lord Ram that motivated and inspired both Angad and Hanuman to seek the Lord's blessing and patronage, and serve him so faithfully and diligently.]

अहह कंत कृत राम बिरोधा । काल बिबस मन उपज न बोधा ॥ ६ ॥

काल दंड गहि काहु न मारा । हरइ धर्म बल बुद्धि बिचारा ॥ ७ ॥
निकट काल जेहि आवत साई । तेहि भ्रम होइ तुम्हारिहि नाई ॥ ८ ॥

ahaha kanta kṛta rāma birōdhā. kāla bibasa mana upaja na bōdhā. 6.
kāla daṇḍa gahi kāhu na mārā. hara'i dharma bala bud'dhi bicārā. 7.
nikaṭa kāla jēhi āvata sā'īm. tēhi bhrama hō'i tumhārihi nā'īm. 8.

Alas my beloved husband (ahaha kanta)! It is so unfortunate and sad that inspite of being aware of all the above facts you still chose to be hostile to Lord Ram. It is because you are under the firm grip of 'Kaal' (the factor of 'time' that governs the span of a living being's life in this mortal world) so much that all your wisdom and intelligence and prudence have been eclipsed. (6)

Verily indeed, 'Kaal' does not kill anyone by hitting him with a baton, but it employs a subtle way of achieving that end, and that way is by robbing the doomed creature's goodness and virtues by which he might have done good deeds, acted righteously, practiced probity and propriety in life and his dealings with others, or by robbing his strength so quietly and imperceptibly that the affected creature is not even aware that he has become very weak till the time of testing his strength comes, or by clouding his wisdom, decimating his intelligence and the power to think rightly to such an extent that he is turned into a dumb-witted and worthless stupid fellow who is not even shadow of his former illustrious self. (7)

My lord (sā'īm)! When Kaal comes calling near a creature then the latter becomes as deluded and overcome by hallucinations as has become of you.

[To wit, when the end of a person is near then he will do all the wrong things and take all the wrong decisions, and no matter how hard it is tried to show him that he is treading a wrong path that would lead to his ruin, he simply wouldn't listen. The same thing applies to you it certainly seem, for you too appear to be under the firm grip of Kaal so much so that your wisdom and intelligence seem to have totally abandoned you, leaving you sinking in a dark void of delusions and hallucinations that have prompted you to slide towards your own destruction. Alas, it is so sad and dismaying that this seems to be the fiat of your fate and the writ of your destiny over which no one has any control whatsoever.] (8)

दो०. दुइ सुत मरे दहेउ पुर अजहुँ पूर पिय देहु ।
कृपासिंधु रघुनाथ भजि नाथ बिमल जसु लेहु ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

du'i suta marē dahē'u pura ajahum' pūra piya dēhu.
krpāsindhu raghunātha bhaji nātha bimala jasu lēhu. 37.

Two of you sons have died; your city has been burnt to ashes¹. Oh my dear husband (piya)! In spite of these calamities, your body is still whole, and you are unharmed as yet².

Oh Lord (nātha); worship Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram) who is like an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness. By doing this you will gain good fame and pure

glory (as this act of yours would be auspicious, righteous and proper, and it would automatically have its due rewards)³.’ (Doha no. 37)

[Note—¹You boast so much of your valour and strength. Tell me—where were you and what had happened to you famed valour, strength and powers when your sons died and when your city of Lanka was burnt to ashes? Why didn’t, and why couldn’t, you stop these calamities happening right under your nose? Why couldn’t you stop Kaal from carrying out these two things—killing your sons and having your city burnt? So how will you stop the same Kaal from killing you? Don’t you realise that Kaal has been emboldened by your inability to stop him then, and so now this time around the Kaal will strike you harder, and with more confidence.

Who were the two sons of Ravana that Mandodari mentioned as being killed, and by whom were they killed?

The first son was Akshay Kumar, and he was slayed by Hanuman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 18 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

The second son was killed by Angad when he had gone as Lord Ram’s emissary to Ravana. This son was as bad mannered as his father Ravana. He was playing when Angad met him. The interaction that followed between the two soon became heated and acerbic. Ravana’s son, as was his habit, raised his leg to kick Angad, at which the latter grabbed him and smashed him to the ground, instantly killing Ravana’s second son. This event occurred prior to Mandodari’s fourth and last attempt to persuade Ravana to end his hostile attitude towards Lord Ram, and it is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 18.

²To wit, though horribly frightening things have been happening here, yet you are still safe, and therefore you still have time to take precautionary steps that no further damage is done, and no personal harm comes to you. It is said that one must save the harvest while there is time. So you must take immediate remedial measures to avoid further damage.

³If you abandon hostility towards Lord Ram and return his wife Sita, whom you have wrongfully stolen, then be sure this deed of yours will give you immense fame and glory—because it is the right thing to do.

On the other hand, even if you manage to win the war, you will get nothing but infamy and ignominy as a person who was so highly pervert, sinful, evil and unscrupulous that he abducted another person’s wife to satisfy his lust, and when that person came to free his wife you had the temerity to defeat him in battle just to prove that you are more powerful. But this proving of your might, even if it’s successfully achieved, is not with some auspicious and righteous objective, but it is to satisfy your perversity, arrogance and rapacity.

How do you imagine that this thing would give you any good name? No, I must tell you that it would be a very shameful and ignominious victory even if you do become victorious in the war! I’d be myself ashamed to call you my husband in such a scenario.]

चौ०. नारि बचन सुनि बिसिख समाना । सभाँ गयउ उठि होत बिहाना ॥ १ ॥

बैठ जाइ सिंघासन फूली । अति अभिमान त्रास सब भूली ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāri bacana suni bisikha samānā. sabhām̐ gaya'u uṭhi hōta bihānā. 1.
baiṭha jā'i siṅghāsana phūlī. ati abhimāna trāsa saba bhūlī. 2.

The stern words of Mandodari that were shot at Ravana were like sharp arrows that wounded his pride and ego¹.

[The night passed, and—] The next morning Ravana went to his court. (1)

He forgot (or pretended to forget) all his worries and fears, and sat very proudly on his throne (putting up a bold face, and letting all the demons know that their king is fearless and not at all worried by the impending war)². (2)

[Note—¹Mandodari's scorching rebuke left Ravana squirming in embarrassment; he was stunned, peeved and exasperated all at once. But how much he may have become angry inside himself and appalled at his wife's audacity to tell him all the things that she boldly dared to say, things surely he wouldn't have like to hear, yet he still kept quiet as he knew that she was speaking the truth. It goes to Ravana's credit that he did not take any revenge against Mandodari throughout the war for speaking the truth on his face.

But why; why did he not take revenge on Mandodari? There are reasons for this: One reason is that whatever she told him, no matter how bitter it may have been, were said in private, in their personal apartment, and not in public as was the case with others such as his own brother Vibhishan, then again his other brother Kumbhakaran, and his trusted messenger Suka, as well as his aged courtier Malayawant. On all these occasions Ravana had shown his anger at the speaker because it was a public chiding of a kingdom's king, which obviously no sovereign would tolerate. The other reason is that Ravana loved Mandodari, and her repeated pleadings only proved to him that she too loved him intensely as she felt no hesitation in pointing out his weaknesses on his face inspite of being aware that all others who had advised him almost on the same lines were punished.

We read in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 36-61, that towards the end of the war Ravana has explicitly told Mandodari that she should stop worrying about him as he has willingly chosen to die at the hands of Lord Ram because he knows the Lord to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and by dying at the Lord's hands he would be able to free his soul (Atma) that is trapped inside his evil body of a demon. This would grant him deliverance, emancipation and salvation as well as eternal peace, bliss and beatitude all at one go. What better could it be! So, since he is fighting this war for his own good, as well as for the good of all other demons who would die before Lord Ram and are sure to find deliverance themselves, he must not be stopped, and neither will he.

Forsooth and without gainsay therefore, Ravana had not fought Lord Ram because the Lord was his worldly enemy whose wife he had wished to keep, as the world thinks, but because this fight was the only way by which Ravana's sacred Atma, his soul and pure consciousness that is eternally pure and holy, would be freed from his evil body of a demon which had become like a hard shell of a coconut or a walnut that is not easy to break. Just as these hard shells need an external medium to break them, Ravana's soul too needed an external medium to pierce his body so that his Atma could escape from the slit thus formed and find its freedom.

And Ravana had been correct in his thinking, for when he finally died his soul emerged from his body as a shaft of dazzling light and went straight to enter the body of Lord Ram, signifying the merger of the individual Atma with the cosmic Atma that Lord Ram represented. This fact has been clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 78-79.

The celestial sage Narad had made it absolutely clear to the assembled gods, who were very astonished at Ravana's soul merging with the Soul of Lord Ram, that even though the world recognized Ravana as an evil demon but he was pure and holy internally, and that he had fought the Lord not out of any animosity but with the sole objective of attaining liberation and deliverance of his soul, to find emancipation and salvation for his tormented self, for attaining eternal beatitude and felicity that is usually not available to even the most learned sages and ascetics. Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 80-87; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 114.

And what about others; what about the fate of Ravana's demon army and its individual soldiers who had laid down their lives in the battle-field? Well, they too attained deliverance and emancipation. This is explicitly said in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 114.

²This external show of confidence and defiance was a very necessary strategy for Ravana so as to keep the morale of his army high. If he had sulked and given the slightest hint that he is worried and upset then the war would have been lost even before its beginning. And if that happened, if his demons had deserted him in the beginning en masse, then all his planning of dying and finding liberation for his soul would have come to a naught.]

इहाँ राम अंगदहि बोलावा । आइ चरन पंकज सिरु नावा ॥ ३ ॥
अति आदर समीप बैठारी । बोले बिहँसि कृपाल खरारी ॥ ४ ॥

ihām̐ rāma aṅgadahi bōlāvā. ā'i carana paṅkaja siru nāvā. 3.
ati ādara samīpa baiṭhārī. bōlē biham̐si kṛpāla kharārī. 4.

[We now resume the Story by picking up the thread from where we had left it earlier, i.e. from the point where Angad left Ravana's court to return to his own camp—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35-a.

After leaving Ravan's court, Angad returned to his own camp. When Lord Ram was informed of his arrival, he called Angad and affectionately made him sit very close to him and report about the developments so that the next course of action can be decided upon.]

Here (i.e. on Mt. Subel, where the army of monkeys and bears had made their camp), Lord Ram called Angad¹. The latter went and reverentially bowed his head at the feet of the Lord. (3)

To show great affection and honour to Angad, Lord Ram, who was the slayer of the demon named Khar (kṛpāla kharārī), asked him most respectfully² to sit down near him, and then the Lord said to him, --- (4)

[Note—¹Upon his return from Lanka, Angad did not go straight to Lord Ram, but sent someone to inform the Lord of his arrival. Why did Angad refrain from going straight to the Lord? One, he wished to observe protocol, and it required him to first send a message that he has come back to report to the Lord, and now he seeks an appointment. Two, Angad was not sure if his mission would be considered as successful or failure by the Lord, so he wished to first send a feeler through a messenger to inform the Lord of his arrival from Lanka so that this messenger could come back and inform Angad how the Lord reacted at this news.

Why was Angad doubtful about the success of his mission? It is because Angad had failed to persuade Ravana to return Sita to Lord Ram and avoid the devastating war inspite of his best efforts. He compared the result of his own mission with that of Hanuman: in the case of Hanuman the mission was successful because Sita had been found by him, but in his own case it could be regarded as not being completely successful because Ravana could not be persuaded to give Sita back and avoid the war.

Besides this, he was not sure if Lord Ram had liked his action of kicking Ravana's crowns without permission. But in this regard Angad felt that it would be alright with the Lord, for he had not been annoyed with Hanuman when told that the latter had burnt the city of Lanka without the Lord's express permission. When a messenger, an envoy or an emissary is sent on a mission by his master, a lot of discretion and authority is given to him to deal with the situation on the ground as he deems fit and necessary, as everything can't be foretold and planned in advance. A good master or lord is one who gladly accepts what his ambassador has done and said. The only thing that the master would like to consider to judge his emissary's performance is the latter's integrity and loyalty to him, and see that the emissary has done nothing that undermines the master's honour or sacrificed his interests.

Both Hanuman and Angad had scored perfectly on these counts. So Lord Ram had been pleased with both of them when they came to report to him.

To wit, when Angad was called by Lord Ram and shown special respect and honour, he felt very reassured that the Lord has not deemed his mission a failure or was annoyed with him in the least. On the other hand, the Lord's warm welcome of Angad clearly hinted that the Lord was fully pleased with him. At the time of sending Angad as his emissary, the Lord had given him a lot of discretion and the authority to use his own wisdom according to the situation[#], so he was within his right in doing what he did as long as he had proved himself loyal to the Lord, and protected his honour and cause. {[#]Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 17.}

The main aim of Lord Ram in sending Angad as an emissary to Ravana was to prevent anyone saying at a later date that the Lord did not attempt to solve the vexed issue in a peaceful way, though if this matter had been sorted out peacefully, and without the war that led to the slaying of Ravana and his cruel demon hordes, then the very purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down as Lord Ram would have been defeated. For, after avoiding death, Ravana would have laid low for some time, and then would have resumed his old sinful and cruel ways once again, who knows not with a vengeance. The torments and horrors of the demon race that had made Mother Earth and the Gods pray to Lord Vishnu to save them would have continued unabated.

The question is: If this is the case, if Lord Ram actually wanted to use this excuse of Ravana abducting Sita to get rid of the menace of the demons, then why did

choose to send an emissary to Ravana to find a peaceful way to end the confrontation, instead of going headlong into the war and slaying Ravana?

The answer is this: Lord Ram is an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace, he is benevolent and magnanimous, he is forgiving and tolerant, he treats everyone alike. So he wished to give every possible chance to Ravana to improve himself and mend his vile ways. One sure indication of it would be his willingness to see his own fault and be ready to repent and apologize, not letting his ego and pride come in the way of repentance for wrong done, and promising to improve himself and not commit evil deeds in the future. By offering to make truce with Lord Ram, surely Ravana would have had to accept the Lord's terms for peace, which obviously would have included, *inter alia*, a vow to stop his sinful and cruel ways forthwith, and to desist from terrorizing and tormenting the world henceforth.

Ravana's refusal to make peace with Lord Ram was therefore in line with the Lord's wish and real objective—which was to eliminate Ravana along with his ferocious demons once and for all. Hence, there was no reason why Angad's failure to persuade Ravana to make peace would at all annoy Lord Ram; rather, the Lord was glad that no such truce was made.

This is the reason why Lord Ram “smiled” when he asked Angad to give details of his adventure (*bōlē biham̐si*).

²Lord Ram had many things in mind when he showed affection, respect and honour to Angad by receiving him warmly and making him sit very close. The Lord wanted to clearly tell everyone that he loves Angad as much as he loves Hanuman, and especially because his father Baali, at the time of his death, had entrusted Angad's future in the hands of the Lord by making him his son's guardian—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

The Lord had shown great affection to Hanuman when he came back from Lanka with the news that Sita has been found—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) once again in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33. Now, at that time Angad was watching how the Lord showered great honour, respect and affection on Hanuman. He (Angad) felt sad in his heart; he thought to himself that if it had been him, instead of his friend Hanuman, who had been successful in doing Lord Ram's work, then it would have given him a chance of receiving the same honours and love that the Lord now gives Hanuman. Angad's heart was very happy; he felt he did not live up to the Lord's expectation; he felt that now onwards, Hanuman would be treated with favour by the Lord.

Lord Ram is all-knowing and omniscient; he knows the very thought and the emotions of a creature as soon as they arise in his mind and heart. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17.}

This being so, the Lord immediately realised that Angad was feeling sad and heart-broken. ‘Well’, the Lord decided in his own heart, ‘I will compensate Angad for this. Next time I shall send him as my emissary, and when he comes back I'll show him affection and honour no less than what I have shown to Hanuman. Nay, I'll show him a bit more of it, because I owe this to him as his father has made me his guardian.’ This is why Lord Ram showed Angad ‘great respect and honour, while making him sit close to him’ (*ati ādara samīpa baiṭhārī*).

Lord Ram also wished to tell Angad not to be afraid that he failed in his mission of persuading Ravana to give Sita back to the Lord and avoid the war, and that his action of kicking Ravana's four crowns and sending them flying over to land

at the feet of the Lord was uncalled for and an indecent behaviour for a messenger. Perhaps this is the reason why Angad did not go directly to Lord Ram after returning from Lanka, but had to be called by the Lord to give his report (ihām̃ rāma aṅgadahi bōlāvā).

The third reason for this especial show of 'great respect and honour' by the Lord to Angad is that the latter was a "prince" of the kingdom of Kishkindha, and not an ordinary member of the army. Even Hanuman, who was the Lord's favourite warrior, was not a prince; whereas Angad was. Hence he deserved some special treatment, some more respect and honour as compared to others. The other exception for this special treatment was Sugriv because he was the 'king' of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha.

It ought to be noted that though Lord Ram showed affection to both Hanuman and Angad, there was a bit of a difference between the two. For one, Angad had Lord Ram's special sympathy and empathy because he was orphaned due to the death of his father Baali. Secondly, Lord Ram was made Angad's guardian by Baali at the time of his death, a responsibility which the Lord had to fulfill under all circumstances; so therefore Lord Ram treated Angad as his foster son. Hanuman too had been elevated to this exalted position because Sita had also addressed him as her son. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16.} But that was after Hanuman had repeatedly addressed Sita as "mother". {For instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 15; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 16.} Yet, Hanuman was not 'orphaned' like Angad.

The fourth reason why Lord Ram showed such preferential treatment to Angad is that inspite of Ravana's repeated provocation by way of reminding Angad of his father Baali* so that deep in his heart his suppressed resentment against those who caused his father's death, i.e. Lord Ram and Sugriv, would burst out into the open, leading to Angad deserting Lord Ram's cause, had failed, and Angad remained steadfast in his devotion and loyalty to the Lord. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 21; (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 24; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34.}

So Lord Ram had a softer corner for Angad in his heart that no one else could replace. The Lord wished to tell Angad that he must never feel isolated, and never hesitate to approach the Lord, for he (Lord Ram) has great respect and affection for him. And in order to hint it, the Lord overtly showed 'great respect and honour to Angad and made him sit close to him as he would have sat his own son'.]

बालितनय कौतुक अति मोही । तात सत्य कहु पूछउँ तोही ॥ ५ ॥

रावनु जातुधान कुल टीका । भुज बल अतुल जासु जग लीका ॥ ६ ॥

तासु मुकुट तुम्ह चारि चलाए । कहहु तात कवनी बिधि पाए ॥ ७ ॥

bālitānaya kautuka ati mōhī. tāta satya kahu pūcha'um̃ tōhī. 5.

rāvanu jātudhāna kula ṭikā. bhuja bala atula jāsu jaga līkā. 6.

tāsu mukuṭa tumha cāri calā'ē. kahahu tāta kavani bidhi pā'ē. 7.

[Lord Ram said to Angad—] ‘Oh son of Baali (bālitanaya)! I am very amazed¹ about one thing and am curious to learn more about it. So, oh my dear (tāta), I request you to tell me the truth. (5)

Ravana is the most acclaimed and the bravest member of the demon race, and he is famous in the world for the strength of his arms which has no match or parallel anywhere. (6)

You had sent four of his crowns rolling here²; this is an amazing and astounding feat. So my dear (tāta), I do really (appreciate your wondrous feat and I) wish to know how you managed to do it; how you managed to first get hold of them, and then send them rolling here.’ (7)

[Note—¹Many unprecedented and amazing things have occurred in this Lanka Kand besides the one Lord Ram refers to presently: Angad kicking the four crowns of Ravana, and sending them rolling over to Lord Ram.

To begin with, the first was the construction of the floating bridge measuring a distance of 100 Yojans (800 miles approx.) across the choppy surface of the water of the ocean. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.}

The next astonishing feat was how a single arrow shot by Lord Ram, almost casually from his camp on Mt. Subel, had gone and precisely struck the ten crowns on Ravana’s head, as well as his wife Mandodari’s earrings, making them all fall to the ground, and then, wonder of wonders, this arrow came back to enter Lord Ram’s quiver. The greatest wonder in this incident is that it was night time, and to shoot an arrow so precisely in the dark is absolutely stunning and truly amazing. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

The third miraculous and unbelievable thing is that none of the mighty demons, who had prided themselves for their stupendous muscular strength and astounding physical powers, who had conquered the whole world and ran through the heaven like an unstoppable juggernaut, hadn’t been able to move the foot of Angad when he planted them on the ground, no matter how hard they had tried, individually and jointly. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Likewise, many amazing deeds were done and many stunning feats were accomplished during the course of the war which we shall be reading by-and-by.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 32-a along with Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede it.]

सुनु सर्बग्य प्रनत सुखकारी । मुकुट न होहिं भूप गुन चारी ॥ ८ ॥
 साम दान अरु दंड बिभेदा । नृप उर बसहिं नाथ कह बेदा ॥ ९ ॥
 नीति धर्म के चरन सुहाए । अस जियँ जानि नाथ पहिँ आए ॥ १० ॥

sunu sarbagya pranata sukhakārī. mukuṭa na hōhiṁ bhūpa guna cārī. 8.
 sāma dāna aru daṇḍa bibhēdā. nṛpa ura basahiṁ nātha kaha bēdā. 9.
 nīti dharma kē carana suhā'ē. asa jiyam' jāni nātha pahim ā'ē. 10.

Angad replied, ‘Listen oh Lord. You are all-knowing and omniscient (**sarbagya**), and you bestow happiness to those who come to bow before you and seek shelter with you (**pranata sukhakārī**). These are not ordinary crowns; but they symbolise the four great qualities and outstanding virtues that make a king great, that a great king must possess. (8)

Oh Lord; the Vedas (which ancient scriptures that are repositories of knowledge and wisdom covering all spheres of human activity, including religious and secular) assert that a good king is one who always keeps in mind the four chief tools of statecraft (which he employs according to the situation at hand). These are the following: (i) the ability to arrive at a consensus and have a reconciliatory approach to the issue at hand that may seem vexing (**sāma**); (ii) the willingness to give liberally and make charity so that he acquires a good reputation as well as a following of loyal subjects who have benefited from his largesse (**dāna**); (iii) the wisdom to decide when and how to use force or coercive methods in order to make things turn in his favour, and to punish an offender (**daṇḍa**); and (iv) the tact to create dissension in his opponents so that they fail to remain united (because then it would make them weak and easily manoeuvrable) (**bibhēdā**). (9)

The four crowns of Ravana (that had come flying to you when I kicked them) represented these aforementioned stellar qualities of diplomacy and good governance that a great king must possess as envisioned and espoused by the scriptures. When they found Ravana not fit for them, they came on their own to you to present themselves at your feet².’ (10)

[Note—¹ “Oh Lord,” said Angad, “you know the mystery behind the four crowns; you know what they actually signify. Yet, since you have asked me, well then, I shall tell you what I think about them, and why they came rolling over to you after abandoning Ravana. Oh Lord, you have told me to “tell the truth”, so I shall tell you the true mystery or secret behind these four crowns as I understand it.”

²What an excellent interpretation has been done by Angad. The crowns on the head of Ravana symbolized the virtues of a great king. The four crowns representing the four excellent qualities of a great king as enumerated herein above decided to leave Ravana because he had lately lost his eligibility to wear them. So they first left Ravana’s head by falling to the ground, which means they abandoned him, and when he tried to put them back on his head they virtually refused and pleaded with Angad to move them out of Ravana’s physical reach. Nay, they not only refused to go back to Ravana but also asked Angad to get them out of Lanka as fast as he could. The only way to do so was to kick them and send them flying away out reach of Ravana and his demons. These four crowns landed before Lord Ram and sought acceptance by him.

Angad summed up his experience of Ravana’s character by using this metaphor of the four crowns. This in brief explained why he was unable to persuade Ravana to make truce; it was because Ravana lacked any of the four qualities needed by a king to resolve a vexed issue.

How was Angad justified in making this conclusion? Let us analyse:

The first virtue is ‘reconciliation’ (*sāma*): Ravana obviously was not in its favour.

The second virtue is ‘being liberal in gifting or giving’ (*dāna*): Ravana obstinately refused to give Sita back for no rhyme or reason.

The third is ‘punishment or use of force’ (*daṇḍa*): Ravana failed to either punish or use force against all those who offended him, viz. Hanuman, Angad, Vibhishan (his brother who deserted him to join Lord Ram), Suka (his messenger who pleaded with him to end hostility with Lord Ram, as well as lavishly praised the Lord), and Mandodari (his wife who too did what Suka had done).

And lastly, the fourth is ‘create dissension in the rank of the enemy’ (*bibhēdā*): Ravana failed in this skill too because instead of creating dissension in the enemy quarter he created an enemy in his own brother Vibhishan who deserted him and joined his adversary’s camp. Another instance of his failure in this sphere of statecraft is his attempt to incite Angad to revolt against Sugriv and Lord by reminding him repeatedly they were the cause of death of his father Baali, but Angad did not bite his bait.]

दो०. धर्महीन प्रभु पद बिमुख काल बिबस दससीस ।

तेहि परिहरि गुन आए सुनहु कोसलाधीस ॥ ३८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

dharmahīna prabhu pada bimukha kāla bibasa dasasīsa.

tēhi parihari guna ā'e sunahu kōsalādhīsa. 38 (a).

[Angad continued—] ‘Listen oh Lord of Kaushal (“kōsalādhīsa”; i.e. Lord Ram, the Lord of the kingdom of Ayodhya, of which ‘Kaushal’ was another name)! The ten-headed Ravana (*dasasīsa*) has no Dharma¹ left in him; he has abandoned this noble way of life (*dharmahīna*). Not only this, he is opposed to you, and has no affection and devotion for your holy feet (*prabhu pada bimukha*)², and to compound the problems and make matters worse for him he is also under the influence of Kaal (death) which has gripped him in its vice-like grip, completely obstructing his wisdom and eclipsing his common sense, thereby preventing him from being rationale and acting wisely (*kāla bibasa*)³.

Under these unfortunate and negative circumstances (which are unbecoming of a king and cause his downfall), the four noble and positive virtues that make a creature great, righteous, respected and honourable (and which a king must possess) decided to leave him and come to you in a symbolic manner, to take refuge with you (in the guise of the four crowns that came rolling over to you, because these excellent virtues I have mentioned herein above⁴ thought that Ravana was not a proper candidate to lend the glories associated with them to him).’ (Doha no. 38-a)

[Note—¹The term “Dharma” covers a wide spectrum of excellent qualities that makes a person renowned and worthy of great respect and honour. The term would therefore include such good virtues as righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, noble thought and conduct, ethics, morality, and everything else that is laudable and worthy of emulation.

²Lord Ram is deemed to be an embodiment of all the excellent qualities that come under the umbrella of the term ‘Dharma’; the Lord is an upholder of ‘Dharma’. And one of the many facets or aspects of Dharma is to be respectable to the Supreme Being.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being too, and since he is an upholder of Dharma, so therefore anyone who is disrespectful to the Lord is showing disrespect to the Supreme Lord of this creation as well as Dharma.

Refer also to: (a) what Angad has said to Ravana in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 35; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27; and (b) what Mandodari tells Ravana in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15.

To wit, since Ravana was opposed and hostile to Lord Ram, the virtues of Dharma decided that their place was not with Ravana but with Lord Ram. So they abandoned the demon king Ravana, and instead sought refuge with the king of Kaushal, Lord Ram.

³Even Ravana’s wife Mandodari has concluded that her husband is acting recklessly and refuses to heed any kind of good advice because he is under the grip of death, and it is the fiat of fate and the writ of destiny that he is now destined to die, so it’s useless to talk with him and make him see reason—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 37; (v) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 104.

⁴The ‘four grand virtues’ that abandoned Ravana are mentioned by Angad in Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 38 herein above.]

परम चतुरता श्रवन सुनि बिहँसे रामु उदार ।

समाचार पुनि सब कहे गढ़ के बालिकुमार ॥ ३८ (ख) ॥

parama caturatā śravana suni bihamśē rāmu udāra.
samācāra puni saba kahē garha kē bālikumāra. 38 (b).

Hearing this witty answer of Angad, the son of Baali (bālikumāra), the magnanimous and benevolent Lord Ram (rāmu udāra) smiled politely (as the Lord was amused by Angad’s cleverness and presence of mind)¹.

Then, Angad proceeded to give a report to the Lord and brief him about Lanka and its fort². (Doha no. 38-b)

[Note—¹Observing that the Lord was pleased with his answer as was evident when the Lord ‘smiled’, Angad felt glad. He then gave a detailed account of Lanka and its fort to the Lord so that strategic planning for the military offensive can be finalised.

There was one occasion earlier when Lord Ram has smiled in a similar way. It was when, after pitching his camp on Mt. Subel, the Lord had observed the moon rising in the eastern sky and had asked his companions what they made of it, Hanuman had offered a witty answer, saying that the slight darkness in the brilliance of the moon’s disc is due to the fact that an image of the Lord, who has a dark

complexion, resides in the heart of the Moon God as the latter is the Lord's ardent devotee, and the dark shade in the moon's otherwise silvery disc is a reflection of the Lord's image permanently residing in the heart of the deity of the moon. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 12.}

With this clever answer, Angad endeared himself to Lord Ram and placed himself on the same pedestal as Hanuman; he showed that he is no less devoted to the Lord than his friend Hanuman was. And that is why Lord Ram 'smiled'.

The Lord's 'smile' meant that he was very amused by the reply of Angad as much as he was by the reply of Hanuman earlier.

²We have read earlier that Angad had walked through the streets of Lanka on his way to the palace of Ravana; he had also met and killed one of Ravana's sons on the way. As he walked like a conqueror through the avenues of the city of Lanka, the demon citizens thought that he was the same monkey (Hanuman) who had burnt their city earlier; so they were so terrified of him and out of their wits that they swiftly moved away from his path wherever he went, and some even volunteered to show him the way to Ravana's court just in order to avoid his sterns glance questioning them, fearing to invite his wrath if they demurred and failed to give him the correct direction. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 18 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede it.}

Angad had taken careful mental notes of his surroundings and a layout of the city, as well as its level of security and preparedness in case of an assault, as he headed to Ravana's court. The city was expected to be on the highest level of alert as the news of an invading army already camping on the shore of the island of Lanka had already reached it, and it was the talk of the town. So Angad's report was quite accurate and updated. A lot must have changed since Hanuman's visit; so the final strategy for the offensive was devised on Angad's field report that was current.

What was the outline of Angad's brief? We shall get a clear hint of it in Chaupai line no. 2 herein below—in which Lord Ram has summoned his advisors to say that the fort of Lanka has four giant and strong gates, and therefore the strategy for breaching the defenses of Lanka should be devised accordingly.]

चौ०. रिपु के समाचार जब पाए । राम सचिव सब निकट बोलाए ॥ १ ॥

लंका बाँके चारि दुआरा । केहि बिधि लागिअ करहु बिचारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ripu kē samācāra jaba pā'ē. rāma saciva saba nikaṭa bōlā'ē. 1.

laṅkā bāṁkē cāri du'ārā. kēhi bidhi lāgi'a karahu bicārā. 2.

{From now onwards, the author of this Book will narrate the thrilling and awe-inspiring proceedings of the 'Great Epic War of Lanka' as if he were a war correspondent writing his memoirs based not only on his own recollections of the events as they unfolded at that time but also by collating vivid descriptions presented by other contemporary correspondents who had themselves witnessed this Epic Saga. This approach will present to the esteemed reader of this magnificent Book a vivid, a four-dimensional, and a comprehensive picture of the events that unfolded during the Epic War of Lanka. In fact, as must have been noted by now by my respected readers, this has been a constant feature of our Book—that we have read four classical Texts

all throughout our reading, as it helps one to be acquainted with the Story from four different angles, aspects or perspectives.

To wit, the ‘four war correspondents’ whose detailed description of the War of Lanka that have been cited and collated here stand for the four classical Texts which we shall be quoting, and, as said above, which we have actually been doing throughout our Book, viz. Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Adhyatma Ramayan.

That said, now let us proceed.}

When Lord Ram received all the vital bits of information regarding the enemy forces and their formidable fort of Lanka, he summoned all his ministers and said, --- (1)

--- ‘Lanka has four strong, massive gates which are virtually impenetrable. How shall we lay siege to them and effectively breach them—think over this matter urgently and devise a strategy accordingly.’ (2)

तब कपीस रिच्छेस बिभीषन । सुमिरि हृदयँ दिनकर कुल भूषन ॥ ३ ॥
करि बिचार तिन्ह मंत्र दृढ़ावा । चारि अनी कपि कटकु बनावा ॥ ४ ॥
जथाजोग सेनापति कीन्हे । जूथप सकल बोलि तब लीन्हे ॥ ५ ॥

taba kapīsa ricchēsa bibhīṣana. sumiri hr̥dayam̐ dinakara kula bhūṣana. 3.
kari bicāra tinha mantra ḍṛṛhāvā. cāri anī kapi kaṭaku banāvā. 4.
jathājōga sēnāpati kīnhē. jūthapa sakala bōli taba līnhē. 5.

Then the three chief commanders of the Lord’s army, viz. Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, Jamvant who was the king of the bears, and Vibhishan who was a prince of the demon race and a brother of Ravana, and who had come to surrender and take refuge with Lord Ram earlier, remembered or invoked the glory of the Lord, who was like a jewel of the Solar race to which the family of the illustrious king Raghu belonged, in their hearts while pondering over the matter and consulting each other to finalise a strategy.

[To wit, the chief commanders of the army prayed to the Supreme Being and invoked his grace before discussing the matter and arriving at a consensus.] (3)

After thoroughly discussing the affair they arrived at a firm decision. They divided the mammoth army into four divisions, --- (4)

--- And appointed an appropriate field commander for each division. After that, they called all the commanders and their subordinates as well as the rest of the warriors (to brief them of the strategy and the outline of the offensive)¹. (5)

[Note—¹Since Lanka’s fort had four gates, it was felt necessary to divide the army into four divisions, with each division assigned the task to tackle one gate.]

प्रभु प्रताप कहि सब समुझाए । सुनि कपि सिंघनाद करि धाए ॥ ६ ॥
हरषित राम चरन सिर नावहिं । गहि गिरि सिखर बीर सब धावहिं ॥ ७ ॥

गर्जहिं तर्जहिं भालु कपीसा । जय रघुबीर कोसलाधीसा ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu pratāpa kahi saba samujhā'ē. suni kapi siṅghanāda kari dhā'ē. 6.
haraṣita rāma carana sira nāvahiṁ. gahi giri sikhara bīra saba dhāvahiṁ. 7.
garjahiṁ tarjahiṁ bhālu kapīsā. jaya raghubīra kōsalādhīsā. 8.

When the mammoth army had assembled for a parade prior to the actual launch of the assault on Lanka, the chief commanders addressed it¹ to explain the rationale behind the war as well as to raise the morale of the warriors and infuse confidence in their rank and file by lauding the glory, the divinity, the mystical powers and the majesty of Lord Ram, their supreme commander.

When the briefing ended and orders to proceed were given, the warriors of the Lord's army surged forward to launch the assault with a thunderous roar like that made by an attacking lion. [Their roar reverberated in the sky like repeated claps of thunder emanating from a rapidly moving bank of dark clouds, and it made the earth tremble by its shock waves.]² (6)

Before departure, the warriors bowed their heads before the holy feet of Lord Ram (to seek his blessings), and then grabbing large ragged boulders and rocks that resembled summits of huge mountains (because of their sheer size), the army dashed forward for the attack on the fort of Lanka. (7)

The mighty monkey and bear warriors jumped enthusiastically and yelled ferociously as they roared with a thunderous war cry citing the name of Lord Ram: 'Glory to the Lord of Kaushal; Glory to the brave King of the Raghu dynasty' (jaya raghubīra kōsalādhīsā)!

[Note—¹The army assembled for a briefing. The chief commanders of the army extolled the exemplary valour, courage, gallantry and strength of the warriors; the commanders further motivated the warriors by telling them about the glories, the mystical powers and the majesty of their supreme Lord and Commander-in-chief, i.e. Lord Ram, alongside explaining to them the righteous and noble cause for which this war was being fought.

This briefing infused dynamism and energy into the rank and file of the Lord's army that was already restless for action and raring to go; it filled the army with confidence of victory, and it injected vigour and enthusiasm into each soldier. The fuse was lit and the spark of fire spread rapidly through the army, which bubbled with enthusiasm so much that it was daring to face the enemy and determined to reduce it to smithereens.

An army with high morale, an army that is sure it is fighting a just war, and an army that is confident to win a war, is more likely to actually win it than an army that is not certain of its own ground on principles of morality and righteousness of the cause for which it is expected to lay down its life.

²A sky-shattering and ear-splitting uproar was raised as the formidable army of Lord Ram, of mammoth proportions, made its departure for launching the first wave of a massive and no-holds barred assault on the fort of Lanka, that would be followed by many more such waves of assaults as the war progressed from day to day. It was a war which would go down in the realms of history of warfare as one that was rivaled

by none else in its ferocity, dare devilry, gallantry, valour, courage and resilience shown by all those involved; it was an epic war which, though devastating and singularly calamitous, finally settled the matter in favour of a right cause by eliminating the elements that had undermined this cause; it was a war that marked the triumph of good over evil; it was a war that helped restore Dharma in this creation, Dharma that had earlier been overturned by the savagery of the demon race.]

जानत परम दुर्ग अति लंका । प्रभु प्रताप कपि चले असंका ॥ ९ ॥
घटाटोप करि चहुँ दिसि घेरी । मुखहिं निसान बजावहिं भेरी ॥ १० ॥

jānata parama durga ati laṅkā. prabhu pratāpa kapi calē asaṅkā. 9.
ghaṭāṭōpa kari cahuṁṁ disi ghērī. mukhahiṁ nisāna bajāvahiṁ bhērī. 10.

They (the monkeys and bears) knew that the fort of Lanka was exceptional strong and singularly formidable, making it virtually impregnable. Yet they were so much motivated and highly inspired by the remembrance of the glory and majestic powers of Lord Ram that they did not fear anything at all; they confidently and fearlessly proceeded ahead, with great zeal and dynamism. (9)

The army approached the fort of Lanka from all the four directions as if dark clouds of doomsday rise from all the directions of the horizon to descend upon the earth and engulf it in a dark veil of death and destruction. While doing so, the warriors made chilling and ear-splitting war cries as if so many battle-drums and kettle-drums and war-trumpets were being played at the same time¹. (10)

[Note—¹The clouds of the doomsday do not come silently; they come roaring and thundering. Their sound is so violent and blood-curdling that the creature dies out of sheer fear even before the actual land fall of havoc and destruction that these clouds unleash by way of ferocious storms, rapid lightening strikes and deluge that drowns everything.

The scene of the huge aggressive army of monkeys and bears descending on the fort of Lanka from all corners of the island, roaring and thundering viciously, stomping the ground violently, yelling ferociously, baring their sharp teeth and showing their extended claws menacingly, was no less chilling than that of the rapidly moving clouds that cover the sky over the earth at the time of doomsday.]

दो०. जयति राम जय लछिमन जय कपीस सुग्रीव ।
गर्जहिं सिंघनाद कपि भालु महा बल सींव ॥ ३९ ॥

dōhā.

jayati rāma jaya lachimana jaya kapīsa sugrīva.
garjahiṁ siṅghanāda kapi bhālu mahā bala sīnva. 39.

Verily indeed, the monkey and bear warriors, who exemplified the best of the combined virtues of valour, courage, strength and gallantry, roared enthusiastically

like a fearless lion (the king of the forest and the lord of the animal kingdom), cheering their Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, as well as their own king Sugriv, the lord of the monkey kingdom.

They yelled passionately in one voice: ‘Glory to Lord Ram; Glory to Laxman; Glory to Sugriv!’¹ (Doha no. 39)

[Note—¹In ancient times when wars were fought face-to-face in the battle-field between two great armies, unlike how wars are fought today, both the sides raised their own war cries that marked their independent identities.

So while the army of monkeys and bears cheered their own commanders such as Lord Ram, Laxman and Sugriv, and at the same time made a lot of loud noise to announce that they have arrived and are ready for battle, the army of demons would respond by cheering their king Ravana and beating their own war-drums and sounding other instruments that are routinely played during battles to announce that they were ready too—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 41 herein below.]

चौ०. लंकाँ भयउ कोलाहल भारी । सुना दसानन अति अहँकारी ॥ १ ॥

देखहु बनरन्ह केरि ढिठाई । बिहँसि निसाचर सेन बोलाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

laṅkāṃ bhaya'u kōlāhala bhārī. sunā dasānana ati ahaṁkāārī. 1.

dēkhahu banaranha kēri ḍhiṭhāī. bihaṁsi nisācara sēna bōlāī. 2.

Meanwhile, there was a great tumult in Lanka. When the ten-headed Ravana, who was extremely arrogant and haughty, heard of the developments, --- (1)

--- He said to himself with a sarcastic attitude, ‘Look how foolish and stubborn the monkeys are (that they have had the temerity to attack my city, thereby voluntarily pushing themselves into the jaws of death)!’

Thinking thus, he sneered scornfully¹ and summoned (the commanders of) his demon army. (2)

[Note—¹Why did Ravana scoff with contempt at the news of the arrival of the monkey army? The answer is to be found shortly in what he said to his demon warriors. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that follow herein below.}]

आए कीस काल के प्रेरे । छुधावंत सब निसिचर मेरे ॥ ३ ॥

अस कहि अट्टहास सठ कीन्हा । गृह बैठें अहार बिधि दीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

सुभट सकल चारिहुँ दिसि जाहू । धरि धरि भालु कीस सब खाहू ॥ ५ ॥

ā'e kīsa kāla kē prērē. chudhāvanta saba nisicara mērē. 3.

asa kahi aṭṭahāsa saṭha kīnhā. gr̥ha baiṭhēm ahāra bidhi dīnhā. 4.

subhaṭa sakala cārihum̐ disi jāhū. dhari dhari bhālu kīsa saba khāhū. 5.

When Ravana stood to address his army of demon warriors that had assembled to hear his command, he haughtily observed: ‘These monkeys have been driven here by the

wind of their own death, and behold my demon warriors who are all hungry to devour them!’ (3)

After making this contemptuous remark, he laughed derisively in a thunderous way to mock the monkeys. Then he turned to his demon army and ordered: ‘The Creator is so kind to us that he has served us food right at our doorstep, while we sit at home. [We are all hungry, and the Creator is so gracious that he has provided us food even without our going out to hunt for it.] (4)

Oh you excellent demon warriors who are champions in their own right (*subhata*)! All of you go forthwith and proceed furiously in all the four directions; catch hold of the monkeys and the bears wherever you can find them, and then eat all of them up.¹ (5)

[Note—¹For quite some time now, none of the demons had dared to go out of the fort of Lanka to hunt and acquire food for the city because of fear of the monkeys and bears who had laid siege of Lanka. Food, which for the demons meant meat-based supplies, was quickly running out, and what still remained was being rationed. The demons, who had large appetites, were therefore virtually famished with limited supply of food at their disposal.

This is what Ravana hints at. Now with the monkeys and bears right at the gates of Lanka, the hungry demon warriors would theoretically have a field day, feasting and replenishing their depleted supplies of meat.

The demons were already smarting from aggravated battery of insult and humiliation to which they were subjected by Hanuman and Angad; they were furious with un-requitted anger because of the shame that both Hanuman and Angad had inflicted upon them and their whole race, including their king Ravana, and the way their golden city of Lanka had been devastated.

It is true that a lot many of the demon citizens were extremely terrified of the monkeys and bears, first because of the devastation caused by Hanuman in Lanka with no one daring to check him, and second in the way Angad had fearlessly rebuked Ravana and trounced his pride in full court, even going to the extent of disdainfully kicking Ravana’s crowns, which were symbols of his majesty and authority, thereby inflicting an insult and humiliation on the pride and honour of the entire demon race in a manner that could never ever be revenged or requited by them, with no one to check him either, but it is also true that a lot many of the demons, especially the warrior class, must have been furious at these developments and were violently itching to get an opportunity to settle scores with their enemy, the monkeys and the bears.

Hence, when Ravana gave them the green signal to go and devour the invading army, it was a signal to wreak their suppressed anger upon the enemy with a vengeance, and do it vigorously, because now was the opportunity to seek severe retribution for the wrong done to them by Hanuman and Angad, and for which they had been waiting eagerly till now. So there was no stopping the demon warriors now as they dashed forward furiously, in large and multiple groups, to spit their venomous wrath mercilessly on the monkeys and bears.

So Ravana was right when he thought that by ordering his demon warriors to have a free hand at killing and eating the invading army of monkeys and bears he is virtually unleashing a wild and ferocious pack of hungry wolves in order to get rid of

a helpless flock of pigeons that has come un-invited to disturb him and dirty his city of Lanka with their droppings!]

उमा रावनहि अस अभिमाना । जिमि टिट्ठिभ खग सूत उताना ॥ ६ ॥
चले निसाचर आयसु मागी । गहि कर भिण्डिपाल बर साँगी ॥ ७ ॥
तोमर मुद्गर परसु प्रचंडा । सूल कृपान परिघ गिरिखंडा ॥ ८ ॥

umā rāvanahi asa abhimānā. jimi ṭiṭṭibha khaga sūta utānā. 6.
calē nisācara āyasu māgī. gahi kara bhiṇḍipāla bara sām̐gī. 7.
tōmara mudgara parasu pracandā. sūla kṛpāna parigha girikhaṇḍā. 8.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this divine story of Ram Charit Manas, said to his consort Uma to whom he was narrating it.]

Shiva said, ‘Listen Uma! Ravana was so deluded by his haughtiness that he resembled the bird known as sandpiper that goes to sleep with its legs pointing to the sky¹.’ (6)

The demon warriors sought Ravana’s final permission and embarked to carry out the orders given to them. They armed themselves with different kinds of weapons, such as, inter alia, slings, javelins, spears, lancets, iron clubs, batons, maces, battle-axes, forks, sickles, battle-knives, wheels with razor-sharp edges, et al, as well as huge boulders and rocks (that were to be used as missiles). (7-8)

[Note—¹The sandpiper sleeps with its legs pointing to the sky in the belief that it will prevent the heaven from falling and crushing it while it is asleep. The bird is so stupid and ignorant and haughty at the same time that it harbours this ridiculous idea. The sky would neither fall to crush it, nor is it able to support the sky in case it does fall on it.

Similarly, Ravana, in his ignorance and haughtiness, had become so deluded that he thought it was a joke to kill the monkeys and bears to feed his hungry demon hordes in the same way as the demons used to hunt and kill other creatures for food.]

जिमि अरुनोपल निकर निहारी । धावहिं सठ खग मांस अहारी ॥ ९ ॥
चोंच भंग दुख तिन्हहि न सूझा । तिमि धाए मनुजाद अबूझा ॥ १० ॥

jimi arunōpala nikara nihārī. dhāvahiṁ saṭha khaga mānsa ahārī. 9.
cōṇca bhaṅga dukha tinhahi na sūjhā. timi dhā'ē manujāda abūjhā. 10.

Even as carnivorous birds-of-prey swoop down on pieces of red stones thinking them to be pieces of red meat [9], unaware of the intensity of agony and severity of pain that their foolishness would cause them (because by striking at the stone they bloody themselves and break their own beaks), the foolish and ignorant man-eating demons (manujāda) lunged forward towards their own peril¹ [10]. (9-10)

[Note—¹To wit, the demon army did not realise that it is going to jump down a well of self-destruction when it dashed forward furiously and recklessly to clash headon with the army of monkeys and bears.]

दो०. नानायुध सर चाप धर जातुधान बल बीर ।
कोट कँगूरन्हि चढ़ि गए कोटि कोटि रनधीर ॥ ४० ॥

dōhā.

nānāyudha sara cāpa dhara jātudhāna bala bīra.
kōṭa kaṁgūranhi caḍhi ga'ē kōṭi kōṭi ranadhīra. 40.

Countless numbers of mighty demon warriors, who were all extremely ferocious and vicious by nature, as well as were very valiant, brave, gallant and courageous, picked up whatever weapons they could lay their hands on, such as bows and arrows and many other types of arms and armaments, as they scampered forward excitedly and mounted the ramparts and battlements of the fort of Lanka¹. (Doha no. 40)

[Note—¹One section of the demon army rushed to the top of the wall of the fort of Lanka as it would be easy for them to pound the invading army from there even as their compatriots would face the enemy at the gates of the fort and on the ground around it. This is why those who rushed to the ramparts and battlements held bows and arrows so they can shoot at the enemy from the top, and those demon warriors who rushed to guard the gates and the ground around these gates had other weapons that are needed for face-to-face battle, such as slings, spears, batons, clubs, battle-axes et al as enumerated in verse nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 40 herein above.]

चौ०. कोट कँगूरन्हि सोहहिं कैसे । मेरु के सृंगनि जनु घन बैसे ॥ १ ॥
बाजहिं ढोल निसान जुझाऊ । सुनि धुनि होइ भटन्हि मन चाऊ ॥ २ ॥
बाजहिं भेरि नफीरि अपारा । सुनि कादर उर जाहिं दरारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kōṭa kaṁgūranhi sōhahim kaisē. mēru kē sṛngani janu ghana baisē. 1.
bājahim ḍhōla nisāna jujhā'ū. suni dhuni hō'i bhaṭanhi mana cā'ū. 2.
bājahim bhēri naphīri apārā. suni kādara ura jāhim darārā. 3.

The demon warriors adorning the ramparts and battlements of the fort appeared to resemble huge banks of dark clouds assembled over the summit of Mt. Sumeru, the golden mountain¹. (1)

Battle-drums and war-trumpets, as well as other musical instruments that are usually sounded during battles, were being played furiously. The provocative sound emanating from these musical instruments of war were meant to inject vigour, energy, courage and dynamism in the warriors; these sounds lifted their spirits and stoked their passions for battle, provoking them to fight ferociously and without pause. Hence, the sound of these instruments excited the demon warriors no end, and made them eager for battle. (2)

The sound of kettle-drums and the clarionets was so shrill, sharp and thunderous that they made the hearts of the cowards crack in fear². (3)

[Note—¹The walls of the fort of Lanka, all its ramparts and battlements, were plastered with foils of gold, or may be they were made of bricks of gold like the rest of this famed city. Though it is true that when Hanuman had burnt Lanka, a major part of it was destroyed and the city was more or less turned into a black hulk, yet it is also true that no matter how fiercely the fire may have raged some part of the city failed to be affected by the flames and managed to escape major damage. To wit, while the greater part of Lanka was turned black, there were some outer areas that still retained their golden shine. And the ‘fort’ must have been one such place that was little or not at all affected by the raging fire simply because it was far away from the city centre; the walls of the fort surrounded the city like a ring and they were away from the densely populated areas which were set ablaze by Hanuman. Hence, the ramparts and battlements retained their ‘golden hue’ when the war began. This is why they are compared to Mt. Sumeru, the ‘golden mountain’.

The demons had huge bodies and dark complexion, and sitting and moving around on the top of the walls of the fort of Lanka they resembled the dark clouds that hover on the top of the golden mountain by the name of Mt. Sumeru.

²Verse nos. 2 and 3 bring into sharp focus the difference between a brave warrior and a coward. The sound of musical instruments of war excites a warrior, keeping him energised and inspiring him to fight spiritedly, but the same sound chills the blood of a coward who would have a heart attack if subjected to it for long.]

देखिन्ह जाइ कपिन्ह के ठट्टा । अति बिसाल तनु भालु सुभट्टा ॥ ४ ॥
धावहिं गनहिं न अवघट घाटा । पर्वत फोरि करहिं गहि बाटा ॥ ५ ॥
कटकटाहिं कोटिन्ह भट गर्जहिं । दसन ओठ काटहिं अति तर्जहिं ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhinha jā'i kapinha kē ṭhaṭṭā. ati bisāla tanu bhālu subhaṭṭā. 4.
dhāvahiṃ ganahiṃ na avaghaṭa ghāṭā. parbata phōri karahiṃ gahi bātā. 5.
kaṭakaṭāhiṃ kōṭinha bhaṭa garjahiṃ. dasana ōṭha kāṭahiṃ ati tarjahiṃ. 6.

The demon warriors saw their enemy for the first time. They saw a mammoth assemblage of monkey and bear warriors with huge bodies and formidable reputation. (4)

These brave and irrepressible warriors (the monkeys and bears) were rushing in (towards the fort) from all directions. They paid no heed to any obstacle in their way; they grabbed huge boulders and rocks that blocked their progress, some of which were as large as hillocks (literally ‘as large as small mountains or hills’; “parbata”), only to dash them to the ground to crush them to pieces. (5)

Hundreds and thousands of valiant warriors of the monkey and bear army were gnashing their teeth, yelling ferociously, biting their lips with their teeth, and jumped and hopped menacingly (as they rapidly neared the fort)¹. (6)

[Note—¹The invading army of monkeys and bears was raring and eager for battle; the warriors were fast closing in menacingly on the fort of Lanka. It was a chilling sight the demon soldiers, who had first arrived on the walls of the fort, saw.]

उत रावन इत राम दोहाई । जयति जयति जय परी लराई ॥ ७ ॥

निसिचर सिखर समूह ढहावहिं । कूदि धरहिं कपि फेरि चलावहिं ॥ ८ ॥

uta rāvana ita rāma dōhā'ī. jayati jayati jaya parī larā'ī. 7.

nisicara sikhara samūha ḍhahāvahiṁ. kūdi dharahiṁ kapi phēri calāvahiṁ. 8.

There were shrill cries and raising of slogans from both the opposing forces, each praising and cheering its respective Lord, the demons raising slogans in honour of Ravana on the other side, yelling 'Glory to Ravana', and the monkeys and bears raising slogans in honour of Lord Ram on this side, yelling 'Glory to Lord Ram'.

With these shrill and chilling war cries respectively from both the sides, the two forces clashed head-on. (7)

The demons who had mounted the ramparts and battlements threw down huge mountain-like boulders upon their enemy (in order to crush the invading soldiers crowding at the bottom of the wall), but the monkeys and bears immediately grabbed the falling boulders, broke them into pieces, and then viciously hurled these pieces back at the demons stationed on the top of the wall of the fort. (8)

छं०. धरि कुधर खंड प्रचंड मर्कट भालु गढ़ पर डारहीं । १ ।

झपटहिं चरन गहि पटकि महि भजि चलत बहुरि पचारहीं ॥ २ ॥

अति तरल तरुन प्रताप तरपहिं तमकि गढ़ चढ़ि चढ़ि गए । ३ ।

कपि भालु चढ़ि मंदिरन्ह जहँ तहँ राम जसु गावत भए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

dhari kudhara khaṇḍa pracaṇḍa markṭa bhālu gaṛha para ḍārahīṁ. 1.

jhapatahiṁ carana gahi paṭaki mahi bhaji calata bahuri pacārahīṁ. 2.

ati tarala taruna pratāpa tarapahiṁ tamaki gaṛha caḍhi caḍhi ga'e. 3.

kapi bhālu caḍhi mandiranha jaham̐ taham̐ rāma jasu gāvata bha'e. 4.

The ferocious monkey and bear warriors picked up broken pieces of mountains (hills and such like) and hurl them viciously on the wall of the fort. (Chanda line no. 1)

They (the monkeys and bears) lunged at the demons, caught hold of anyone they could lay their hands on by grabbing him by his legs, and then dashed the unfortunate victim hard on the ground. When the terrified demons tried to escape, these warriors mocked them (for their cowardice and un-warrior like meekness) and challenged them (not to run away, but to come close for a duel). (Chanda line no. 2)

The youthful and valiant monkeys and bears showed exceptional versatility and maneuverability as they easily climbed on the walls of the fort and mounted its top very quickly. (Chanda line no. 3)

Once on the top of the fort, the monkeys and bears rapidly descended into the city of Lanka and swept through it; they climbed on the terraces of its buildings (*caḍhi mandiranha*), all the while loudly cheering the glory of Lord Ram and proclaiming the Lord's majesty¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹It must have been a spectacular sight to behold. The Lord's army made rapid progress and forced the demon soldiers to beat a hasty retreat back into the city. To wit, the high wall of the fort of Lanka proved inadequate to stop the invasion.

The gates of the fort were no bother for the monkeys and bears, and the first wave of attackers did not pay attention to it either, as they chose to assault Lanka directly by jumping over the walls of the fort and invading the city itself.

They were in their hundreds and thousands, and once inside the city they roared and yelled triumphantly, cheering Lord Ram and raising slogans in his honour. The terrified demon citizens ran for cover and gave a right of way to the invading warriors. The monkeys and bears rushed atop buildings, small and big, shouting the glory of Lord Ram from there. The whole demon city reverberated with their loud cheers and yells even as the demons scampered for cover, and to plan to regroup and launch counter-offensive. There surely must have been complete chaos and a huge turmoil in Lanka.]

दो०. एकु एकु निसिचर गहि पुनि कपि चले पराइ ।
ऊपर आपु हेठ भट गिरहिं धरनि पर आइ ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

ēku ēku nisicara gahi puni kapi calē parā'i.
ūpara āpu hēṭha bhaṭa girahiṁ dharani para ā'i. 41.

Each monkey took hold of a demon as a hostage, and then they ran back from the city clutching the demon hostages. At the time of jumping over the wall of the fort they sat on top of their hostages, as a result of which when they landed on the ground below, it was the demon who was dashed against the hard surface of the earth, cushioning the effect of the fall for the benefit of the monkey warrior and preventing any injury to be caused to him (because the brunt of the violent fall was borne by the demon)¹. (Doha no. 41)

[Note—¹The poor demon faced a double whammy. First it was the long fall from the top of the wall of the fort that ended in a fierce dashing on the hard ground below, and then the horror of pain was magnified by the sheer weight of a heavy monkey sitting on the back of this demon, crushing the pitiful fellow between the weight of the monkey riding on the top and the hard surface of the ground below.]

चौ०. राम प्रताप प्रबल कपिजूथा । मर्दहिं निसिचर सुभट बरूथा ॥ १ ॥

चढ़े दुर्ग पुनि जहँ तहँ बानर । जय रघुबीर प्रताप दिवाकर ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

rāma pratāpa prabala kapijūthā. mardahim nisicara subhaṭa barūthā. 1.
caṛhē durga puni jaham̐ taham̐ bānara. jaya raghubīra pratāpa divākara. 2.

With the grace of Lord Ram, the indomitable monkeys and bears had acquired formidable strength and immensity of punch. They crushed and smothered the demons ruthlessly and violently, without letting them to have a pause. (1)

Once again, a fresh wave of monkeys leapt over the fort (of Lanka) here and there, wherever they found a chance². They chanted slogans and cheered Lord Ram whose glories and majesty were akin to the splendour of the brilliant sun. (2)

[Note—¹In Doha no. 40 and its preceding verses we have read about the first wave of the assault. Waves after waves of assaults were launched in quick succession, one after another. After the first batch of monkey warriors returned triumphantly from the city of Lanka, bringing back news of how they leapt across the wall and ran amok in the city, cheering loudly and establishing the flag of victory of Lord Ram symbolically in the city by shouting his name from atop buildings, the next group of monkey warriors, which was waiting below the fort, became excited as the monkeys in this group also wanted some vigorous action and a chance to prove their mettle.

This was the second wave of assault launched on Lanka. By this time the monkey warriors had determined that it was easier for them to enter Lanka by simply leaping over the walls of the fort instead of wasting time and energy in trying to fight their way in through the gates of the fort.]

चले निसाचर निकर पराई । प्रबल पवन जिमि घन समुदाई ॥ ३ ॥

हाहाकार भयउ पुर भारी । रोवहिं बालक आतुर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

सब मिलि देहिं रावनहिं गारी । राज करत एहिं मृत्यु हँकारी ॥ ५ ॥

calē nisācara nikara parā'ī. prabala pavana jimi ghana samudā'ī. 3.
hāhākāra bhaya'u pura bhārī. rōvahir̐ bālaka ātura nārī. 4.
saba mili dēhir̐ rāvanahir̐ gārī. rāja karata ēhir̐ mṛtyu ham̐kārī. 5.

The demon warriors fled before the monkeys like dark clouds that are easily and swiftly swept away when pushed away by the powerful force of a strong gust of wind. (3)

There was total chaos and an unprecedented upheaval in the city of Lanka as terrified children and anxious demon females wailed, howled and lamented all over the place¹. (4)

Everyone got together to hurl abuses and curses at Ravana, accusing him of misusing his powers as a king to invite death and destruction for all². (5)

[Note—¹The distressed cries and howls of grief of the horrified citizens reverberated in the city, in all its nooks and corners. The children wailed and shrieked; the demonesses lamented their fate and grieved for their dead husbands, brothers, sons etc. who perished in the first few hours of the massive invasion. The first day of the war gave them a hint of what was yet to come. The demons were habituated in tormenting others and inflicting pain and grief on them, but they had never themselves witnessed the pain and grief of defeat, loss, death and destruction from so close a quarter in their personal lives as they had been witnessing lately, and it climaxed with the actual invasion by Lord Ram's army. Everything seemed lost and gone for the demon citizenry.

²The demons citizens were right in blaming Ravana for the calamity that had befallen them. The king, after all, is responsible for ensuring peace and happiness of his subjects; he must not take a rash decision that would cause havoc on his own kingdom. Whatever was happening now in Lanka was the doing of Ravana, because he had stubbornly refused to listen to anybody. He was so obstinate by nature, and so firmly gripped by arrogance and overcome with delusions, that even the evil omen of the burning of Lanka did not ring any alarm bell in his mind, nor did the falling off of his crowns on two occasions, once when they were shot down by the arrow of Lord Ram, and the second time when Angad had planted his legs on the ground. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 13-a along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 32 respectively.}

What could the poor and helpless citizens of Lanka do against the haughty will of their own king, except to accept their doomed fate and submit themselves meekly to it?

The female demons whose male relations had already died or were maimed, wept and wailed in grief; and the rest of the female demons wailed and wept at the prospect of their own male relations meeting the same end.

The children could not understand the gravity of the situation; but they wailed and cried and shrieked nevertheless out of fear as well as in resonance with the surrounding environment of loud lamentation and pitiful grieving that overwhelmed their little minds.]

निज दल बिचल सुनी तेहिं काना । फेरि सुभट लंकेस रिसाना ॥ ६ ॥

जो रन बिमुख सुना मैं काना । सो मैं हतब कराल कृपाना ॥ ७ ॥

सर्वसु खाइ भोग करि नाना । समर भूमि भए बल्लभ प्राना ॥ ८ ॥

nija dala bicala sunī tēhim kānā. phēri subhaṭa laṅkēsa risānā. 6.

jō rana bimukha sunā mair̥m kānā. sō mair̥m hataba karāla kṛpānā. 7.

sarbasu khā'i bhōga kari nānā. samara bhūmi bha'ē ballabha prānā. 8.

When the king of Lanka, Ravana, heard that his army was in distress and retreating, he became furious with anger. (6)

He stopped them and yelled at the demon warriors, chiding them for their cowardice and bringing shame to the valiant demon race. He shouted at them: 'Oh you all; listen to me. If I hear anyone of you turning your back from the battle-field, then be warned ye all that I shall draw my sword and slay that coward with my own hands. (7)

You have been feeding yourselves well and eating everything you wished from my ration stores, and you have been enjoying all sorts of pleasures because of my patronage. Now when it comes to the battle-field, you prefer to save your life at the cost of my honour and prestige!

[Woe to you accursed fellows; shame to you! And remember my words: if anyone turns back then I will kill him myself. Go and show your mettle by pushing the enemy back. I told you to go and feed yourselves on the monkeys and bears, but here I see you are running away like a hunted animal. Curse be unto you, coward and spineless fellows; who have brought utter disgrace to our race of demons who are famed for their valour, gallantry and dare devilry. Return forthwith and face the enemy. Don't dare to show your face to me by showing your back to the enemy; the mighty sword of Ravana will welcome you!]¹ (8)

[Note—¹A similar threat was given by the demon commanders Khar and Dushan when their army, which attacked Lord Ram in the wake of Supernakha's episode, started fleeing in terror when the Lord began slaying them relentlessly with volleys of his fierce arrows—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 20.]

उग्र बचन सुनि सकल डेराने । चले क्रोध करि सुभट लजाने ॥ ९ ॥

सन्मुख मरन बीर कै सोभा । तब तिन्ह तजा प्रान कर लोभा ॥ १० ॥

ugra bacana suni sakala ḍērānē. calē krōdha kari subhaṭa lajānē. 9.
sanmukha marana bīra kai sōbhā. taba tinha tajā prāna kara lōbhā. 10.

When the demon warriors heard the sternly-worded warning of Ravana, all of them were terrified (because they knew Ravana's unforgiving nature and were sure that he will kill them if they did not obey him).

They were also utterly ashamed of themselves for being so timid and cowardly. So they angrily returned to the battle-field to avenge for the humiliation that they have suffered (at the hands of the monkeys and bears on the one hand, and Ravana on the other hand). (9)

It has been held that a warrior gets his fame, honour and glory by dying while fighting in the battle-field (and not by running away from it). Keeping this maxim in mind, the demon warriors set aside attachment to their lives and discarded the fear of losing it, as they decided to die while fighting the enemy up front in the battle-field¹. (10)

[Note—¹The demon warriors realised that their king was speaking the truth when he admonished them for turning their backs and running away from the battle-field. Surely this would invite scorn and infamy on their present families and cast a dark pall of dishonour that would dog their future generations. So they decided that if death was sure to come to them, then it is better for them to die like a hero fighting the enemy than to die an ignominious death of a coward by getting disarmed and slayed by Ravana.]

दो०. बहु आयुध धर सुभट सब भिरहिं पचारि पचारि ।
 व्याकुल किए भालु कपि परिघ त्रिसूलन्हि मारि ॥ ४२ ॥

dōhā.

bahu āyudha dhara subhaṭa saba bhirahim pacāri pacāri.
 byākula ki'ē bhālu kapi parigha trisūlanhi māri. 42.

[Deciding to die an honourable death of a warrior, the demon hordes were filled with renewed energy and dare-devilry as they lost all fear of death and longing for life.]

The brave demon warriors grasped many types of weapons and returned to face the enemy with renewed vigour. They fiercely challenged the monkeys and bears for hand-to-hand duel, and striking their enemy hard and viciously with iron clubs and tridents, the demon warriors began bludgeoning the monkeys and bears ruthlessly¹. (Doha no. 42)

[Note—¹Ravana's threat and chiding worked well, for this is the first time since the assault on Lanka began that the demons have shown some guts and resilience to fight. Earlier they simply fled from the ground, but now they showed their true mettle by striking hard at their enemy.

The result was spectacular. We shall read in the forthcoming verses herein below that now it was the time for the monkeys and bears to flee.]

चौ०. भय आतुर कपि भागन लागे । जद्यपि उमा जीतिहहिं आगे ॥ १ ॥
 कोउ कह कहँ अंगद हनुमंता । कहँ नल नील दुबिद बलवंता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhaya ātura kapi bhāgana lāgē. jadyapi umā jītiyahim āgē. 1.
 kō'u kaha kham' aṅgada hanumantā. kham' nala nīla dubida balavantā. 2.

Lord Shiva continued with his narration, 'Oh Uma! The monkeys, who were terrified by the determined counter-offensive launched by the ferocious demon warriors who struck them hard and viciously, began to flee and scatter in a chaotic way, though by-and-by the glory of victory would be theirs. (1)

Some asked where Angad was, some called out to Hanuman, and some others questioned the whereabouts of the brave Nala and Dubid¹. (2)

[Note—¹During this alarming moment when the forward formations of the attacking monkey army that had invaded the city of Lanka faced sudden rout, and their phalanxes were breached by the vicious counter-attack by the demon forces, forcing the monkeys to flee in complete disarray, the terrified monkeys looked around for their commanders in order to seek orders. This verse shows that Angad, Hanuman, Nala and Divid were the commanders who had led the wave of attacking monkeys that had been divided into two divisions—one that leapt across the walls of the fort to directly enter Lanka, and the other that was making effort to break the massive gates of the fort.

An interesting observation can be made here. Where did this clash took place when the monkeys were pushed back by the charging demon warriors? We have just read that the second wave of monkey troops had entered the city of Lanka by leaping over the walls of the fort—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42 herein above. So obviously the place of this action was within the fort of Lanka. The invading monkeys were swarming all over the city at the time Ravana had summoned his warriors and scolded them for showing cowardice in the face of the enemy, ordering them to fight like a true warrior or face death at his hands if they bring dishonour to the demon race by showing their back to the enemy—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 42 herein above. The demon warriors then struck hard at the monkeys who had been running amok in the city itself, and chased them back in complete disarray.

It is to be particularly noted at this point of time that the mighty gates of the fort hadn't been breached till now. Intense fighting was underway at the western gate where Meghanad, the son of Ravana, was leading the demon troops to guard it, while Hanuman was leading the monkey troops there making desperate attempts to break it. It will be clear shortly in verse nos. 3-4 herein below.

Angad too was on the field below—this will be clear in Doha no. 43 herein below.

In short, the commanders of the advance formations of the monkey and bear army, such as Angad, Hanuman, Nala and Divid, were on the ground below the walls of the fort, monitoring the troops and making effort to breach the gates. That is why those monkey warriors who had been inside the fort could not see their commanders around as is evident from this verse no. 2.]

निज दल बिकल सुना हनुमाना । पच्छिम द्वार रहा बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥
मेघनाद तहँ करइ लराई । टूट न द्वार परम कठिनाई ॥ ४ ॥

nija dala bikala sunā hanumānā. pacchima dvāra rahā balavānā. 3.
mēghanāda taham̐ kara'i larā'ī. ṭūṭa na dvāra parama kaṭhinā'ī. 4.

The brave Hanuman, who was near the western gate of the fort, heard that his group is in distress and needs help. (3)

He was fighting with Meghanad (the valiant son of Ravana) at this gate, but despite all efforts breaking this strong gate was found to be very difficult. (4)

पवनतनय मन भा अति क्रोधा । गर्जेउ प्रबल काल सम जोधा ॥ ५ ॥
कूदि लंक गढ़ ऊपर आवा । गहि गिरि मेघनाद कहूँ धावा ॥ ६ ॥
भंजेउ रथ सारथी निपाता । ताहि हृदय महुँ मारेसि लाता ॥ ७ ॥
दुसरें सूत बिकल तेहि जाना । स्यंदन घालि तुरत गृह आना ॥ ८ ॥

pavanatanaya mana bhā ati krōdhā. garjē'u prabala kāla sama jōdhā. 5.
kūdi laṅka gaṛha ūpara āvā. gahi giri mēghanāda kahum̐ dhāvā. 6.
bhanjē'u ratha sārathī nipātā. tāhi hr̥daya mahum̐ mārēsi lātā. 7.

dusarēṁ sūta bikala tēhi jānā. syandana ghāli turata gr̥ha ānā. 8.

When the son of the wind god (Hanuman) heard this alarming news he became extremely angry; the mighty warrior roared like the god of death himself would when he is filled with wrath. (5)

Hanuman instantly leapt across the walls of the fort and entered it. Once inside, he grabbed a large hill-like rock and lunged furiously at Meghanad (who was leading his demon troops from within the western gate of the fort). (6)

He (Hanuman) broke the chariot into splinters, killed its charioteer, and then kicked violently on the chest of Meghanad. (7)

Another charioteer (who was kept as a reserve with a second chariot-in-waiting for contingencies) saw that his master (Meghanad) was seriously hurt and very agitated; so he immediately lifted him into his reserve chariot and took him home¹. (8)

[Note—¹Meghanad was taken aback as he hadn't expected this sudden attack from his rear; he couldn't imagine that someone would suddenly come from behind him, destroy his chariot and kick him violently in the chest. This sudden and unexpected assault from inside the fort therefore left Meghanad vulnerable and made him an easy target for attack by Hanuman. Meghanad couldn't even retaliate.]

दो०. अंगद सुना पवनसुत गढ़ पर गयउ अकेल ।

रन बाँकुरा बालिसुत तरकि चढ़ेउ कपि खेल ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

aṅgada sunā pavanasuta gar̥ha para gaya'u akēla.
rana bām̐kurā bālisuta taraki caṛhē'u kapi khēla. 43.

Meanwhile, Angad learnt that the son of the wind god (Hanuman) had gone on the fort all alone. So the son of Baali (Angad), who was gallant in battle, reached the top of the fort in one single bound as if it was a sporting activity for him¹. (Doha no. 43)

[Note—¹As we have noted earlier, since both Hanuman and Angad were on the battle-field below the fort, monitoring and leading their troops from there and making attempts to break the gates of Lanka, there was no one to lead the group of monkeys who had jumped over the fort and entered Lanka to create havoc inside the city as narrated previously—apropos: Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 42.

That is why when the monkeys rampaging inside Lanka were scattered in a complete disorderly manner by a fierce counter-attack by the demons within the walls of the fort, the retreating monkey warriors couldn't find any commander to guide them and wondered where Hanuman, Angad, Nala and Divid were—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43.]

चौ०. जुद्ध बिरुद्ध क्रुद्ध द्वौ बंदर । राम प्रताप सुमिरि उर अंतर ॥ १ ॥

रावन भवन चढ़े द्वौ धाई । करहिं कोसलाधीस दोहाई ॥ २ ॥

कलस सहित गहि भवनु ढहावा । देखि निसाचरपति भय पावा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jud'dha birud'dha krud'dha dvau bandara. rāma pratāpa sumiri ura antara. 1.

rāvana bhavana caṛhē dvau dhāī. karahim kōsalādhīsa dōhāī. 2.

kalasa sahita gahi bhavanu ḍhahāvā. dēkhi nisācarapati bhaya pāvā. 3.

The two monkey warriors (Hanuman and Angad), who had become furious and vicious with the heat of battle, let loose their anger on the enemy. They had a lot of confidence and bravery in them by the virtue of invoking the grace and blessing of Lord Ram in their hearts. (1)

Both of them climbed atop the palace of Ravana, all the while cheering and proclaiming the glory of Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (karahim kōsalādhīsa dōhāī). (2)

Once there, they shook the 'Kalash'¹ atop the palace so violently that not only was it uprooted and tumbled down to the ground but it also brought the whole structure of the palace crashing down with it as the violent shaking had made it crack.

When the helpless king of the demons (Ravana) watched this happen, he was horrified with anger and terrified with fear². (3)

[Note—¹The Kalash is a ceremonial structure shaped like an urn or a pitcher that adorns the top of important buildings. It was a cupola on the palace's top. When Angad and Hanuman shook it violently, the building developed cracks because the Kalash was firmly grouted into the terrace and formed a part of the main structure that supported the building. When the Kalash shook it was similar to the effect of an earthquake that results in wide cracks in a building and makes it fall down.

²Ravana was in a state of shock. The shaking and the demolishing of the palace occurred so quickly and without warning that he had little time to gather his wits and think what to do. As the gigantic structure came crashing down with a mighty thud and a storm of dust, Ravana stood dazed, not knowing how to react. He had become immobile for some moments, so dismayed and shocked he was.

Up until now his own palace was spared any particular damage; it was not burnt while the rest of Lanka was razed to the ground in the fire lit by Hanuman, and it was not climbed by the invading monkeys who had leapt across the walls of the fort and rode atop the terraces of the major buildings of Lanka a little while ago.

One may wonder where Ravana would have stayed after his palace was demolished. The answer is that, being a king, it is certain that he had many other such palaces at his disposal. So he immediately shifted to some other palace.]

नारि बृंद कर पीटहिं छाती । अब दुइ कपि आए उतपाती ॥ ४ ॥

कपिलीला करि तिन्हहि डेरावहिं । रामचंद्र कर सुजसु सुनावहिं ॥ ५ ॥

nāri br̥nda kara pīṭahim̐ chātī. aba du'i kapi ā'ē utapātī. 4.
kapilīlā kari tinhahi ḍērāvahim̐. rāmacandra kara sujasu sunāvahim̐. 5.

The women folk residing in the palace (Ravana's ladies, maids, queens and mistresses) beat their chests with their hands and wailed, 'Behold there; now there are two rioting monkeys here (instead of one)¹.' (4)

The two monkeys (thoroughly enjoyed this scene, and they) teased the horrified demonesses and terrified them further by their menacing acts², all the while proclaiming the glories of Lord Ram and making these dazed ladies listen to them³. (5)

[Note—¹The demon ladies raised an alarm when they saw Angad and Hanuman menacingly rampaging around together. Earlier they had witnessed how much havoc one single monkey can cause when Hanuman had single-handedly destroyed the city of Lanka during his first visit when he had burnt it. Now with two such violent monkeys determined to unleash their ire on the city in their midst, there was no surety of what worse was to come. So the terrified demonesses wailed and yelled and shrieked in horror.

²Angad and Hanuman scared the poor women of Ravana's palace by making menacing faces at them with wide open mouths that showed their sharp teeth; they threatened the ladies by rushing at them with claws extended as if they would grab and kill them; they hopped and jumped and stomped their feet violently on the ground around these shrieking and terrified demonesses; they made ferocious gestures at them.

The net effect was that the petrified women folk of Ravana's inner palace were shrieking, yelling and wailing alarmingly in the same way as the female demon citizens had done earlier when the invading monkey troops had first entered the city and run through it spreading terror everywhere. {Apropos: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 42 herein before.}

³The ladies living in the inner courtyards of Ravana's palace lived a secluded life as they were isolated from the outside world. So they probably had yet not heard the war cries of the invading monkeys who had entered the city a little ago by jumping over the walls of the fort, and had then run through the city and climbed its buildings, all the while loudly cheering and boldly proclaiming the glories of Lord Ram at the top of their voices. This was now done by Angad and Hanuman—i.e. they made the ladies of the inner-chambers of Ravana's palace become aware of who Lord Ram was and why he was so famed and revered in the world.]

पुनि कर गहि कंचन के खंभा । कहेन्हि करिअ उतपात अरंभा ॥ ६ ॥
गर्जि परे रिपु कटक मझारी । लागे मर्दै भुज बल भारी ॥ ७ ॥
काहुहि लात चपेटन्हि केहू । भजहु न रामहि सो फल लेहू ॥ ८ ॥

puni kara gahi kañcana kē khambhā. kahēnhi kari'a utapāta arambhā. 6.
garji parē ripu kaṭaka majhārī. lāgē mardai bhuja bala bhārī. 7.

kāhuhi lāta capēṭanhi kēhū. bhajahu na rāmahi sō phala lēhū. 8.

Then they (i.e. Hanuman and Angad) grabbed two thick golden pillars (of the demolished palace) each, and said to each other that they should now begin their job of ravaging through the demon forces and trouncing them. (6)

With this mutual understanding, the two valiant warriors roared ferociously as they plunged head-on in the middle of the enemy forces, pounding their adversaries mercilessly, right, left and center, with their mighty arms. (7)

They kicked some and slapped others, stomping on one demon, punching someone else and cuffing another, telling all of them menacingly that it is their punishment for not being devoted to Lord Ram, for not honouring and adoring him¹. (8)

[Note—¹Angad and Hanuman joined hands to start pounding and crushing the demon army. It is to be noted that their emphasise is on these demons not being devoted to Lord Ram and honouring him. The two friends did not tell their opponents that they are being punished for fighting for Ravana, the king of the demon race, for they were aware that it was their duty to fight for their king. The mistake the demons were actually making was that they chose the wrong cause to fight, for this war was sparked because Ravana had kidnapped Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, which is an evil deed and must be punished.]

दो०. एक एक सों मर्दहिं तोरि चलावहिं मुंड ।
रावन आगें परहिं ते जनु फूटहिं दधि कुंड ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

ēka ēka sōm mardahim tōri calāvahim muṇḍa.
rāvana āgēm parahim tē janu phūṭahim dadhi kuṇḍa. 44.

They randomly caught hold of one demon and violently pressed him against another, thereby squashing them and making a pulp of both. After the demons died in this manner, the two warriors twisted their heads and yanked them off their corpses, and then flung them.

These heads landed heavily in front of Ravana and broke down into many pieces like so many earthen pots filled with curd that would break apart instantly when they fall from a height on the hard ground below, spilling out their contents. (Doha no. 44)

[Note—¹The severed heads of killed demon warriors started falling before a stunned Ravana like so many earthen pitchers filled with curd or any other liquid being pelted at him. They rained all around Ravana, falling with heavy thuds and immediately splitting wide open to spill out their contents—blood, brain and other tissue. The ground around the demon king resembled a garbage dumping area as it got rapidly filled with cracked and splintered skulls, blood, flesh and soft tissue of the damaged brains.

It appeared to a beholder that Ravana was being pelted heavily by rounded balls of baked earth stuffed with stinking garbage that littered the area around him, as

these earthen balls split open immediately after crashing to the ground, spilling their dirty contents all around.]

चौ०. महा महा मुखिआ जे पावहिं । ते पद गहि प्रभु पास चलावहिं ॥ १ ॥

कहइ बिभीषनु तिन्ह के नामा । देहिं राम तिन्हू निज धामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mahā mahā mukhi'ā jē pāvahim. tē pada gahi prabhu pāsa calāvahim. 1.
kaha'i bibhiṣanu tinha kē nāmā. dēhim rāma tinahū nija dhāmā. 2.

Whenever they (Hanuman and Angad) found a high general or chief commander of the demon army, they would seize him by the leg, swirl him round and round rapidly in the air (like a ball tied to a string), and then flung the dazed captive so violently that he flew straight (literally like a javelin or a ball released by a swinging sling) and landed right before Lord Ram. (1)

Vibhishan (who was standing close to Lord Ram) introduced the Lord to these great demon warriors by telling him their names (and designations). The Lord (who is by his inherent nature compassionate, merciful and forgiving) sent these dying demon warriors to his own abode in the heaven¹. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram granted these demon commanders and generals the boon of deliverance of their souls; they were granted emancipation and salvation of their souls. Though normally they ought to have gone to hell due the evil life they had led, but since they died in front of the Lord and at his feet, the Lord lived up to his reputation of showing mercy and grace to all those who come to him and die before him by blessing these demons and giving them a place in heaven instead of leaving them to face their fate, which was surely hell.

One may ask: If Lord Ram is so merciful that he granted this privilege of going to the heaven to generals and commanders of the demon army, what about the poor ordinary demon soldiers who laid down their lives almost at the same time and in the same war as these generals?

The answer is to be found later on when we read that at the time the war ended and the Lord saw the battle-field littered with dead bodies of dead demons warriors, he cast his benevolent glance around and blessed the soul of all those dead demons with liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. In fact, all the demons who had died remembering Lord Ram and his divine name, albeit it was done not with devotion but out of either fear or animosity, found a destiny that is the envy of great hermits, seers, sages and saints, so magnanimous and kind Lord Ram is.

The Lord decided that no one who laid down his life to help him fulfil his mandate—one of which was to physically come down to earth as a human being and then bless his devotees with the story of his life that they would sing for generations to come to derive spiritual joy and happiness and feel blessed—must be punished; rather each individual is to be duly rewarded. The Lord was not vengeful; the Lord was an ocean of love and compassion. So he deemed it his moral obligation to send the demons to his own abode in the heaven, and not condemn them to hell.

The next relevant question is: Well then, what about the monkeys and bears who had died? The answer is this: Lord Ram asked Indra, the king of gods, to rain

Amrit (the nectar of eternity; the ambrosia that can revive the dead) on the battle-ground. All the monkeys and bears were revived by this rain. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

But then, another question arises: Why was one group, the demons, allowed to die and go to heaven, while the other, the monkeys and bears, allowed to live? The answer is this: One of the Lord's mandates was to 'eliminate the cruel and sinful demons from the earth because they were tormenting all other creatures', so he was bound to uphold this promise that he had made to the gods and mother earth. On the other hand, the monkeys and bears who fought on the side of Lord Ram were actually the gods themselves as they had assumed these forms to help the Lord in his mission. Hence, the demons had to die, and the monkeys and bears would live. To wit, at the end of the day, evil and sinful forces represented by the demons had to be got rid of, and good virtues represented by the monkeys and bears were allowed to survive. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.}

The following verse nos. 3-5 reiterate these above observations.]

खल मनुजाद द्विजामिष भोगी । पावहिं गति जो जाचत जोगी ॥ ३ ॥
 उमा राम मृदुचित करुनाकर । बयर भाव सुमिरत मोहि निसिचर ॥ ४ ॥
 देहिं परम गति सो जियँ जानी । अस कृपाल को कहहु भवानी ॥ ५ ॥
 अस प्रभु सुनि न भजहिं भ्रम त्यागी । नर मतिमंद ते परम अभागी ॥ ६ ॥

khala manujāda dvijāmiṣa bhōgī. pāvahim̐ gati jō jācata jōgī. 3.
 umā rāma mṛducita karunākara. bayara bhāva sumirata mōhi nīsicara. 4.
 dēhim̐ parama gati sō jiyam̐ jānī. asa kṛpāla kō kahahu bhavānī. 5.
 asa prabhu suni na bhajahim̐ bhrama tyāgī. nara matimanda tē parama
 abhāgī. 6.

[It's indeed a wonder of wonders that—] The demons who were wicked, enemies of the entire human race, who killed and ate flesh of Brahmins (i.e. of those who were elders of the society and learned ones), and who remained engrossed in enjoyment of sensual pleasures—even such vile ones attained a destiny which great ascetics aspire for.

[To wit, these demons were so lucky that they got liberation and deliverance for their souls; they attained emancipation and salvation; they found beatitude and felicity for their tormented souls.] (3)

[Why was it so? Lord Shiva answers this when he said to his consort Uma:] 'Oh Uma! Lord Ram is so immensely kind by his nature, and so full of mercy, compassion and grace that he thought to himself: "These demons had been remembering me (and repeating my divine name), albeit it was done in an inimical way.

[So I must keep my hallowed reputation in mind, that anyone who remembers me and utters my divine name even once becomes eligible to receive my grace and blessing. Hence, I must ensure that these demons get their due share; I must ensure that their souls find peace and beatitude. After all, it was their gross body that was sinful, and with its death this blot on their soul is wiped out. Their soul, which is inherently pure as it is consciousness personified, was unfortunately trapped inside

their demon body, and now that body is history. So I must grant them emancipation and salvation inspite of them fighting with me and opposing me.]” (4)

Oh Bhavani (another name of Uma)! Thinking thus, Lord Ram granted these dead demon warriors a destiny that is regarded as supreme for all living beings¹. Say, who else in this world is so nice, graceful, merciful, compassionate and understanding (*asa kṛpāla kō*) as Lord Ram is? (5)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, those who do not adore and have devotion for such a merciful and gracious Lord Ram even after knowing his excellent character and benevolent nature, then truly and without doubt such people are most unfortunate, dumb and ill-fated.² (6)

[Note—¹The best destiny of a creature is when his soul, known as his Atma or his ‘true self’, which in turn is a personified form of pure consciousness, leaves the creature’s gross body and finds eternal freedom. This eternal freedom means that the Atma will not have to take a birth again; it finds permanent deliverance from the cycle of transmigration wherein the soul keeps returning to this gross mortal world by entering one or the other forms that the creatures take. This grants the soul liberation from the sufferings associated with life in this mortal world. The effect is that the soul of the creature finds eternal rest and peace; it attains a state of beatitude and felicity that grants it eternal bliss.

To wit, Lord Ram granted eternal freedom to the souls of the demons and ensured that they would not take a rebirth again. From spiritual and metaphysical perspective it means a great reward for these demons, a reward that even great ascetics, sages and hermits yearn for. On the other hand, from more worldly perspective it means that Lord Ram ensured that the earth is freed from the prospect of it being re-inhabited once again by these demons, for if that happened, if the earth was once again filled by cruel demons after all the efforts to get rid of them, then the time and the energy invested to eliminate them would have been wasted in the first place.

²Truly it would be an irony if a person does not honour and adore such a great Lord as Lord Sri Ram is who goes out of his way to accept even the fallen and lowly, and welcome them with a smile. The Lord does not demur or think twice to grant them a high place inspite of their past wrongdoings—with only one caveat, and it is that they turn themselves over to his care without reservations or deceit in their hearts.]

अंगद अरु हनुमंत प्रबेसा । कीन्ह दुर्ग अस कह अवधेसा ॥ ७ ॥

लंकाँ द्वौ कपि सोहहिं कैसें । मथहिं सिंधु दुइ मंदर जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

aṅgada aru hanumanta prabēsā. kīnha durga asa kaha avadhēsā. 7.

laṅkāṁ dvau kapi sōhahīṁ kaisēm. mathahīṁ sindhu du'i mandara jaisēm. 8.

Lord Ram, the Lord of Ayodhya (*avadhēsā*), said to his senior advisors or ministers who were near him (such as Sugriv, Vibhishan etc.), ‘Angad and Hanuman have entered the fort. (7)

These two great warriors must be looking awesome in Lanka as they rampage wildly through it, and while on their spree of causing havoc in the city and battering the demon forces, resulting them to be scattered in complete chaos, helter-skelter in panic, they surely must resemble two mighty mountains known as Mandrachal that are churning the ocean simultaneously¹.’ (8)

[Note—¹In some ancient time, the gods and the demons had used Mt. Mandrachal to churn the celestial ocean. In this war which has resulted in a great churn in Lanka, the gods are represented by the monkey warriors in general, and Ravana’s soldiers are obviously the demons. Just like Mt. Mandrachal which was at the focal point of the ancient churning of the ocean, Angad and Hanuman are presently the focus of the great upheaval and chaos prevailing in Lanka. The turmoil in Lanka is like the immense tumult produced in the water of the celestial ocean as it wildly roared, heaved, swirled, splashed and foamed when it was churned in ancient time.

How did Lord Ram come to the conclusion that Angad and Hanuman had entered the fort of Lanka? Well, one reason obviously is that he was being updated by a network of spies on the ground who reported every development back to the command center monitored by the Lord and his close aides. The other reason is the sudden falling on the ground of demon commanders, some wounded and in a state of daze, and some others already dead, as they came in flying like balls when they were hurled out of Lanka by Angad and Hanuman. The gates of the fort were still not breached, and the higher ranking demon commanders were still within the fort. So when they started arriving and falling on the ground in a confused hail of bodies, it surely meant that the two valiant warriors, Angad and Hanuman, had reached within the fort and kicking these commanders out after seizing them from the inside it.

The Lord already had witnessed this skill of Angad when the latter had kicked Ravana’s crowns so precisely that they landed right in his front—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 32 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-10 that precede it; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Lord Ram also was aware that Angad and Hanuman kept close company; they were virtually inseparable from one another like two fast friends. So the Lord deduced that if Angad had gone inside the fort, then surely Hanuman too must be there.

A very vivid picture of the chaos in Lanka created by Hanuman’s assault is presented in Tulsidas’ book “Kavitawali Ramayan”, in its Lanka Kand, verse nos. 40-41.]

दो०. भुज बल रिपु दल दलमलि देखि दिवस कर अंत ।

कूदे जुगल बिगत श्रम आए जहँ भगवंत ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

bhuja bala ripu dala dalamali dēkhi divasa kara anta.

kūdē jugala bigata śrama ā'ē jaham' bhagavanta. 45.

After having crushed the forces of the enemy by the might and punch of their arms, and seeing that the day was coming to an end, the two brave warriors (Angad and Hanuman) jumped back over the walls of the fort effortlessly, as if they weren’t tired at all due to the strenuous activities of the day, and came back to their camp where the Lord (Ram) was. (Doha no. 45)

चौ०. प्रभु पद कमल सीस तिन्ह नाए । देखि सुभट रघुपति मन भाए ॥ १ ॥

राम कृपा करि जुगल निहारे । भए बिगतश्रम परम सुखारे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu pada kamala sīsa tinha nā'ē. dēkhi subhaṭa raghupati mana bhā'ē. 1.
rāma kṛpā kari jugala nihārē. bha'ē bigataśrama parama sukhārē. 2.

When they reached Lord Ram they reverentially bowed their heads before the lotus-like feet of the Lord. The Lord felt glad in his heart when he saw the two skilled and valiant warriors¹. (1)

Lord Ram looked at the pair (Angad and Hanuman) with grace, compassion and kindness in his eyes, and this made the two feel very happy and rejuvenated². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram looked over Angad and Hanuman anxiously to see if they had any serious marks of wounds on their bodies, and to make out from their appearances how they generally fared: were they showing signs of fatigue and weariness; were they hurt and wounded; were they afraid of what was to happen the next day; did they have any unfortunate experience during the course of the battle of the day; was there any sign that they would like some rest; and so on. When the Lord observed that aside from some minor scars or scratches on their bodies here and there that are natural to occur when one is involved in a close and furious hand-to-hand duel with a vicious enemy, and had a little bit desire for rest, they were otherwise hale and hearty overall and were raring to go to the battle front to face and crush the enemy once again any instant, he felt very happy, and blessed them.

²To wit, all weariness and fatigue that Angad and Hanuman may have had vanished immediately when they found that the Lord was pleased with them and their actions. The Lord's pleased look said it all to them; it encouraged them to fight with renewed vigour and with a harder punch the next day.]

गए जानि अंगद हनुमाना । फिरे भालु मर्कट भट नाना ॥ ३ ॥

जातुधान प्रदोष बल पाई । धाए करि दससीस दोहाई ॥ ४ ॥

निसिचर अनी देखि कपि फिरे । जहँ तहँ कटकटाइ भट भिरे ॥ ५ ॥

द्वौ दल प्रबल पचारि पचारी । लरत सुभट नहिं मानहिं हारी ॥ ६ ॥

ga'ē jāni aṅgada hanumānā. phirē bhālu markaṭa bhaṭa nānā. 3.

jātudhāna pradōṣa bala pā'ī. dhā'ē kari dasasīsa dōhā'ī. 4.

nisicara anī dēkhi kapi phirē. jaham̐ taham̐ kaṭakaṭā'i bhaṭa bhirē. 5.

dvau dala prabala pacāri pacārī. larata subhaṭa nahim̐ mānahim̐ hārī. 6.

When the rest of the monkey and bear troops heard that their commanders Angad and Hanuman have gone back to their camp, they also decided to return. (3)

When the demon army saw that their adversaries (the monkeys and bears) were turning back because it was twilight hours after which battles are usually not fought, they seized this occasion and lunged forward to chase the monkeys and bears from behind, making war fierce cries proclaiming the glory of their king, the ten-headed Ravana. (4)

When the monkeys and bears saw that they were being chased by the demon warriors with an intention to fight, they immediately turned back and clashed with their pursuers. The rival troops collided with each other ferociously, and groups of brave warriors could be seen gnashing their teeth wrathfully and engaging themselves in a no-holds barred vicious duel everywhere on the battle-field. (5)

The two sides fought fiercely, each thrashing and pounding the other mercilessly and with all the might they could muster. None of the clashing warriors would yield his ground; not a single brave soldier would accept defeat and turn his back. (6)

[Note—¹In ancient times, battles were fought only during the day time and stopped after sunset. That is why Angad and Hanuman decided to come back to their camp as soon as they saw that the sun was setting. The demons took advantage of this rule of warfare and decided to attack the monkeys and bears when they would least expect an attack. So for a few initial moments the monkeys and bears may have become confused by this untimely attack, but being alert soldiers they were quick to respond. The demons thought that they would have a good kill by attacking the retiring troops from their behind, but they underestimated the vigour and alertness of the Lord's troops. The demons rush forward was soon checked when the monkeys and bears turned back and met them head-on in the middle of their path. With a chilling battle-cry raised from both the sides, the demons cheering in the name of Ravana and the monkeys and bears cheering Lord Ram, the two forces clashed with each other with full force.

The twilight hours are the time when dark and evil forces become more active, vigorous and energised. Since the demons symbolized such forces, they found renewed vigour during this time. After the debacle they faced during the day time, they wished to make up for it during the evening hours; so they attacked the monkeys and bears with a severity of ferocity that they lacked during the day time.]

महाबीर निसिचर सब कारे । नाना बरन बलीमुख भारे ॥ ७ ॥

सबल जुगल दल समबल जोधा । कौतुक करत लरत करि क्रोधा ॥ ८ ॥

प्राबिट सरद पयोद घनेरे । लरत मनहुँ मारुत के प्रेरे ॥ ९ ॥

mahābīra nisicara saba kārē. nānā barana balīmukha bhārē. 7.

sabala jugala dala samabala jōdhā. kautuka karata larata kari krōdhā. 8.

prābiṭa sarada payōda ghanērē. larata manahum̐ māruta kē prērē. 9.

All the demons were great and valiant warriors; they had huge dark-complexioned bodies of myriad sizes and shapes, with wide ferocious mouths and fearful disposition. (7)

The warriors on both the sides were equally brave, strong, gallant and powerful. They fought fiercely, adopting countless tactics and maneuvering skilfully to outwit their opponent. (8)

When the two troops wrangled with each other they resembled a sight when countless banks of dark clouds of the rainy season as well as white clouds of the winter season dash forward to collide with each other when they are propelled ahead by powerful gusts of winds¹. (9)

[Note—¹To wit, there was complete chaos on the battle-field. The warriors from one group fought the warriors from the other group in a free-for-all battle, forming small and large groups scattered at random, in a chaotic way here and there on the ground, without any particular order and distinction of rank. When one of the fighting warriors of a particular group belonging to one faction saw that some other group of his faction needed help, he would immediately leave the first group to go and join the second group to help. So there was mingling of warriors; it was a free melee of warring warriors where no one knew who the other was, except that he was either one of his own faction and therefore a friend, or that of the other faction and therefore his enemy.]

अनिप अकंपन अरु अतिकाया । बिचलत सेन कीन्हि इन्ह माया ॥ १० ॥
भयउ निमिष महँ अति अँधिआरा । बृष्टि होइ रुधिरापल छारा ॥ ११ ॥

anipa akampana aru atikāyā. bicalata sēna kīnhi inha māyā. 10.
bhaya'u nimīṣa maham̐ati am̐dhi'ārā. br̥ṣṭi hō'i rudhirōpala chārā. 11.

The demon commanders named Anip, Akampan and Atikaye¹ observed that their demon troops were losing ground and have become scared, so they immediately employed their magical powers to create an illusion of a natural calamity about to happen in the battle-field. (10)

As a result, everything suddenly became dark, and blood, stones, splinters and ash began raining down on the ground below. (11)

[Note—¹The battle in which these three demon warriors were directly involved and exhibited their skills is elaborated narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 55.]

दो०. देखि निबिड़ तम दसहुँ दिसि कपिदल भयउ खभार ।
एकहि एक न देखई जहँ तहँ करहिं पुकार ॥ ४६ ॥
dōhā.

dēkhi nibiṛa tama dasahum̐disi kapidala bhaya'u khabhāra.
ēkahi ēka na dēkha'ī jaham̐taham̐karaḥim̐pukāra. 46.

When the monkeys and bears saw that there was sudden darkness surrounding them on all sides (and stones, blood and ash were raining down upon them), they became alarmed and shocked. It was so pitch dark that no one could see anyone else. As a result, the monkeys and bears found themselves all alone, left to fend for themselves. This left all of them dismayed and petrified with fear, and so they cried out in distress. (Doha no. 46)

चौ०. सकल मरमु रघुनायक जाना । लिए बोलि अंगद हनुमाना ॥ १ ॥
समाचार सब कहि समुझाए । सुनत कोपि कपिकुंजर धाए ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sakala maramu raghunāyaka jānā. li'ē bōli aṅgada hanumānā. 1.
samācāra saba kahi samujhā'ē. sunata kōpi kapikunjara dhā'ē. 2.

When Lord Ram came to know of this development, he called Angad and Hanuman. (1)

After telling them of the news, the Lord explained to them its mystery¹. Hearing everything, the two were very angry, and they departed immediately to settle the matter in the battle-field. (2)

[Note—¹The Lord explained to Angad and Hanuman that there was no actual rain of stones, blood and ash, and neither was there any extraordinary darkness in the battle-field as it was made out to be. It was merely the result of black-magic done by the demon commanders Anip, Akampan and Atikaaye.

This enraged Angad and Hanuman no end. They rushed to the aid of their compatriots trapped in the battle-ground.]

पुनि कृपाल हँसि चाप चढ़ावा । पावक सायक सपदि चलावा ॥ ३ ॥
भयउ प्रकास कतहुँ तम नाही । ग्यान उदयँ जिमि संसय जाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

puni kṛpāla haṁsi cāpa caṛhāvā. pāvaka sāyaka sapadi calāvā. 3.
bhaya'u prakāsa katahum'tama nāhīm. gyāna udayam'jimi sansaya jāhīm. 4.

Then the merciful Lord Ram smiled, stringed his bow, and shot a fiery arrow in the direction of the battle-field. (3)

Instantly the concerned area was lit up; there was no darkness anywhere around. It was like the case when darkness caused by ignorance and delusions is removed when there is light of knowledge, enlightenment and gnosis (collectively called 'Gyan')¹. (4)

[Note—¹A similar idea extolling the importance of Gyan is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

भालु बलीमुख पाइ प्रकासा । धाए हरष बिगत श्रम त्रासा ॥ ५ ॥
 हनूमान अंगद रन गाजे । हाँक सुनत रजनीचर भाजे ॥ ६ ॥
 भागत भट पटकहिं धरि धरनी । करहिं भालु कपि अद्भुत करनी ॥ ७ ॥
 गहि पद डारहिं सागर माहीं । मकर उरग झष धरि धरि खाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bhālu balīmukha pā'i prakāsā. dhā'ē haraṣa bigata śrama trāsā. 5.
 hanūmāna aṅgada rana gājē. hāmka sunata rajanīcara bhājē. 6.
 bhāgata bhaṭa paṭakahim dhari dharanī. karahim bhālu kapi adbhuta karani.
 7.
 gahi pada ḍārahim sāgara māhīm. makara uraga jhaṣa dhari dhari khāhīm. 8.

When there was light on the battle-field, the bears and monkeys felt exhilarated and encouraged. They dashed towards their enemies, the demons, with renewed zeal and vigour; all their weariness and distress were dispelled. (5)

Meanwhile, Hanuman and Angad, who had arrived at the battle-field, roared fiercely. When the demon warriors heard their thunderous war-cry, they ran away in terror.
 [To wit, the demons were so terrified of Hanuman and Angad that their mere presence in the battle-ground was enough to make them flee for their lives.] (6)

When the monkeys and bears saw that the demons were fleeing hastily in terror, they chased them in hot pursuit and overtook them. They caught the fleeing demons and dashed them violently on the ground.

Verily, the bears and monkeys were performing wonderfully well and doing astonishing deeds in the battle-field! (7)

Some of the demons who were fleeing were caught by their legs and dumped into the ocean, where alligators, crocodiles, sea-serpents and large fish such as sharks devoured them¹. (8)

[Note—¹Some of the fleeing demons were killed by getting dashed to the ground, while others were caught by their legs, swung around like on a sling and then flung off to the ocean where they drowned or were caught by carnivorous marine creatures who had gathered near the shore to feed on warriors who came within their reach.]

दो०. कछु मारे कछु घायल कछु गढ़ चढ़े पराइ ।
 गर्जहिं भालु बलीमुख रिपु दल बल बिचलाइ ॥ ४७ ॥

dōhā.

kachu mārē kachu ghāyala kachu gaṛha caṛhē parā'i.
 garjahim bhālu balīmukha ripu dala bala bicalā'i. 47.

Out of the great numbers of demon troops, some got slayed, some fell wounded on the ground, and some managed to escape and enter the fort.

Having scattered the demon forces, the bears and monkeys (bhālu balīmukha) roared and thundered triumphantly. (Doha no. 47)

चौ०. निसा जानि कपि चारिउ अनी । आए जहाँ कोसला धनी ॥ १ ॥
 राम कृपा करि चितवा सबही । भए बिगतश्रम बानर तबही ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

nisā jāni kapi cārī'u anī. ā'ē jahām' kōsalā dhanī. 1.
 rāma kṛpā kari citavā sabahī. bha'ē bigataśrama bānara tabahī. 2.

When night fell (and calm descended on the battle-field after the demons fled completely), all the four wings or divisions of the monkey and bear troops retired for the day and came back to their camp where Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (kōsalā dhanī), was¹. (1)

Lord Ram spread his grace and blessing over the whole assembly by casting his benevolent glance over his troops. The Lord's reassuring and benign look removed whatever traces of weariness the warriors might have had; they felt rejuvenated and excited once again. [The monkeys and bears were ready for the next day's battle.] (2)

[Note—¹This marks the end of the first day of the war.]

उहाँ दसानन सचिव हँकारे । सब सन कहेसि सुभट जे मारे ॥ ३ ॥
 आधा कटकु कपिन्ह संघारा । कहहु बेगि का करिअ बिचारा ॥ ४ ॥

uhām' dasānana saciva haṁkārē. saba sana kahēsi subhaṭa jē mārē. 3.
 ādhā kaṭaku kapinha saṅghārā. kahahu bēgi kā kari'a bicārā. 4.

Meanwhile, there in Lanka, the ten-headed Ravana summoned an urgent meeting of his ministers for a war council. He told them the names of all those demon warriors who had died in the battle that day. (3)

He said woefully, 'The monkeys have virtually eliminated half of our army. Tell me quickly now what your advice is in this matter.

[To wit, don't waste time in futile consultations and debates, and be quick in arriving at a decision regarding the strategy for the forthcoming days. Our forces are getting depleted rapidly, so there is no time for playing jokes. We have very little time, and whatever is to be done has to be done during this night itself.]' (4)

माल्यवंत अति जरठ निसाचर । रावन मातु पिता मंत्री बर ॥ ५ ॥
 बोला बचन नीति अति पावन । सुनहु तात कछु मोर सिखावन ॥ ६ ॥
 जब ते तुम्ह सीता हरि आनी । असगुन होहिं न जाहिं बखानी ॥ ७ ॥
 बेद पुरान जासु जसु गायो । राम बिमुख काहुँ न सुख पायो ॥ ८ ॥

mālyavanta ati jaraṭha nisācara. rāvana mātu pitā mantrī bara. 5.
 bōlā bacana nīti ati pāvana. sunahu tāta kachu mōra sikhāvana. 6.
 jaba tē tumha sītā hari ānī. asaguna hōhirṁ na jāhirṁ bakhānī. 7.
 bēda purāna jāsu jasu gāyō. rāma bimukha kāhumṁ na sukha pāyō. 8.

There was an old demon named Malyawant amongst his ministers. He was a very senior demon and was like a parent for Ravana as he was his maternal grandfather. (5)

He spoke words of great wisdom when he addressed Ravana, saying to him ‘Listen my dear (sunahu tāta) to some of my advice that I speak for your own good. (6)

Ever since you have abducted Sita and brought her here, so many evil omens¹ are occurring on a regular basis that they can’t be listed and explained. (7)

Mind you, anyone who has opposed Lord Ram, whose glory and divinity have been proclaimed and affirmed by the ancient scriptures such as Vedas and Purans, has never found peace and happiness.

[So tell me honestly, how do you expect to find peace and happiness by being hostile to the Lord? My dear son, you are on the wrong path, and it would be good for all of us if you heed my advice and make a truce with the Lord by returning Sita to him and ending this war forthwith.]’ (8)

[Note—¹Some of the many bad signs portending bad days for a king and his kingdom are the following: (1) donkeys bray in a brutal voice; (2) clouds rain bloody water and thunder deafeningly; (3) the horizon and all the directions seem to be covered in a dark haze of smoke or dust; (4) vultures, jackals and serpents enter and hide inside gardens and make fearful noises; (5) the idol of goddess Kali, the patron goddess of the battle-field presiding over death and destruction, seems to smile; (6) women begin talking incoherently and walk while asleep; (7) the food meant as morsels for the crow are eaten by stray dogs; (8) donkeys are produced as calves of cows, and rats are produced from mongoose; (9) conjugal relationships are established between tigers and cats, dogs and pigs, demons and kinnars, and human beings and demons; they begin copulating; (10) blue pigeons with red claws enter homes; (11) a dark-skinned man with tonsured head roams around homes during dawn and dusk hours {apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 35, verse nos. 25-34}; (12) the sacred fire of the sacrifice does not light up properly with a brilliant flame, but instead gives a lot of smoke and flying sparks, and leaves embers prematurely; (13) black ant contaminate the sweet pudding meant to be offered to the sacred fire during religious sacrifices; (14) the udder of cows dry up, the juicy exudation from the skin on the heads of elephants dry up, indicating that they have lost their stamina, and inspite of feeding well the horses remain hungry; (15) donkeys, camels, mules wail while their skin develops goose bumps; (16) well selected medicines fail to cure or give relief; (17) flocks of crows sit on houses and crow wildly while vultures fly overhead; (18) female jackals and hyenas and other carnivorous animals assemble near inhabited places and wail woefully {apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 15-21}; (19) when the wind blows it is filled with dust; (20) there are earthquakes; (21) trees fall down without any apparent cause; (22) the evening sky looks dark red; (23) the rays of the moon appear to be red or dark; (24) blue dots appear either on the surface of the sun or move across it’s disc; (25) the stars become invisible because the night sky is covered in a haze of dust; (26) crows, kites, vultures

and other birds of prey drop dead suddenly from the sky {apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 23, verse nos. 4-11}; (27) clouds rain hot bloody water; (28) statues begin to cry; (29) consecrated idols sweat and begin moving from their pedestals; (30) mouse begins fighting with cats {apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 28-32}.]

दो०. हिरन्याच्छ भ्राता सहित मधु कैटभ बलवान् ।
 जेहिं मारे सोइ अवतरेउ कृपासिंधु भगवान् ॥ ४८ (क) ॥
 कालरूप खल बन दहन गुनागार घनबोध ।
 सिव बिरंचि जेहि सेवहिं तासों कवन बिरोध ॥ ४८ (ख) ॥

dohā.

hiran'yāccha bhrātā sahita madhu kaitabha balavāna.
 jēhim mārē sō'i avatarē'u kṛpāsindhu bhagavāna. 48 (a).

[PAUSE 25 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

kālarūpa khala bana dahana gunāgāra ghanabōdha.
 siva biranīci jēhi sēvahiṁ tāsōṁ kavana birōdha. 48 (b).

[Malyawant continued—] ‘The Supreme Lord who had slayed the powerful and strong demons named Madhu and Kaitav, as well as the two brothers Hiranyakshyapu and Hiranyaksha, has himself manifested once again (in the form of Lord Ram)¹. (Doha no. 48-a)

[PAUSE 25 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

The Lord who personifies Kaal (the god of death), the Lord who is like a wild fire to burn a forest represented by wickedness and evil forces, the Lord who is embodiment of all goodness and excellent virtues, the Lord who is all-knowing, omniscient and an image of enlightenment, the Lord who is worshipped and adored by Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma—say, what sense is there in being opposed to him?² (Doha no. 48-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 6.

²Earlier, Mandodari, the wife of Ravana and the grand-daughter of Malyawant, had also entreated Ravana to realise his follies and end hostility with Lord Ram, but like Malyawant here she too had failed—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

चौ०. परिहरि बयरु देहु बैदेही । भजहु कृपानिधि परम सनेही ॥ १ ॥
 ताके बचन बान सम लागे । करिआ मुह करि जाहि अभागे ॥ २ ॥

बूढ़ भएसि न त मरतेउँ तोही । अब जनि नयन देखावसि मोही ॥ ३ ॥
तेहिं अपने मन अस अनुमाना । बध्यो चहत एहि कृपानिधाना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

parihari bayaru dēhu baidēhī. bhajahu kṛpānidhi parama sanēhī. 1.
tākē bacana bāna sama lāgē. kari'ā muha kari jāhi abhāgē. 2.
būrha bha'ēsi na ta maratē'um' tōhī. aba jani nayana dēkhāvasi mōhī. 3.
tēhim apanē mana asa anumānā. badhyō cahata ēhi kṛpānidhānā. 4.

[I sincerely advice you to—] Give Sita (baidēhī) back to the Lord and discard your hostile attitude towards him¹. You should, rather, develop devotion and adoration for Lord Ram who is, by his very nature, exceptionally merciful, kind and compassionate, as well as very affable, affectionate and endearing.' (1)

His (Malyawant's) words appeared like sharp arrows piercing Ravana. He became furious and contemptuously rebuffed Malyawant: 'Oh you wretched old fellow! Blacken your godforsaken face and go away from here. (2)

You have become old (so I am constrained to spare your life); otherwise I would have slayed you instantly. Scoot immediately from here; get out of my sight, and don't show me your ugly face again.' (3)

He (Malyawant) concluded in his heart that surely the Lord (Sri Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being), who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhānā), wishes to get rid of him (Ravana)² (and that is why Ravana has become so stubborn and deaf to good advice). (4)

[Note—¹Mandodari had made the same plea repeatedly to Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 6; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14; (iii) Doha no. 15-b; (iv) Doha no. 37 and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes it; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 36.

Ravana's brother Vibhishan too had offered the same advice to Ravana which so much infuriated the latter that he kicked Vibhishan out of the kingdom—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; (ii) Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 42.

At that time, when Vibhishan was making efforts to persuade Ravana to return Sita to Lord Ram and make peace with him, Malyawant had endorsed his views, but like now, Ravana had sternly rebuked him and turned him away—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40.

²The flustered Malyawant thought to himself: "Ravana is not listening because the Lord has cast his spell of delusions known as 'Maya' over him; it has eclipsed Ravana's wisdom and the ability to think rationally. Forsooth, Ravana is in the throes of death; he is gripped by the fever of doom and destruction. He would therefore not listen, and it is absolutely futile even to try it. It's the Lord's wish which no one can change or challenge. It's the fiat of fate and the writ of destiny that has made Ravana so obstinate and deaf to advice. What can I do; for that matter, what can anybody else do in this situation, for it has become absolutely hopeless.

The use of the word “*krpānidhānā*” for Lord Ram, meaning that the Lord is a treasury of the grand virtues of mercy, kindness, compassion and grace, is significant here in the context of saying that “Ravana’s death is the wish of Lord Ram”. It implies that Lord Ram wants to slay Ravana not because the Lord lacks these virtues in the slightest, or because he is a war-mongering warrior, merciless, cruel and vengeful who is out to kill Ravana just because the latter has taken away his wife Sita, unmindful of the consequences that would follow, such as the heavy loss of life in the ensuing war and the total destruction of the demon race and ruin of the famed golden city of Lanka—but because it is so destined that Ravana would die at the hands of Lord Ram.

The Lord was merely keeping his mandate and the promise he had made, as the Supreme Caretaker of this world, to the gods and mother earth on some earlier occasion. This death of Ravana was pleaded for by the latter, for they were so much horrified by Ravana’s unending torments and reckless misadventures that they had no option left for them but to pray to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, to help them get rid of this evil menace, at which the Lord had promised them that he would personally come down as Lord Ram and do whatever is needed to honour their request. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 41 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.}]

सो उठि गयउ कहत दुर्बादा । तब सकोप बोलेउ घननादा ॥ ५ ॥

कौतुक प्रात देखिअहु मोरा । करिहउँ बहुत कहौं का थोरा ॥ ६ ॥

सुनि सुत बचन भरोसा आवा । प्रीति समेत अंक बैठावा ॥ ७ ॥

sō uṭhi gaya'u kahata durbādā. taba sakōpa bōlē'u ghananādā. 5.

kautuka prāta dēkhi'ahu mōrā. kariha'um̃ bahuta kahaur̃ kā thōrā. 6.

sunī suta bacana bharōsā āvā. prīti samēta aṅka baiṭhāvā. 7.

Muttering curses (on Ravana), he (Malyawant) got up agitatedly and went away (from the court)*.

[*This part of the verse can be interpreted in another way as: “When Ravana used uncouth words for Malyawant, the latter got up and left the court.”]

Then, Meghanad (“*ghananādā*”; the son of Ravana)¹ spoke boastfully --- (5)

‘Watch what strange and fantastic deeds I would do tomorrow morning. I will do wonderful and awe-inspiring things; it is better for me not to speak much about them now before I actually exhibit my skills (in the battle-field)². (6)

Hearing the confident words of his son, Ravana felt reassured. He was very pleased with Meghanad and affectionately made him sit on his lap³. (6)

[Note—¹Meghanad was called “*ghananādā*” because whenever he spoke angrily it was like a clap of thunder emanating from dark stormy clouds.

²When Meghanad observed that his father Ravana was feeling cornered, helpless and distressed, he immediately came to the latter’s rescue. He confidently told Ravana: “Look my father; don’t feel so disheartened. I am still around. Watch what havoc I’ll

unleash tomorrow morning in the battle-field. I would like to be modest by not speaking too much of what I intend to do, but have patience and see how I will avenge today's debacle by wreaking the enemy's forces ferociously."

Whenever in the past Ravana suffered defeat in the battle-field, it was Meghanad who come to his rescue. The most famous feat was when Meghanad had freed his father from the captivity of Indra, the king of gods, who had captured him when Ravana attacked heaven. Meghanad immediately launched an offensive to free his father, and after accomplishing this he had tied Indra and brought him to Lanka as a trophy of war. At that time Brahma had gone to free Indra by granting many boons to Meghanad in return. This story is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 78-81; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 50-54.

As a result, Ravana not only loved Meghanad but put immense faith in him as is evident from verse no. 6 here.

As the war progressed and Meghanad was killed, Ravana was unhinged and he became sure that he is going to lose. So thereafter, overcome with abject grief when he found that everything was lost and there was nothing more to lose than his own life, Ravana had fought the final phase of the war most fervently, most viciously and most ferociously like a true warrior does before he finally collapses and dies in the heat of battle.

Meghanad lived up to his words, for in the next day's battle he led the charge from the front and poured out his anger on the enemy forces vehemently. He performed many magical feats that would be described shortly in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 52. It was during this battle that Meghanad had shot and wounded Laxman, making him fall unconscious in the battle-field—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 54.

³To wit, Ravana made Meghanad sit very close to him on the royal throne; Meghanad sat so close to his father that for all practical purposes he appeared to be sitting on Ravana's lap. Perhaps Meghanad had one of his hands resting on Ravana's lap, with his father spreading his hand over his shoulder to hold his dear son tightly close, giving the impression that the son was virually sitting on his father's lap. This gesture was meant to express Ravana's thanks and gratitude for his beloved son Meghanad.]

करत बिचार भयउ भिनुसारा । लागे कपि पुनि चहूँ दुआरा ॥ ८ ॥

कोपि कपिन्ह दुर्घट गढु घेरा । नगर कोलाहलु भयउ घनेरा ॥ ९ ॥

बिबिधायुध धर निसिचर धाए । गढ ते पर्वत सिखर ढहाए ॥ १० ॥

karata bicāra bhaya'u bhinusārā. lāgē kapi puni cahūṁ' du'ārā. 8.

kōpi kapinha durghaṭa gaṛhu ghērā. nagara kōlāhalu bhaya'u ghanērā. 9.

bibidhāyudha dhara niscara dhā'ē. gaṛha tē parbata sikhara ḍhahā'ē. 10.

The whole night was spent in consultations. When the day broke the next day, the monkeys and bears once again surrounded the four gates of the fort¹. (8)

When the powerful monkeys and bears laid siege of the gates and the news spread wildly in Lanka, there was an immense turmoil inside the city. (9)

The demon warriors grabbed myriad kinds of weapons and rushed to face them. They threw (or rolled down) huge boulders resembling pointed peaks of mountains (parbata sikhara) from the top of the fort (in order to crush the monkeys and bears who were massed at the four gates, and surrounded the walls of the fort). (10)

[Note—¹This is the beginning of the second day of the war.]

छं०. ढाहे महीधर सिखर कोटिन्ह बिबिध बिधि गोला चले । १ ।
 घहरात जिमि पबिपात गर्जत जनु प्रलय के बादले ॥ २ ॥
 मर्कट बिकट भट जुटत कटत न लटत तन जर्जर भए । ३ ।
 गहि सैल तेहि गढ़ पर चलावहिं जहँ सो तहँ निसिचर हए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ḍhāhē mahīdhara sikhara kōṭinha bibidha bidhi gōlā calē. 1.
 ghaharāta jimi pabipāta garjata janu pralaya kē bādalē. 2.
 markāṭa bikāṭa bhaṭa juṭata kaṭata na laṭata tana jarjara bha'ē. 3.
 gahi saila tēhi gaṛha para calāvahiṁ jaham̃ sō taham̃ nīsicara ha'ē. 4.

Huge boulders, large as hills and mountains, were rolled down the sides of the fort, and countless balls were shot (from canons and catapults). (Chanda line no. 1)

They (the canons and catapults) produced deafening sounds as if countless thunderbolts were striking simultaneously. They (the demons and monkey warriors) roared and made war-cries fiercely like so many clouds of doomsday rumble and thunder in unison. (Chanda line no. 2)

The ferocious monkey and bear warriors (markāṭa bikāṭa bhaṭa) clashed with their enemies; in spite of their bodies suffering wounds they do not demur or relent or hesitate from engaging their adversaries in violent, no holds-barred duels. (Chanda line no. 3)

They (the monkeys and bears) grab the falling boulders and fling them back on the fort like so many missiles that are shot back with such high velocity that when they hit the demons atop the walls of the fort, they fall down dead instantly¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—Thus the battle of the second day progressed with violence and mayhem, causing serious injuries and casualties on both the sides.

It is to be noted that till this point of time, the mighty gates of the fort of Lanka could not be breached; they still held their ground. However, they soon will be opened when Meghanad marched to the battle-front to take on the Lord's army head-on as promised to Ravana a little while ago in Chaupai line no. 6 that follows Doha no. 48 and precedes these above Chandas.

It ought to be noted that no worthwhile gain was made by either side during the whole of the first day of the war, and the first half of the second day too. The two giant armies clashed and dashed but gained nothing except bloodshed and mayhem.

Meghanad decided to break this logjam by intervening himself. He would march to the battle-field with his large and well-equipped demon army to face the enemy, and this would necessitate the unlocking of the gigantic gates of the fort. Though this “opening of the gates” is not specifically mentioned in the Text, but it is an obvious conclusion—because without their opening, the massive demon army, their huge war chariots and their countless warriors and great commanders, one of them being Meghanad himself, could not step on the battle-field and fight the war directly with Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, Vibhishan who too lent his hand, Sugriv, the king of the monkey forces, and Jamvant, the chief of the bears.

The main actions of the war unfolded on the battle-ground outside the walls of the fort. We shall be reading all about it as the war progresses.]

दो०. मेघनाद सुनि श्रवन अस गढु पुनि छेंका आइ ।
उतर्यो बीर दुर्ग तें सन्मुख चल्यो बजाइ ॥ ४९ ॥

dōhā.

mēghanāda suni śravana asa gaṛhu puni chēṅkā ā'i.
utaryō bīra durga tēm sanmukha calyō bajā'i. 49.

When Meghanad (the valiant son of Ravana) heard that the monkeys and bears have once again surrounded the fort and have laid siege to it, he decided to enter the fray himself. So he got down from the fort to the accompaniment of beating of war-drums (to announce to the enemy that he is coming forward to tackle them), and went to face the formations of enemy's forces assembled in the front of the fort of Lanka¹. (Doha no. 49)

[Note—¹Till this point of time, all earlier fighting had taken place inside the walls of the fort—because the demon warriors were so scared of the invading army of monkeys and bears that they did not dare to open the giant gates of the fort, forcing their enemy to leap over its great walls and engage in hand-to-hand battles right inside the city of Lanka. As we have read, this caused widespread panic and devastation in Lanka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 41; Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 42; Doha no. 43 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it; Doha no. 44 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; and Doha no. 45.}]

Meghanad was extremely peeved at this cowardly behaviour of his demon warriors. So now he decided to take the battle to the field opposite the fort where he would directly face his chief adversaries such as Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and Vibhishana whom Meghanad regarded as a traitor and betrayer of his race. By taking the war to the battle-field outside the fort, any further destruction of Lanka and damage to the fort would at least be prevented.

Once the gigantic gates of the fort of Lanka were opened and the first battle was fought outside it with Meghanad leading his demon troops, the course of the war changed in as much as the rest of the bloody war was fought in the plains opposite the city.

It is also believed that the battle with Meghanad happened during ‘Pushya Nakshatra’, i.e. during the time when the asterism known as Pushya was dominant.]

चौ०. कहँ कोसलाधीस द्वौ भ्राता । धन्वी सकल लोक बिख्याता ॥ १ ॥
 कहँ नल नील दुबिद सुग्रीवा । अंगद हनूमंत बल सींवा ॥ २ ॥
 कहाँ बिभीषणु भ्राताद्रोही । आजु सबहि हठि मारउँ ओही ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kaham̐ kōsalādhīsa dvau bhrātā. dhanvī sakala lōka bikhyātā. 1.
 kaham̐ nala nīla dubida sugrīvā. āṅgada hanūmanta bala sīnvā. 2.
 kahām̐ bibhīṣaṇu bhrātādrōhī. āju sabahi haṭhi mārā'um̐ ōhī. 3.

Meghanad thundered diabolically: 'Where is the Lord of Kaushal (Lord Ram); where are the two brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) who are famed all over the world for their skill with the bow (i.e. are known to be famous archers)? [I have come here to challenge them; where are they; why don't they come out now in the open before me?] (1)

Say, where are Nala, Neela, Dwivid, Sugriv; where is Angad and Hanuman who call themselves as extremely valiant? [Why, where are they now? Let them show their faces to me; I have come to meet them in the battle-field. Why are they hiding?] (2)

And where is the traitor Vibhishan who has betrayed his own brother (Ravana) and turned hostile towards him?

Come you, one and all; today I shall slay all of them at one go.' (3)

[Note—¹How did Meghanad know the names whom he lists now to come forward to meet the challenge? Here's the answer:

Earlier when the invading monkeys had raised war cries, they had done so in the name of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sugriv—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 39.

A little later, when the demons pushed back the monkeys with a vicious counter-attack, making them flee in terror, they had called for help, and at that time the retreating monkeys called out the names of Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela and Dwivid—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43.

The name of Vibhishan, who was Meghanad's uncle, was of course already known to him.

So this is how Meghanad got to know the names of the chiefs in the enemy camp.]

अस कहि कठिन बान संधाने । अतिसय क्रोध श्रवन लगि ताने ॥ ४ ॥

सर समूह सो छाड़ै लागा । जनु सपच्छ धावहिं बहु नागा ॥ ५ ॥

जहँ तहँ परत देखिअहिं बानर । सन्मुख होइ न सके तेहि अवसर ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi kaṭhina bāna sandhānē. atisaya krōdha śravana lagi tānē. 4.
 sara samūha sō chāṛai lāgā. janu sapaccha dhāvahiṁ bahu nāgā. 5.
 jaham̐ taham̐ parata dēkhi'ahiṁ bānara. sanmukha hō'i na sakē tēhi avasara.

6.

With this formidable challenge, he (Meghanad) raised his bow and angrily pulled its string tight, stretching it right back to his ears. (4)

Then he shot a volley of abominable arrows that flew so fast and fierce, with a hissing sound, that they appeared to be winged snakes dashing forward towards their prey. (5)

Everywhere one could see there were monkeys falling to the ground, for none could face him (Meghanad)¹. (6)

[Note—¹To wit, the volley of sharp arrows shot angrily by Meghanad slammed into the front ranks of the monkey army, felling countless warriors. The arrows were shot so rapidly that none of the monkey warriors had the least chance to lunge at Meghanad and catch hold of him.]

जहँ तहँ भागि चले कपि रीछा । बिसरी सबहि जुद्ध कै ईछा ॥ ७ ॥
सो कपि भालु न रन महँ देखा । कीन्हिसि जेहि न प्रान अवसेषा ॥ ८ ॥

jaham̐ taham̐ bhāgi calē kapi rīchā. bisarī sabahi jud'dha kai īchā. 7.
sō kapi bhālu na rana maham̐ dēkhā. kīnhēsī jēhi na prāna avasēṣā. 8.

Under the fierce onslaught launched by Meghanad, the terrified monkeys and bears ran helter-skelter everywhere; they were so sore alarmed and affright, and so much scared out of their wits by the ferocity of the attack, as well as the sight of so many of their numbers falling down to the ground, either as wounded or as dead, that the fleeing warriors lost all enthusiasm and courage to get involved in the battle any further. (7)

Not a single monkey or bear warrior was seen in the battlefield who was not scared for his life due to Meghanad's brutal attack.

[To wit, all those who remained alive lost their zeal to fight as they became very concerned about their own survival after witnessing the fate of their companions, most of whom were lying wounded or dead on the ground. The result was that, for the time being, the rout of the monkeys and bears was complete.] (8)

दो०. दस दस सर सब मारेसि परे भूमि कपि बीर ।
सिंहनाद करि गर्जा मेघनाद बल धीर ॥ ५० ॥

dōhā.

dasa dasa sara saba mārēsi parē bhūmi kapi bīra.
simhanāda kari garjā mēghanāda bala dhīra. 50.

[The ferocity of Meghanad's attack and the rapidity with which he shot his volley of arrows can be gauged by the fact that—] He shot and wounded every monkey and

bear warrior with around ten arrows aimed at each of them¹, and the result was that all of them fell down mortally wounded in the battle-field.

Having decimated his enemy, the brave, courageous, strong and valiant Meghanad (mēghanāda bala dhīra) roared thunderously, in triumph, like a lion (who has boldly entered and fearlessly attacked a group of wild animals, killing some, and making others flee in terror). (Doha no. 50)

[Note—¹By saying that each monkey and bear warrior was hit by “ten arrows” it is meant that Meghanad shot countless arrows at them; the arrows rained down over the monkeys and bears like so many pieces of hail-stones falling upon them from the sky during a fierce hail-storm, that there was no count of how many pellets of hail hit each warrior. The arrows fell so rapidly and thickly that they resembled a large piece of blanket-of-needles descending from the sky to cover the entire ground of the battle-field, virtually suffocating every single warrior on the ground and taking the breath out of them.

Another significance of the number “ten” is that the arrows hit every single organ of the body of the monkey and bear warriors, making them grievously injured and wailing woefully in pain. It ought to be noted here that there are five organs of perception and five organs of action in the body of an individual, bringing the total to ten organs.

The five organs of perception and the five organs of action, with their corresponding objects, are the following: ‘ear’ is concerned with hearing; ‘eye’ with seeing; ‘tongue’ with tasting; ‘skin’ with touch; ‘nose’ with smelling; ‘mouth’ with speaking; ‘leg’ with walking; ‘hand’ with receiving and giving and doing deeds; ‘excretory’ with elimination of waste from the body; and ‘genitals’ with procreation.

So therefore, every pore of the body of the warriors was made to bleed; their bodies were filled with wounds.]

चौ०. देखि पवनसुत कटक बिहाला । क्रोधवंत जनु धायउ काला ॥ १ ॥

महासैल एक तुरत उपारा । अति रिस मेघनाद पर डारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi pavanasuta kaṭaka bihālā. krōdhavanta janu dhāya'u kālā. 1.
mahāsaila ēka turata upārā. ati risa mēghanāda para ḍārā. 2.

When the son of the wind god (“pavanasuta”; Hanuman) observed that the army was in a dire strait and panicky, he immediately dashed forward angrily, as if the god of death had himself lunged forward, filled with vengeance¹. (1)

He immediately uprooted a huge mountain (i.e. a gigantic boulder or rock) and threw it on Meghanad very wrathfully, with full force (in order to crush him underneath it)². (2)

[Note—¹It is believed that Hanuman was a manifestation of Lord Shiva’s form known as ‘Rudra’. This form of the Lord is his angry form, and Shiva assumes this form at the time of conclusion of creation when, at the time of doomsday, hellfire and brimstone burns and consumes everything in this world. This form of Lord Shiva is also synonym of death, and hence represents the ‘god of death’ known as Kaal. This

is why Hanuman's angry rush at Meghanad is compared to the rush of the god of death, known as Kaal, in order to punish the demon prince.

²This is the third confrontation between Hanuman and Meghand.

The first occurred when Hanuman had come to Lanka to search for Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 20.

The second occasion was in Lanka when Meghanad was defending the western gates of the fort of Lanka and the monkey army was unable to breach it. At that time too the monkeys had fled in terror when the demons had launched a fierce counter-attack on them. Hanuman leapt on the fort and attacked Meghanad with a huge mountain-like rock, breaking the demon prince's chariot, killing his charioteer, and kicking Meghanad in the chest, making him swoon and fall to the ground. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 43.

This is the third occasion, and it is presently being described between Doha no. 49—to Chaupai line 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.]

आवत देखि गयउ नभ सोई । रथ सारथी तुरग सब खोई ॥ ३ ॥
बार बार पचार हनुमाना । निकट न आव मरमु सो जाना ॥ ४ ॥

āvata dēkhi gaya'u nabha sōī. ratha sārathī turaga saba khōī. 3.
bāra bāra pacāra hanumānā. nikaṭa na āva maramu sō jānā. 4.

When he (Meghanad) saw that Hanuman was coming to him with a mighty rock ready to be hurled at him, he (having had a bitter experience of such an attack by Hanuman and its serious consequences) immediately ascended to the sky, abandoning his chariot, charioteer and horses in great haste¹. (3)

Hanuman challenged him repeatedly to come down and face him like a bold warrior, but Meghanad was overcome with sore affright as he recalled the bitter experience he had had of a similar attack by Hanuman on an earlier occasion² that he durst not come near. (4)

[Note—¹Meghanad saw it coming; he had witnessed such an attack by Hanuman previously when he had managed to survive by the breadth of his hair. It happened during their second confrontation near the western gates of the fort of Lanka when Hanuman had similarly dumped a huge mountain-like rock on Meghanad, breaking his war chariot and killing his charioteer, and when Meghanad fell to the ground, kicking him viciously in the chest so furiously that he swooned and became unconscious. Another charioteer, driving a reserve chariot, had taken the seriously wounded Meghanad back into the fort of Lanka. This episode is narrated in: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 43.

²Meghanad could not forget it, and the mere sight of Hanuman furiously dashing towards him with a gigantic rock in his hand, ready to smash the light of life out of him, chilled Meghanad, and sucked the courage and the wit out of him. So he left his chariot instantly to escape from being crushed with it when the rock hit hard, with a

great velocity. Meghanad managed to jump into the air in the nick of time, just at the moment the rock came down heavily upon his chariot, managing to save himself by the width of his skin.

Meghanad therefore dared not come on the ground to face Hanuman physically; so he decided instead to use the many magical tricks he knew from a distance, from the safe environ of the sky itself, so that if anything went awry, he would be able to escape quickly.]

रघुपति निकट गयउ घननादा । नाना भाँति करेसि दुर्बादा ॥ ५ ॥

अज सज आयुध सब डारे । कौतुकहीं प्रभु काटि निवारे ॥ ६ ॥

raghupati nikaṭa gaya'u ghananādā. nānā bhām̐ti karēsi durbādā. 5.
astra sastra āyudha saba ḍārē. kautukahīm prabhu kāṭi nivārē. 6.

[In order to divert Hanuman's attention—] He, who could thunder like a cloud ("ghananādā"; i.e. Meghanad), went to the place where Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) was, and hurled many kinds of abuses and insulting words at the Lord. (5)

After venting his verbal ire on the Lord, Meghanad shot many kinds of weapons at him¹. The Lord, who was an expert in the art of use of weaponry during warfare, easily neutralised all his weapons as if it was a mere game for him. (6)

[Note—¹The weapons used by Meghanad were of many kinds, falling under three chief categories—viz. one that was shot like a missile, e.g. an arrow, one that was thrown like a spear or a lance, and one that was hand-held and used directly, such as a battle-axe and a sword.

Meghanad used all of them simultaneously in order to overwhelm his enemy, Lord Ram. He probably was unaware that Lord Ram was a trained warrior belonging to the Kshatriya race, a race that is by birth a martial race. Meghanad also had no information how the Lord had easily neutralised such attacks, not by one or two demon warriors but by an entire army of ferocious and blood-hungry demons on earlier occasions, so an attack by an individual demon was merely a sport for Lord Ram. There are previous occasions which we recall when Lord Ram had single-handedly overcome such ferocious attacks by angry demons.

One such prominent occasion was when Lord Ram was attacked by the vicious army of Marich and Subahu while the Lord was protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

The other significant occasion was when Khar and Dushan attacked the Lord with their army of ferocious demons after their sister Supernakha was punished by the Lord for her pervert behaviour—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20-a.]

देखि प्रताप मूढ़ खिसिआना । करै लाग माया बिधि नाना ॥ ७ ॥

जिमि कोउ करै गरुड़ सैं खेला । डरपावै गहि स्वल्प सपेला ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi pratāpa mūr̥ḥa khisi'ānā. karai lāga māyā bidhi nānā. 7.
jimi kō'u karai garuṛa saim̐ khēlā. ḍarapāvai gahi svalpa sapēlā. 8.

The stupid fellow (Meghanad) felt very frustrated when he observed the immense skills of the Lord (i.e. in the way he had neutralised all the weapons and prevented any of them from harming him), and so he (Meghanad) decided to employ the many magical tricks he knew, by using which he could create various kinds of illusions. (7)

It was like the case of a foolish man trying to tease Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu who relishes devouring serpents) by holding a small snake in his hand and showing it to the giant bird (Garud), trying to shoo him away with the snake¹. (8)

[Note—¹Garud, the legendary Eagle who is the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, can easily snap and gobble up all species of serpents, no matter how large and poisonous the reptile is. So it is ridiculously foolish to scare away Garud by showing him a small serpent.

Similarly, it is so utterly foolish for Meghanad in showing his weapons as well as his magical tricks to Lord Ram, not knowing that the Lord was a Master of all such small and cheap tricks, as he is the Supreme Lord of this creation who has himself created all tricks in existence. To wit, what weapons and tricks Meghanad used against Lord Ram were but a small part, a very small and limited fraction, of the vast numbers of weapons and magical tricks that the maverick supreme Creator had created as a part of his vast empire that is known as the universe.]

दो०. जासु प्रबल माया बस सिव बिरंचि बड़ छोट ।
ताहि दिखावड़ निसिचर निज माया मति खोट ॥ ५१ ॥

dōhā.

jāsu prabala māyā basa siva biran̄ci baṛa chōṭa.
tāhi dikhāva'i nisicara nija māyā mati khōṭa. 51.

Forsooth, the Lord (Ram, the Supreme Being) whose Maya (powers to create illusions and delusions) is so powerful and omnipotent that all the powers and skills possessed by Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma taken together are dwarfed in its comparison, so much so that they are perpetually under the grand spell of the Lord's Maya¹, the demon prince (Meghanad) is so immensely dumb-headed that he was showing his cheap tricks to that same Lord²! (Doha no. 51)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 140; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22; and (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71.

²To wit, it was an extremely stupid thought and an ignorant behaviour of Meghanad to even imagine that he could stun Lord Ram with his magical tricks and weapons. But had he been not that foolish as he obviously was in the first place, he would not have wasted his energy and time even in attempting to fool Lord Ram with his stupid acts; on the contrary, he would have thought himself very honoured and privileged to have

the chance to welcome the Lord, who had come calling right at his doorstep, and offer him his respect and tribute.

Why Meghanad alone; if his father Ravana had this kind of wisdom and knowledge, the savage war could have been avoided and the demon race could have been spared annihilation. But Destiny had destined things differently for them and their race, and no amount of preaching would bring light to this ill-fated race that was destined to doom and destruction like a twig which is involuntarily sucked up, spun and taken away to oblivion by a strong wind during a violent storm.]

चौ०. नभ चढि बरष बिपुल अंगारा । महि ते प्रगट होहिं जलधारा ॥ १ ॥
 नाना भाँति पिसाच पिसाची । मारु काटु धुनि बोलहिं नाची ॥ २ ॥
 बिष्टा पूय रुधिर कच हाड़ा । बरषइ कबहुँ उपल बहु छाड़ा ॥ ३ ॥
 बरषि धूरि कीन्हिसि अँधिआरा । सूझ न आपन हाथ पसारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

nabha caḍhi baraṣa bipula aṅgārā. mahi tē pragaṭa hōhiṁ jaladhārā. 1.
 nānā bhāmṭi pisāca pisācī. māru kātu dhuni bōlahiṁ nācī. 2.
 biṣṭā pūya rudhira kaca hārā. baraṣa'i kabahum' upala bahu chārā. 3.
 baraṣi dhūri kīnhēsi aṁdhi'ārā. sūjha na āpana hātha pasārā. 4.

[Having failed to have any influence of his dirty tricks on Lord Ram, Meghanad changed his tactic; now he decided instead to attack the monkeys and bears spread all over the battle-field. So, what did he do?¹]

He (Meghanad) went up in the sky and employed his magical powers to create a scene of doomsday (to terrify the army of monkeys and bears) by showering a large quantity of fireballs on the ground below, and at the same time created an illusion of water gushing out in large spouts from crevices formed on the earth. (1)

Various denominations of phantoms and hobgoblins, both males and females, began their death-dance on the battle-field, with blood-curdling shrieks calling for killing and chopping of warriors. (2)

From the sky there rained down all sorts of garbage, stinking slush and other abhorable things on the ground; sometimes it was a rain of excreta, mucous, blood, hairs and bones, and at other times it was a hail of sharp stones and raining of hot ash. (3)

He created a virtual dust-storm so thick and heavy that a dark cloud covered the sky and blocked all sunlight, causing such a thick blanket of darkness to form all around the battle-field that one could not see one's own hands. (4)

[Note—¹Meghanad had earlier assured his father Ravana that he would perform such miraculous deeds in the battle-field the next day that the like of which had never been witnessed by anyone ever—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 49.

So now he was carrying out his promise.]

कपि अकुलाने माया देखें । सब कर मरन बना एहि लेखें ॥ ५ ॥
 कौतुक देखि राम मुसुकाने । भए सभित सकल कपि जाने ॥ ६ ॥
 एक बान काटी सब माया । जिमि दिनकर हर तिमिर निकाया ॥ ७ ॥
 कृपादृष्टि कपि भालु बिलोके । भए प्रबल रन रहहि न रोके ॥ ८ ॥

kapi akulānē māyā dēkhēm. saba kara marana banā ēhi lēkhēm. 5.
 kautuka dēkhi rāma musukānē. bha'ē sabhīta sakala kapi jānē. 6.
 ēka bāna kātī saba māyā. jimi dinakara hara timira nikāyā. 7.
 kṛpādr̥ṣṭi kapi bhālu bilōkē. bha'ē prabala rana rahahim na rōkē. 8.

The monkeys and bears were utterly terrified when they witnessed this illusion similar to doomsday, and they panicked, thinking that this situation portended certain death for all of them. (5)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram smiled (as he was amused) when he saw this illusionary scene resembling the sight witnessed on doomsday, and also realised its widespread negative effect on the monkeys and bears who panicked because they believed it to be a reality. (6)

[What did the Lord do?] So the Lord shot an arrow that instantly cut through this veil of delusions to restore the situation as it existed prior to Meghanad's tricks, just like the appearance of the sun cuts through, in a moment, the veil of darkness cast by the night. (7)

Then Lord Ram looked around the ground of the battle-field, casting his benevolent glance over all the monkeys and bears to bless them. The Lord's rejuvenating glance had a magical effect as it instantly restored the confidence and vigour of the troops so much that they became all the more ferocious, formidable, and un-stoppable in the battle-field¹. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had done it earlier also when he shot an arrow to illuminate the battle-field which was covered by darkness during the first day of the war when his troops had become panicky, and once again when the darkness was removed the monkeys and bears fought with renewed vigour and zeal—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 47—to Doha no. 47, along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram's grace was so singular and divine by nature that whenever he merely looked at his troops, a sort of current passed through all its members, electrifying them and filling each monkey and bear with vigorous zeal, astounding dynamism, and a stupendous amount of energy. One example of this unique phenomenon is to be found at the time when the huge army started from Kishkindha on its way to Lanka, when a glance of Lord Ram inspired the whole army and electrified it; the monkeys and bears acquired a punch and strength of countless mountains striking at once—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 35.]

दो०. आयसु मागि राम पहिं अंगदादि कपि साथ ।

लछिमन चले क्रुद्ध होइ बान सरासन हाथ ॥ ५२ ॥

dōhā.

āyasu māgi rāma pahim āṅgadādi kapi sātha.

lachimana calē krud'dha hō'i bāna sarāsana hātha. 52.

Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram and his constant companion, asked the Lord for permission to join the battle. Having got the Lord's nod, he moved forward angrily in the battle-field with a bow and arrows at the ready in his hands; he was accompanied by Angad and other brave monkey warriors¹. (Doha no. 52)

[Note—¹The following verses would narrate the first battle between Laxman and Meghanad. It was during this duel that Laxman fainted when he was hit by an arrow shot by the demon prince. The end of this duel would also mark the end of the third day of the war in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 55 which we shall be reading by-and-by.

Who were the “other brave warriors” who accompanied Laxman? Naturally they were the chief commanders of the troops, and some of their names have been listed in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43 earlier—viz. Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela, Dwivida. There were others too, such as Mayanda, Dadhimukha, Gada, Vikatasa etc. as mentioned Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 54.

Then of course there were Sugriv and Jamvant, the chiefs of the monkeys and bears as a community. Perhaps these senior commanders, such as the latter two, remained with Lord Ram at their base camp. This observation is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 75 wherein Lord Ram has himself asked Sugriv and Jamvant to remain by his side at the time he sent Laxman to fight with Meghanad for the second time during which the demon prince was killed.

There are some very significant points to note in connection with the two battles between Laxman and Meghanad, and they are as follows:-

When Laxman went out to fight Meghanad for the first time, as he is doing now, he was very angry and full of self confident that he would be able to trounce his enemy. Because of his anger he lost his sense of propriety and wisdom that would have told him to first pay his respects to his elder brother Lord Ram and seek his blessings for victory before asking for permission to go to face Meghanad. Besides this, Laxman was raring to go alone when other monkey warriors, such as Angad etc., voluntarily offered to accompany him. For this also, no express permission was sought from the Lord, and neither did the Lord told anyone of them to accompany Laxman. These things are clear from this Doha no. 52.

Compared to this, the situation was starkly different when Laxman had gone out to engage his adversary for the second time. At that time, Laxman had done so because the Lord himself had expressly asked him to do it. Besides this, during this second time, Laxman was reliant on Lord Ram's grace and blessings to win his adversary; he had invoked the Lord's majesty and glory at the time of seeking permission to go. He had also bowed his head before Lord Ram just before departure. As regarding the other monkey warriors who accompanied Laxman, it was also ordered by the Lord—that Angad and others should go with Laxman. These things are

explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 75, and Chaupai line nos. 6-12 that precede it.

These crucial gestures empowered Laxman and made him able to slay Meghanad during his second engagement with him. During the first engagement, as we see however, Laxman had too much of self-confidence in his own abilities, in his own powers and strength by which he believed he would easily defeat Meghanad, instead of relying on the grace of the Lord in order to achieve this success. So in his haste Laxman had neither bowed his head before Lord Ram nor invoked the Lord's grace, mystical powers and divinity as a majestic force with which to fight and win his enemy. He was also 'angry', and in anger his wisdom and sense of propriety abandoned him.

The result was that Laxman not only failed to overcome Meghand during the first battle, but he was seriously wounded too and fell to the ground unconscious. On the second occasion however, the situation changed as now Laxman was protected by the Lord's grace, as a result of which he successfully slayed Meghanad.

There are two important lessons we learn from these two situations: The first is that 'anger' is a bad thing; it robs a person of his ability to think and act properly. This fact is endorsed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas also, viz. in Baal Kand, Doha no. 277 where Laxman had told sage Parashuram that 'anger is at the root of all sinful activities'. But the irony is that Laxman himself forgets this maxim now.

The second lesson is: We must always rely on the Lord God for everything in life instead of boasting of our own abilities; whatever one does, whenever he does it, he ought to first pay his respects to the Lord God and be clear in his head that success and failure are not of his own doing but they are what the Lord wishes. Sometimes it happens that what appears to be today's failure proves to be god-sent blessing in the days to come. So it is always better and useful to rely on the Lord God in order to have peace of mind and soul.]

चौ०. छतज नयन उर बाहु बिसाला । हिमगिरि निभ तनु कछु एक लाला ॥ १ ॥
 इहाँ दसानन सुभट पठाए । नाना अङ्ग सङ्ग गहि धाए ॥ २ ॥
 भूधर नख बिटपायुध धारी । धाए कपि जय राम पुकारी ॥ ३ ॥
 भिरे सकल जोरिहि सन जोरी । इत उत जय इच्छा नहिं थोरी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

chataja nayana ura bāhu bisālā. himagiri nibha tanu kachu ēka lālā. 1.
 ihām̐ dasānana subhaṭa paṭhā'ē. nānā astra sastra gahi dhā'ē. 2.
 bhūdhara nakha biṭapāyudha dhārī. dhā'ē kapi jaya rāma pukārī. 3.
 bhirē sakala jōrihi sana jōrī. ita uta jaya icchā nahim̐ thōrī. 4.

He (Laxman) had fiery-red eyes (indicating his seething anger as he was wroth with exceeding wrath), a broad muscular chest, and long robust arms (implying that he had a muscular and well-built body of a strong, brave and powerful warrior who possesses the physical prowess by which he can defeat his opponent very easily in a hand-to-hand duel).

His body had a fair complexion like that of a snow-covered mountain, albeit it was a wee whit tanned red (with excitement and anger, as well as due to the fact that

Laxman had been exposed to the elements of Nature for the past fourteen years of his forest sojourn by the side of his elder brother Lord Ram)¹. (1)

Meanwhile, the ten-headed Ravana sent reinforcement to help his son Meghanad; these formidable demon warriors grabbed all sorts of weapons they could lay their hands on, and arming themselves to the teeth they dashed forward (to aid the demon prince). (2)

The monkey and bear warriors raised a fierce war-cry praising Lord Ram and his glory as they too rushed forward to join the fray (and help Laxman); they grabbed parts of huge mountains, such as large rocks and boulders, as well as uprooted trees as their weapons. (3)

The two troops clashed head on with each other in a furious hand-to-hand battle, forming groups that engaged themselves in vicious duels, each vying with the other to have an upper hand and defeat the opponent, because both the sides had no lack of desire and the will to win². (4)

[Note—¹This verse describes how Laxman looked when he stepped out from his camp into the battle-field to take on Meghanad.

²This is the second direct face-to-face, vicious, no-holds barred and bloody clash between the warriors of the two sides, demons on one side, and monkey and bear warriors on the other side. The first such clash occurred during the assault on the fort of Lanka, and it is described in full earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 47.]

मुठिकन्ह लातन्ह दातन्ह काटहिं । कपि जयसील मारि पुनि डाटहिं ॥ ५ ॥
मारु मारु धरु धरु धरु मारु । सीस तोरि गहि जुजा उपावु ॥ ६ ॥
असि रव पूरि रही नव खंडा । धावहिं जहं तहं रुंड प्रचंडा ॥ ७ ॥
देखहिं कौतुक नभ सुर बृन्दा । कबहुँक बिसमय कबहुँ अनंदा ॥ ८ ॥

muṭhikanha lātanha dātanha kāṭahim. kapi jayasīla māri puni dāṭahim. 5.
māru māru dharu dharu dharu mārū. sīsa tōri gahi bhujā upārū. 6.
asī rava pūri rahī nava khaṇḍā. dhāvahim jaham̐ taham̐ ruṇḍa pracaṇḍā. 7.
dēkhahim kautuka nabha sura bṛndā. kabahum̐ka bisamaya kabahum̐ anandā. 8.

The Kapis (monkeys and bears) are motivated and so inspired by the surety of victory that nothing holds them back; they fight vigorously and enthusiastically, clobbering their opponents (the demon warriors) and hitting them hard with their clenched fists and vicious kicks, and biting them deep and ferociously with their sharp teeth. The monkeys and bears, thus, first hit the demons hard, severely wounding and demoralising them, and then the victorious Kapis sternly admonished their adversaries (lecturing them on the fruitlessness of their wasting their energy and life for a lost cause, a cause that is wrong from the beginning)¹. (5)

There was utter chaos and mayhem in the battle-field. Blood-chilling shrieks of the warriors, yelling repeatedly 'kill, kill; catch hold and kill, break the skull and severe the head; tear apart the limbs' [6], rent the air and reverberated all over the nine segments of the island (of Lanka)². Here and there, and everywhere else, whithersoever one could see, severed heads and fragmented skulls flew thick and wild like so many flying objects hurled all over the ground [7]. (6-7)

The gods were watching the strange spectacle from the sky; sometimes they were struck with horror at this sight of the ferocity of the war, and at other times they felt glad that the war has, at last, commenced³. (8)

[Note—¹A similar thing occurred earlier too during the first day of the war. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 44.

²The whole island of Lanka was filled with the sound of war. The island was geographically divided into nine segments for administrative purposes. The clamour and the turmoil of the war, the shrieks of warriors and the clash of weapons, was deafening, and it echoed all over the land.

³The gods sometimes became alarmed at the mismatch between the two sides, for the monkeys and bears were pitted against demons who were superior to them in all respects of warfare, for they had better weapons, were very ferocious and reckless, knew new many tricks to deceive their opponents, and were seasoned warriors who were veterans of countless wars in which they had successfully conquered not only the rulers of earth but had even vanquished the all-powerful gods in heaven. So the gods sometimes feared for the safety of the army of Lord Ram as it consisted of monkeys and bears who are usually regarded as an inferior and weaker race in the hierarchy of creation.

But soon they recovered themselves and regained their confidence of victory, making them feel glad that the war has actually started, because now their long-cherished dream of getting rid of the cruel and sinful demons would be realised. After all, this is for what they had prayed to Lord Vishnu, whereat the Lord had promised them that he would come down personally to earth as Lord Ram to fulfil their wish. So now the time has come when their wish for the elimination of Ravana and his vicious horde of cruel and sinful demons was about to be fulfilled, about to be realised. Hence, it was a time to celebrate and feel happy.]

दो०. रुधिर गाड़ भरि भरि जज्जो ऊपर धूरि उड़ाइ ।

जनु अँगार रासिन्ह पर मृतक धूम रह्यो छाड़ ॥ ५३ ॥

dōhā.

rudhira gāra bhari bhari jamyō ūpara dhūri urā'i.

janu amṅāra rāsinha para mṛtaka dhūma rahyāō chā'i. 53.

All the potholes, cavities and fissures of the earth were filled with blood flowing into them; this blood so collected then coagulated and formed a thick crust over which

layers of dust settled. Thick clouds of dust also flew all over the battle-ground (as it was kicked up by gusts of wind).

The sight resembled a cremation ground where so many pyres could be seen with hot ash over which red-hot ambers burnt, and the sky around was filled with a cloud of dark smoke that arose from the dead bodies that were laid over this heap for the purpose of cremation. (Doha no. 53)

[Note—This imagery draws one's attention to the horrifying and repulsive sight witnessed in the battle-field. The next verse describes the horrifying sight of wounded warriors lying on the ground in the battle-field.

It is a chilling, gut-wrenching, nauseating and nightmarish sight that is visible not only in the battle-field of Lanka but also witnessed wherever bloody wars are fought between two armies. It compels a man of any sensitivity and mercy left in him to ponder over the futility and cruelty of wars; it fills any man who is conscientious, and has even a wee bit compassion left in any corner of his heart, to feel repulsive and wince at the mere thought of a war.

Say, what is gained by mass slaughter of fellow human beings? Even a victory that is attained by massacre and creating the scene described in this doha, is utterly disgraceful, totally inhuman and reprehensible, completely contemptible and outright outrageous, and worth nothing but severe shame and ignominy on the victor.]

चौ०. घायल बीर बिराजहिं कैसे । कुसुमित किंसुक के तरु जैसे ॥ १ ॥
लछिमन मेननाद द्वौ जोधा । भिरहिं परसपर करि अति क्रोधा ॥ २ ॥
एकहि एक सकड़ नहिं जीती । निसिचर छल बल करड़ अनीती ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ghāyala bīra birājahiṁ kaisē. kusumita kiṁsuka kē taru jaisē. 1.
lachimana mēghanāda dvau jōdhā. bhirahiṁ parasapara kari ati krōdhā. 2.
ēkahi ēka saka'i nahiṁ jītī. nisicara chala bala kara'i anītī. 3.

Gravely wounded warriors adorned the battle-field much like the crimson flowers that deck up a Kinshuk tree (the “Butea frondosa” tree) at the time when they are in full bloom¹. (1)

Now the time came for a direct confrontation between Laxman and Meghanad; both of them clashed with each other very furiously. (2)

Both were equal in valour, gallantry and skills, so no matter how hard they tried to subdue their opponents, they could not succeed.

Seeing that Laxman would not be so easily overcome, the demon (Meghanad) started cheating by employing unfair means and using dirty tricks to force himself upon Laxman and vanquish him². (3)

[Note—¹This tree is also known as “Palasha”. It has beautiful deep red coloured flowers that make the tree look very charming when in full bloom.

In this imagery, the battle-field is likened to the Kinshuk tree, and the injured warriors lying on the ground, with thick dark red blood oozing from their wounds, are likened to the flower of this tree. Even as the flowers move softly on the tree when

they are made to sway by the wind, the wounded warriors turn left and right, and try to rise or raise their limbs while lying on the ground.

A similar sight is also referred to in Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 89, verse no. 37.

²When Meghanad observed that he is unable to overcome Laxman by using fair means of warfare, he decided to employ foul methods and resort to cheating. Being a ‘demon’, someone who has no qualms in using dirty tricks and employing unrighteous methods to serve his goal, Meghanad had not the slightest compunctions in using unfair means to overcome his opponent Laxman.

He knew many magical tricks that he had used earlier also in the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52.

So he decided to use them once again. Meghanad would also employ these dirty magical tricks that create a lot of illusions, such as making him suddenly vanish and reappear again somewhere else, during the second battle with Laxman when he was finally killed—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 76.]

क्रोधवंत तब भयउ अनंता । भंजेउ रथ सारथी तुरंता ॥ ४ ॥

नाना बिधि प्रहार कर सेवा । राच्छस भयउ प्रान अवसेषा ॥ ५ ॥

रावन सुत निज मन अनुमाना । संकठ भयउ हरिहि मम प्राना ॥ ६ ॥

krōdhavanta taba bhaya'u anantā. bhañjē'u ratha sārathī turantā. 4.
nānā bidhi prahāra kara sēṣā. rācchasa bhaya'u prāna avasēṣā. 5.
rāvana suta nija mana anumānā. saṅkaṭha bhaya'u harihi mama prānā. 6.

Then (i.e. when Meghanad started cheating and using foul and unfair methods in the duel) Laxman (who is also known as “Anant”¹) became vehemently angry. He immediately broke Meghanad’s chariot into splinters and killed the charioteer.

[To wit, Laxman became so furious when Meghanad started using unfair means in the battle that he angrily retaliated by shooting a powerful volley of arrows that slammed into Meghanad’s chariot with such a mighty force that they smashed it smithereens and killed the charioteer.] (4)

Laxman, who is a manifestation of Sheshnath (sēṣā), launched a vicious attack on his adversary, hitting him hard and furious in a variety of ways so much so that the demon’s life was almost on the edge of being sniffed out. (5)

The son of Ravana (“rāvana suta”; Meghanad)² thought to himself that the situation was extremely alarming, and soon Laxman would snatch his life away from him (i.e. would kill him). (6)

[Note—¹“Anant” means: ‘one who has no end; one who is eternal; one who does not die’. Use of this epithet for Laxman is very significant here because soon we shall read that he is seriously wounded and on the verge of death when Meghanad shot him with a fiery arrow that usually sucked the life of its victim. This epithet mentally

prepares the reader for that moment when Laxman falls unconscious on the ground; it psychologically acclimatises the reader and assures him that when he comes to the point where Laxman is grievously wounded and falls to the ground, there should be no cause worry, as Laxman is “Anant”, i.e. he cannot die. That simply means that there is no cause of alarm, that Laxman’s fainting is part of the game, a part of the show, for he will be revived before long.

“Anant” is also the name of Lord Sheshnath, the celestial Serpent who had manifested himself as Laxman. Lord Vishnu, the macrocosmic and invisible form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, reclines on the coiled body of Sheshnath as it floats on the surface of Kshir-Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk from which the first elements of creation emerged at the time of its origin.

²Like the case of the word “Anant” for Laxman, another interesting word is used here when referring to Meghanad; it is “the son of Ravana— *rāvana suta*”.

What is so remarkable with the use of this term? The word “Ravana” means ‘one who makes others weep’. Since the demon king used to torment the world so much, the word ‘Ravana’ is used for him. Now, his son Meghanad would soon create a situation when Lord Ram too would weep and lament for Laxman when he is wounded by Meghanad’s powerful arrow.

Like his father Ravana, his son Meghanad was about to create a situation which would make Lord Ram weep and his companions feel sorrowful. So therefore, Meghanad is addressed as the ‘son of Ravana’; “like father, like son”.]

बीरघातिनी छाड़िसि साँगी । तेज पुंज लछिमन उर लागी ॥ ७ ॥

मुरुछा भई सक्ति के लागें । तब चलि गयउ निकट भय त्यागें ॥ ८ ॥

bīraghātini chāḍisi sāṁgī. tēja punja lachimana ura lāgī. 7.

muruchā bhaī sakti kē lāgērñ. taba cali gaya'u nikaṭa bhaya tyāgēm. 8.

Frustrated and extremely irritated because he felt he was in a dire strait and his life was in danger if he allowed a moment more to Laxman, Meghanad struck back at his opponent by throwing a special spear (*sāṁgī*) that never failed in felling (and even probably killing) the greatest of warriors¹. This powerful weapon glowed with energy, and it slammed into Laxman’s chest. (7)

Laxman fainted (and fell to the ground unconscious) when this powerful weapon, that had immense energy and dynamism inbuilt in it, hit him hard with all its punch (*sakti kē lāgērñ*). Then Meghanad overcame his fear (of Laxman) and went near his adversary¹. (8)

[Note—¹As long as Laxman was on his legs fighting Meghanad, the latter dared not go near him; but when Laxman swooned and collapsed on the ground, Meghanad gathered enough courage to go near him.

Why did Meghanad go near Laxman? The answer is to be found in the next Doha no. 54—it was to lift and bring Laxman to Lanka. Why? It was to make Laxman a hostage if he was still alive, and use him as a bait to make a stiff bargain with Lord Ram, or as a prized trophy of war if he wasn’t alive. It would be a great victory for

Meghanad and an act of unmatched valour and gallantry if he could bring Laxman to Lanka in whatever state Laxman was, and in whatever way Meghanad could.

There are two other significant reasons why Laxman was wounded and fell to the ground unconscious.

One is that at the time of asking Lord Ram to give him permission to go and face Meghanad, Laxman had not properly shown his respect to the Lord by bowing his head before the latter, which he ought to have done. It was perhaps because Laxman was very angry at the time, and in his anger he had lost his wisdom to act in a proper way. Besides this, Laxman was so confident of his own abilities that he thought that he is competent enough to tackle Meghanad on his own accord independently, and so he felt that there was no need to seek Lord Ram's full protection by way of seeking the Lord's blessings and invoking the Lord's grace and mystical powers. The result was that Laxman lacked the full backing and the complete support of Lord Ram's grace, his divine abilities and mystical powers that would have given him an impregnable shield of protection against harm when he was fighting Meghanad, and so he fell down unconscious. This event shows us that if we are to succeed in any enterprise in life, we must first seek the Lord God's blessings, and then rely on the Lord's powers to enable us to move ahead towards the goal of obtaining success in our efforts. Refer to a note appended to Doha no. 52 herein above where this aspect has been further explained.

The second reason is this: At the time when Lord Ram was preparing to leave Ayodhya to proceed to the forest, he had tried his best to dissuade Laxman from joining him. The Lord had told Laxman that it will do good if he did not accompany him to the forest, because then he would have to bear a lot of sorrows and miseries—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71. Now, this fainting of Laxman was to prove that the Lord's words were true.

A similar situation occurred when Sita insisted on accompanying Lord Ram to the forest. In her case the Lord had been very explicit in outlining the immensity of sufferings one encounters in a forest, telling her that if she insists in going to the forest with the Lord then she will get only sufferings in return—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 63. And the Lord was proved correct once again by the developments later on—when Sita was kidnapped by Ravana and kept as a prisoner in Lanka, where she was subjected to great horrors.]

दो०. मेघनाद सम कोटि सत जोधा रहे उठाइ ।

जगदाधार सेष किमि उठै चले खिसिआइ ॥ ५४ ॥

dōhā.

mēghanāda sama kōṭi sata jōdhā rahē uṭhā'i.
jagadādhāra sēṣa kimi uṭhai calē khisi'ā'i. 54.

Countless warriors, who were truly as strong and powerful as Meghanad, tried their best to lift Laxman from the ground, but failed.

Say, how is it practically possible to lift Sheshnath who is the support of the entire world (or who supports the whole universe upon his thousand hoods)?

No matter how much and how hard these warriors tried, they could not lift Laxman; so at last they gave up in frustration and went away distraught, smarting with shame and feeling extremely humiliated. (Doha no. 53)

[Note—¹Laxman was a manifested form of Lord Sheshnath, the celestial serpent who is believed to hold the world aloft on his thousand hoods—Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 197; and (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 126.

Trying to lift Laxman would be like trying to lift the earth upon which one is standing; it is like lifting the ground from below one's own foot while one is standing on it. It's impossible. One can't hold the ground underneath his own foot and lift it up along with himself.

Similarly, trying to lift Laxman was tantamount to lifting the earth on which these demon warriors were standing.

A very interesting development is about to occur now. While the demon warriors were unable to lift Laxman from the ground where he was lying unconscious, Hanuman would very easily lift him and take his limp body to place it before Lord Ram at the end of the day's war—apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55 below.

The question is: How could Hanuman lift Laxman when the demons couldn't? Well, one reason is that the demons, being sinful, pervert and unholy, lacked any spiritual power and the special abilities that come with it, while Hanuman had an abundance of such powers and abilities.

Secondly, from the perspective of metaphysics, the demons represented 'gross' elements in creation, and such elements are always heavy themselves; their heaviness acted as a drag on their ability to lift and move Laxman because he was extremely heavy himself as he supported the whole world on his hood in his primary form as Lord Sheshnath.

On the other hand, Hanuman represented the lighter, the subtler elements of creation as he was the son of the 'wind' god, and 'wind or air' is one of the five subtle elements in creation. In this interpretation, Laxman represented the 'sky' element, because one of the names of Lord Sheshnath is 'Anant'*, which means eternal and without an end, which are the characteristics of the 'sky' element. {*Refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes this Doha no. 54.}

The air and sky are almost identical in subtlety; so therefore Hanuman and Laxman made a perfect match.

The power of wind is well known; a powerful storm can cause unprecedented havoc; a fierce wind can as easily lift a humble twig as it can topple ships and carry away heavier things that falls in its path, as will be observed when a tornado or hurricane strikes. The wind turns a windmill, and the latter, with the aid of the wind, can lift water from the bowls of the earth if connected to a pump, and then use it for irrigation. The wind can move ships by filling its sails. The air lifts balloons, and the wind can steer it.

In brief, the element 'wind' that Hanuman represented enabled him to lift Laxman because he represented the 'sky' element as explained herein above, making him very light.

Earlier on in the story of the Ramayan we read that Lord Shiva's Bow had become so heavy that a large number of strong kings and princes, who had gathered during the marriage ceremony of Sita at Janakpur, could not lift it, while the same Bow became so light that Lord Ram could not only easily lift it but as easily break it

into two pieces. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 261.}

In this case, every citizen present on the occasion had made a fervent plea to the deity of the Bow, i.e. to Lord Shiva, requesting that the Bow become very light. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 255.}

Similarly, it's quite probable here that Hanuman too had prayed silently to Lord Sheshnath, the primary form of Laxman, to make his manifested form, i.e. Laxman, very light so that he can be lifted. This the third plausible reason as to why Hanuman was able to lift Laxman.

Another interesting reason, and the fourth one, is this: Lord Shiva is depicted in iconography, based on the reading and interpretation of ancient mythological texts known as the 'Purans', as having a number of serpents wrapped around his body; these serpents are his ornamentation. This means simply that Lord Shiva is able to carry the weight of these serpents in the same way as we wear garlands or other ornaments on our bodies. Now, Hanuman is a manifestation of 'Rudra', the eleventh form of Lord Shiva that is concerned with annihilation of everything, it is the angry form of Shiva that brings about the end of this creation; and Laxman is a manifestation of the celestial serpent known as Sheshnath. This means obviously that the weight of the body of Laxman poses no problem for Hanuman to carry just like the case of the weight of the serpents posing no problem for Lord Shiva when he wears them around his body.

To wit, a combination of factors came into play that enabled Hanuman to lift Laxman, whereas the demons failed.]

चौ०. सुनु गिरिजा क्रोधानल जासू । जारइ भुवन चारिदस आसू ॥ १ ॥
सक संग्राम जीति को ताही । सेवहिं सुर नर अग जग जाही ॥ २ ॥
यह कौतूहल जानइ सोई । जा पर कृपा राम कै होई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunu girijā krōdhānala jāsū. jāra'i bhuvana cāridasa āsū. 1.
saka saṅgrāma jīti kō tāhī. sēvahim sura nara aga jaga jāhī. 2.
yaha kautūhala jāna'i sōī. jā para kṛpā rāma kai hōī. 3.

[Lord Shiva continued his narration and said to his consort Uma, who is also known as Girija as she is the daughter of the Kingdom of Mountains. Shiva said:-]

'Listen Girija. He whose anger is so fierce that its hell-like fire can burn all the fourteen divisions of this creation¹ [1], ---

--- And who is served not only by the gods and the human beings but also by all other living beings in this creation, both immortal as well as mortal, both gross as well as subtle—say, who can defeat such a majestic and almighty Lord of the World in the battle-field? [2]

[Of course the answer is “no one can”. So then if that is the case, how do we explain what is happening on the ground in the war of Lanka, where we see that the monkeys and bears, who represent Lord Ram and form his army, are often times beaten back and thrashed by the demons, and we also read that Laxman has been

gravely wounded and felled by their prince Meghanad. The answer to this vexing question is given below in the following verse.] (1-2)

The actual reason for what is happening on the ground in the war of Lanka, the reality behind the external deceptions created (which has presently created an impression that Laxman has been subdued and wounded by Meghanad) is known to only a few enlightened souls on whom Lord Ram (the Supreme Being and the bestower of gnosis, wisdom and knowledge) shows his grace². (3)

[Note—¹The “fourteen divisions of this creation”, known as the 14 Bhuvans or 14 abodes, are the following:

(A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas (उर्ध्व लोक) are seven in number:—(i) Bhu/Bhūḥ (भूः), (ii) Bhuvaha/Bhuvah (भुवः), (iii) Swaha/Swah (स्वः), (iv) Maha/Mah (महः), (v) Janaha/Janaḥ (जनः), (vi) Tapaha/Tapaḥ (तपः), and (vii) Satyam/Satyam (सत्यम्).

(B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha/Adhaḥ Loka (अधः लोक):— (i) Atal/Atala (अतल), (ii) Vital/Vitala (वितल), (iii) Suta/Sutala (सुतल), (iv) Rasaatal/Rasātala (रसातल), (v) Talaatal/Talātala (तलातल), (vi) Mahaatal/Mahātala (महातल), and (vii) Paataal/Pātāla (पाताल). The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

²Only those who know who Lord Ram and Laxman actually were, that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the invisible and all-pervading macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being, and that Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Sheshnath, the cosmic serpent who supports the whole creation on his thousand hoods and on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean that fills the outer space in the form of ether, would know that all this fainting and fighting and all other things were merely for show to hide the reality of both Lord Ram as well as Laxman, because Ravana, the mighty king of demons, had a boon of immunity from death being caused by anybody except at the hands of human beings; so it had to be done that way, that a human being would one day succeed in slaying the mighty demon king, and to make it happen that way, the Lord had to take extra precautions to ensure that nothing is visibly done on the ground that would reveal his true identity, that could be construed as being reasonably beyond the powers of a human being to do, as far as possible, so that the sanctity of the boons granted to Ravana by the creator Brahma could be maintained, and the scourge of the demons could be brought to an end.

To wit, if the secret was leaked—that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human but the Supreme Being himself in the form of a prince—then most of the demons would have either run away or surrendered themselves without a fight. If this happened, the Lord would not have been able to eliminate them, and they would have lived, causing a piquant situation that would have defeated the very purpose for which Lord Vishnu came down to earth—because these cunning demons would have pretended to show remorse and promise the Lord that they would certainly change their sinful ways in order to escape death, but sooner or later, in all probability sooner rather than later, they would have invariably gone back on their words and reverted to their old bad habits of tormenting creatures and creating unfettered terror in this world.

Come to think of it: Lord Sheshnath who could turn the world upside down by merely shifting it or turning it over on his hoods or even tilting his head a little bit to one side, could have very easily make Lanka first heave and then splash and sink into

the depths of the ocean that surrounded it from all the sides like a ship capsizing in rough waters of the ocean during a violent storm, so what was the great idea, except to ensure sanctity of Brahma's boons, that Laxman had to endure so much trouble?]

संध्या भइ फिरि द्वौ बाहनी । लगे सँभारन निज निज अनी ॥ ४ ॥

ब्यापक ब्रह्म अजित भुवनेस्वर । लछिमन कहाँ बूझ करुनाकर ॥ ५ ॥

तब लगि लै आयउ हनुमाना । अनुज देखि प्रभु अति दुख माना ॥ ६ ॥

sandhyā bha'i phiri dvau bāhanī. lagē sam̐bhārana nija nija anī. 4.
byāpaka brahma ajita bhuvanēsvara. lachimana kahām̐ būjha karunākara. 5.
taba lagi lai āya'u hanumānā. anuja dēkhi prabhu ati dukha mānā. 6.

When it was eventide and the time of day when twilight approached, both the armies retired from the battle-field for the day (to go back to their respective camps). The commanders of the two armies (the demons as well as the monkeys and bears) surveyed their troops to take stock of the situation and review the condition of their respective forces¹. (4)

Lord Ram—who is the all-pervading and omnipresent Brahm (the Supreme Being and cosmic Consciousness) in his primary form (byāpaka brahma), who is invincible and the almighty Lord of the entire creation (ajita bhuvanēsvara), and who shows mercy to others (karunākara)—asked where Laxman was (when he could not see him around). (5)

In the meantime, Hanuman brought the unconscious Laxman (and laid him on the ground before the Lord)².

When the Lord saw his younger brother lying unconscious (and almost as if he was not alive), he became very sad and extremely sorrowful. (6)

[Note—¹This is the end of the second day of the war in general, and the end of the first duel between Laxman and Meghanad.

A head count was done by the commanders of the two armies to determine who had died, how many were wounded, and how many and who had survived.

²We have already read in Doha no. 54 herein above that Meghanad and all other strong demon warriors had failed to lift Laxman and take him to Lanka with them. And now we read that the same Laxman was lifted and brought before Lord Ram by Hanuman.

How and why could Hanuman lift Laxman when the demons couldn't? This crucial question has been answered and explained in detail in a note appended to Doha no. 54 referred to above, as well as to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 84 later on, during the narration of Ravana's battle with Lord Ram.]

जामवंत कह बैद सुषेना । लंकाँ रहइ को पठई लेना ॥ ७ ॥

धरि लघु रूप गयउ हनुमंता । आनेउ भवन समेत तुरंता ॥ ८ ॥

jāmvanta kaha baida suṣēnā. laṅkāṃ^ṛ raha'i kō paṭha'ī lēnā. 7.
dhari laghu rūpa gaya'u hanumantā. ānē'u bhavana samēta turantā. 8.

Jamvant (the old bear chieftain) said that a Vaidya (a doctor who treats patients using herbal medicines) named Sushen lives in Lanka¹, and asked for advice as to who should be sent to bring him. (7)

[It was unanimously decided that Hanuman must be urgently dispatched to bring Sushen². So therefore—] Hanuman assumed a small form (like the one he had assumed earlier to enter Lanka undetected when he had gone there the first time in search of Sita), and went to Lanka.

He immediately brought the doctor, along with his house, from there³. (8)

[Note—¹How did Jamvant come to know about Sushen, the doctor? He was told about him by Vibhishan, the demon prince and brother of Ravana who had joined Lord Ram's camp.

Why did Vibhishan not himself disclose that a doctor by this name lived in Lanka, and instead confided this news to Jamvant and asked the latter to reveal this information? Well, Vibhishan was very intelligent; he thought that if he said something himself then there were chances that he would be misunderstood as if he was contriving a devise by which to invite one of his confidantes from Lanka in the garb of a doctor, who would then administer some poison to Laxman that would cause his death.

Even if not actually giving poison to Laxman, no one could be absolutely sure how a medicine would react, as the best of medicines given by the best of doctors may sometimes prove ineffective or even fatal if it causes some serious reaction in the patient's body, which would cause Laxman's death. Should it unfortunately happen, then all the monkeys and bears would definitely conclude that Vibhishan had a malefic intention in suggesting the name of Sushen, with whom he was hand-in-glove secretly to manoeuvre things in a cunning way that would lead to Laxman death by administering a poison or a wrong medicine so as to weaken Lord Ram and make him regret for his decision to attack Lanka. If that happened, if the finger of suspicion rested on Vibhishan for any ill fate that befell Laxman, then that would be his end; he will definitely be killed to avenge Laxman.

Vibhishan weighed the pros and cons and came to the conclusion that there were fair chances that Lord Ram, who would be overcome with grief by then, would begin to doubt his integrity and question why he had advised that Sushen be brought to treat Laxman, and chances were that, driven by excess of sorrow at Laxman's ill fate, and under the wrong impression that Vibhishan was to be blamed for it, the Lord would approve putting him to death as punishment for betrayal.

Vibhishan pondered over the matter seriously and deduced that the aspect of the affair was very alarming and fraught with danger for him, and one unwise step on his part would land him in a grave situation should things go wrong and something unexpected and unfortunate befalls Laxman due to his intercession in this matter. So it was prudent and advisable under the circumstances to keep mum. But at the same time, thought Vibhishan, it was his moral obligation and duty to help his benefactor Lord Ram and his brother Laxman in these trying times, and if he had some knowledge that could be of certain help to them, then he ought to put it to good use

while ensuring his own safety, or even putting himself to a little risk if a greater good is attained.

It was a horrifying prospect, but Vibhishan nevertheless decided to help Lord Ram, who had warmly welcomed him and given him unconditional refuge when he was ousted from his own kingdom by his brother Ravana, as best as he could while playing it safe for himself; and so he quietly approached Jamvant to give this confidential bit of information about the availability of an expert doctor named Sushen in Lanka.

It can be argued that Hanuman may have brought this information, about the presence of a doctor by the name of Sushen in Lanka, when he had gone there in search of Sita. But he would have told this to Angad as he was his fast friend, and probably not to Jamvant as the latter was very senior in the hierarchy as well as in age. Besides, Hanuman belonged to the ‘monkey race’ while Jamvant was the chief of the ‘bear race’; hence the interaction between Hanuman and Jamvant must have been very limited and formal as compared to his interaction with Angad. Now here since Angad has kept quiet, it means he had no such knowledge of a doctor named Sushen in Lanka.

Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that this information was given by Vibhishan to Jamvant.

²Why was Hanuman chosen for the job of bringing Sushen from Lanka? The answer is given right here—it was because he could ‘assume a minute form’ that would enable him to make his ingress and egress from Lanka without being detected.

Hanuman had experience of using this trick, because he had employed it when he had gone to Lanka earlier in search of Sita; he had not only made his ingress by assuming a small form (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4) but had also explored the city throughout the night in this form, without being detected (apropos: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 5).

How then was his bringing the doctor with his whole house kept a secret? It is because it was night time, and he had lifted the house and become air-borne immediately. Then he silently cruised in the sky to exit the boundaries of the city.

³How did Hanuman do it? Well, Hanuman scooped up the house from the ground by digging the soil from underneath it and then lifting it in his hands to bring it to where Lord Ram was sitting by the side of wounded Laxman, just like a gardener transplants a sapling by lifting it from one place in the garden to transfer it to another place.

We shall soon read that Hanuman would employ this skill to lift up a mountain and bring it to Lanka when he could not descry the desired herb on it—apropos: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 58 herein below.]

दो०. राम पदारबिंद सिर नायउ आइ सुषेन ।

कहा नाम गिरि औषधी जाहु पवनसुत लेन ॥ ५५ ॥

dōhā.

rāma padārabinda sira nāya'u ā'i suṣēna.

kahā nāma giri auṣadhī jāhu pavanāsuta lēna. 55.

Sushen arrived and paid his obeisance to Lord Ram by bowing his head at the Lord's feet. Then he named the mountain on which the required medicine (i.e. the medicinal herb) was to be found¹, asking the son of the wind god ("pavanasuta"; Hanuman)² to go and fetch it³. (Doha no. 55)

[Note—¹Where was this mountain that bore the herb which could revive Laxman back to life? It is mentioned in Valmiki's Ramayan, Uddha Kand (Lanka Kand), canto 74, verse nos. 29-30 that Jamvant had told Hanuman: "Fly over the surface of the ocean and reach the northern mountains known as the Himalayas. Further on you will see a golden-hued mountain known as Rishav; the famed abode of Lord Shiva, known as Kailash, is visible beyond it. In between the two you will see a mountain where medicinal herbs glow in the night like so many fire-flies."

In Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 46 it is said that this herb was located in the "Dronachal mountain". Then in verse no. 60 it is said that: "Hanuman went to this mountain and defeated the Gandharvas who were protecting it; then he lifted it and started on his journey back."

What were the special qualities of this unique herb? In Valmiki Ramayan we find the answer in its Lanka Kand, canto 101, verse nos. 30-31. "The herb is to be found on the southern summit of the Drona Mountain; it can heal wounds, restore the origin condition of the patient's body, revive a person who is almost dead, and can re-join or heal broken or ruptured parts of the body such as bones, skin, muscles, veins and tissues."

²The use of the term "son of the wind god" is very significant here. The wind is extremely swift in its movement; it can cover large distances in a short span of time. Hanuman had to travel a long distance to the mountain to bring the herb; he had to cross the ocean and the land beyond, with all the natural geographical obstacles he would have to contend with, in order to reach it. Only the wind can easily surmount all physical obstacles when traversing from one point to another on the surface of the earth.

Secondly, it was necessary to 'fly' in the sky all the way to the destination, and it was possible only if Hanuman's primary form as the 'son of the wind god' is invoked. The wind god would surely help his son Hanuman to fly over the ocean and the land to reach his destination, and then return by the same path.

The 'son' of the wind god surely must possess the unique abilities of his father, the abilities to fly and move rapidly, to overcome all physical hindrances that come in the way of his path, and to be able to remain air-borne while carrying the weight of the bundle of herbs on his way back. As we will soon discover, this ability to remain air-borne while carrying a heavy weight was absolutely essential, because on his way back Hanuman had to carry the entire mountain loaded with herbs. It is because he could not decide which specific herb was needed, and so took along the whole mountain in order to avoid taking the risk of picking a wrong herb, or wasting precious time in searching for the correct herb.

³It is not clear from the reading of this verse who actually asked Hanuman to go to the mountain and bring the needed herb—was it Sushen, or was it Lord Ram?

Most probably it was the doctor himself—firstly it is because since Sushen was brought by Hanuman, he was better acquainted with the latter as compared to the rest of the ministers of Lord Ram who were standing around; and secondly it is

because Lord Ram was so sad and woefully grieving for unconscious Laxman that he was not in a proper state of mind to talk about anything.

It is a common observance that when there is a patient lying in a serious condition and a doctor is called, the patient's closest kin who love him dearly, such as his only son, parent or wife who is the most affected by grief and overcome with sorrows, is not in a proper state of mind to discuss the situation and relevant details coherently with the doctor, and it is usually done by others in the family who are in attendance; it is because the latter are able to maintain their cool and act dispassionately as compared to those who are directly affected by the shock of the serious illness of their dear one.

At the same time, it could have been Lord Ram who asked Hanuman to go and bring the required herb. The Lord was the commander-in-chief of the army, and a person who occupies this senior position in the hierarchy is expected to maintain his cool and exercise self-control during the gravest of situations and battle-field reversals. It was necessary for Lord Ram to maintain external calm to ensure that the morale of his troops is not affected negatively, at least till the time there was hope of Laxman's revival.]

चौ०. राम चरन सरसिज उर राखी । चला प्रभंजन सुत बल भाषी ॥ १ ॥

उहाँ दूत एक मरमु जनाव । रावनु कालनेमि गृह आवा ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

rāma carana sarasija ura rākhī. calā prabhanjāna suta bala bhāṣī. 1.
uhām̐ dūta ēka maramu janāvā. rāvanu kālanēmi gṛha āvā. 2.

Enshrining Lord Ram's holy lotus-like feet in his heart (i.e. after invoking the Lord's glory and grace, and paying his due obeisance to him), and then reassuring the Lord that he will be able to successfully accomplish the mission (of bringing the requisite herb) by reiterating his own abilities, about his skills and strengths, in this regard¹, the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) started off on his journey. (1)

Meanwhile, there (in Lanka) a spy informed Ravana about the developments (that Laxman was lying wounded and unconscious on the ground in his camp, and Hanuman was dispatched to bring an herb from the northern mountains to revive him)².

Being thus informed, Ravana went to the house of the demon named Kalnemi.
(2)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that Hanuman commits the same mistake which Laxman had committed earlier when he had gone to engage Meghanad in the battle-field, and it is that Hanuman did not pay his full respects to Lord Ram by bowing his head before the Lord, nor did he seek the Lord's permission in express terms to proceed with the mission.

The first error, of not bowing his head before the Lord, was however compensated and made excusable to a great extent because Hanuman had 'invoked and enshrined the Lord's holy feet in his heart at the time of departure', a silent and subtle gesture that is equivalent to actually bowing the head before the Lord.

The second error can also be excused because Hanuman has been expressly requested to bring the needed medicinal herb and charged with this mission. Lord's permission was implied and implicit in this request; he was assigned this commission on an urgent basis, as there was no time left for observing formalities and courtesies.

But the third error Hanuman made, of 'speaking of his own abilities, his strength and skills' before the Lord, on his face, and in the presence of all those who had gathered around, was tantamount to boasting about himself. So what happened? Soon Hanuman would learn a bitter lesson, that his wisdom and intelligence and abilities to see things clearly were not as great and refined and sharp as he seemed to believe—for, first he fell in a trap laid by one of the demons, named Kalnemi, who was sent by Ravana to deceive Hanuman and block his way, and if possible, to kill him, because he could not see through the deception initially and was virtually caught by the demon, and on the second occasion a little while later Hanuman could not recognise the herb he was expected to bring to revive Laxman when he arrived at his destination in the northern mountains. These two failures were a sort of punishment for Hanuman, reminding him that whatever he had said about his stellar qualities and unique abilities were only loud talk and bloated assumptions. Thus, Hanuman was reminded to be modest and show more humbleness the next time. We shall read about these two events shortly.

²Ravana's spies were updating him about the developments in the battle-field. They must have surely told him about Sushen being taken to the camp of Lord Ram to treat Laxman. It is remarkable that Ravana did not put Sushen in prison or to death when he was brought back by Hanuman.

What may have been the reason of Ravana's not punishing Sushen for reviving his enemy's brother?

Well, the answer is this: First, it is a sacrosanct duty and moral obligation of any doctor to save a person's life, irrespective of whose life he saves; whether the patient is an enemy or a friend is immaterial in this moral obligation and fulfilment of a doctor's duty.

Secondly, Ravana too needed the services of an expert doctor; it was not in his interest to antagonise or irritate or offend Sushen, who was the best doctor in Lanka, at a crucial time when a fierce war was raging, and countless demon warriors too needed medical help from him. So no matter how much Ravana may have liked to wreak his vengeance upon Sushen, yet he decided in his wisdom to keep quiet for the time being and punish the doctor for treason or betrayal later on when calm returns and the war ends.

Ravana approached Kalnemi because he judged in his mind that this demon was the only one in Lanka who would have the guts and the wherewithal to face Hanuman. Ravana abandoned his usual arrogance and ego by personally approaching Kalnemi and visiting him at his home, instead of summoning him to his palace. We have already seen that earlier Ravana had adopted the same method when he had personally approached another demon named Marich in order to carry out his plans to steal Sita. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23.}

Ravana needed someone who can use the art of deception skilfully, as he intended to capture or kill Hanuman, or at least delay his journey to the northern mountains by blocking his way. Ravana, being a great king was expected to have a wide body of knowledge of virtually everything as kings usually are trained to have; so he had some basic knowledge of the science of herbal treatment, and he guessed

that this herb must be administered to Laxman before day-break in order to be effective. So if he somehow managed to delay Hanuman and prevent him from bringing the herb by morning, then Laxman would not live. This fact is clearly hinted when we shall read a little later that Lord Ram lamented at the delay in Hanuman's coming back because it was past midnight and dawn was fast approaching. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 61.}]

दसमुख कहा मरमु तेहिं सुना । पुनि पुनि कालनेमि सिरु धुना ॥ ३ ॥
देखत तुम्हहि नगरु जेहिं जारा । तासु पंथ को रोकन पारा ॥ ४ ॥

dasamukha kahā maramu tēhiṁ sunā. puni puni kālanēmi siru dhunā. 3.
dēkhata tumhahi nagaru jēhiṁ jārā. tāsu pantha kō rōkana pārā. 4.

The ten-headed Ravana told Kalnemi the reason for his visit, learning which the latter became exceedingly alarmed and highly distraught, repeatedly beating his head in disgust and the doomed prospect of their race (by the recklessness of one single individual, Ravana, who stubbornly refused to see the consequences of his irrational, indefensible and senseless actions)¹. (3)

Kalnemi sternly warned Ravana of the hazards he faced, and rebuked him in strong terms, saying: 'He (Hanuman) had burnt the city right before you, while you were watching helplessly²; say then, who can successfully create a hurdle in his path and stop him? [To wit, who can stop this formidable person from progressing on his journey as you wish me to do?]' (4)

[Note—¹In the story of the Ramayana we come across three such individuals whom Ravana approaches to seek help when he was in dire straits, and all the three have sternly rebuked him, saying that what he has chosen to do is totally unjustified and wrong, that yet there was time for him to make amends and prevent a catastrophe from befalling on the demon race, that he is making a grave error of judgement in thinking that Lord Ram was an ordinary human prince whom he can easily vanquish; and in all the three cases Ravana stubbornly refused to relent, threatening two with death, and putting the third in an embarrassing situation wherein if he refused to cooperate with Ravana and toe his line, then it would be tantamount to betrayal of one's own family blood.

The first such individual was the demon named Marich; Ravana had approached him in order to employ his skills at assuming any form that he wished to have to a deception with the help of which he would abduct Sita. Marich had most politely warned Ravana of the grave and fatal error he is committing in creating animosity with Lord Ram without any reason, and had also told him about his personal experience in this regard, forewarning him of the dire consequences of his recklessness. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26.}

The second instance is that of Kalnemi; we are reading it presently. He too advised Ravana in almost the same way as Marich had done, in no uncertain language that he is severely erring in creating animosity with Lord Ram who is no one else but the Supreme Lord himself in this form, and that he would do good to himself if he

worshipped and adored the Lord instead. But again, Ravana bluntly refused, becoming aggressive and threatening Kalnemi with death. {Doha no. 56 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 directly herein below.}

The third person whom Ravana approached for help was his own brother Kumbhakaran. He too was shocked and gravely lamented to learn what Ravana had done and what he planned to do, about his sinful act of bringing Sita as a captive and unnecessarily provoking a war with Lord Ram, strongly taking him to task and admonishing him for his mad actions, for his pervert nature and wrong decisions. But on realising that his elder brother Ravana is in no mood to listen, and if he refused to enter the fray on his behalf in the war against Lord Ram, then history would accuse him of being disloyal to the king and betraying his own brother, Kumbhakaran reluctantly decided to enter the battle-field. He also saw in this a rare chance of attaining deliverance for his soul, and helping it to find liberation from the cage-like body of a demon, which was sinful, evil and gross. Besides these benefits, Kumbhakaran saw another great reward: that he would have a wonderful opportunity to see Lord Ram from very close quarters; it would be a rarest of rare privilege for him, because such a view is not available even to great sages, hermits and ascetics who spend their entire lives doing severe penances and great sacrifices and observance of vows just for a chance to have this divine glimpse even for a second. So therefore, instead of regretting, Kumbhakaran become joyous. We shall read about it shortly when we soon come to the third day of the war. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.

When Kalnemi came to know Ravana's intention, that the latter wanted him to obstruct Hanuman's way so that he fails to bring the herb to revive Laxman, Kalnemi became sore affright and saw death staring in his face. This is what he means here. He put Ravana in an embarrassing situation by asking this question: what was Ravana doing when Hanuman ran amok in the city and burnt it; couldn't Ravana himself stop him at that time? Why couldn't he ask Kalnemi at that time to stop Hanuman from having a free run in the city, burning it from street to street and house to house, if it was possible, and if Ravana thought that Kalnemi was capable of doing it? The prospects of stopping Hanuman were brighter then as compared to now, because at that time there was a whole army of demons to support Kalnemi if he was ordered to stop Hanuman, but now he has to do it all alone, prejudicing his own life and safety. This is nonsense and a virtual suicide. Ravana had no answer of course.]

भजि रघुपति करु हित आपना । छाँड़हु नाथ मृषा जल्पना ॥ ५ ॥

नील कंज तनु सुंदर स्यामा । हृदयँ राखु लोचनाभिरामा ॥ ६ ॥

मैं तैं मोर मूढ़ता त्यागू । महा मोह निसि सूतत जागू ॥ ७ ॥

काल ब्याल कर भच्छक जोई । सपनेहुँ समर कि जीतिअ सोई ॥ ८ ॥

bhaji raghupati karu hita āpanā. chāṁṛāhu nātha mṛṣā jalpanā. 5.
nīla kanja tanu sundara syāmā. hṛdayamṛākhu lōcanābhirāmā. 6.
mairṁ tairṁ mōra mūṛhatā tyāgū. mahā mōha nisi sūtata jāgū. 7.

kāla byāla kara bhacchaka jō'ī. sapanēhum' samara ki jīti'a sō'ī. 8.

[I sincerely advise you to—] Worship Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) and pay your obeisance to him. To wit, by doing it you would ensure your own good and take care of your welfare.

My lord; stop useless talk, and discard all forms of worthless boast and hollow bluster (for these will not serve you any good at all). (5)

Instead of it (i.e. instead of wasting your time and energy in this futile pursuit), you ought to enshrine the beautiful image of the Lord that is dark complexioned like a blue-hued lotus flower in your heart. Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, this image of the Lord is so enchanting and beauteous that it bewitches the sight of its beholder and holds it in its thrall². (6)

Discard your stupid idea that makes you differentiate between 'I', 'You', 'Mine (and yours)' etc³.

Wake up from the night of ignorance that has created darkness around you, preventing you from seeing the truth and the reality. (7)

He (i.e. Lord Ram) who can devour (bring to an end; conclude) even the serpent of Time (by bringing an end to the cycle of creation and destruction, known as Kaal)⁴, say who can even imagine to conquer him in a war fought in a mortal world⁵? (8)

[Note—¹After telling Ravana of the impracticability of stopping Hanuman, Kalnemi gave him some sincere advice regarding his wrong decision of opposing Lord Ram and creating hostility with him that reflected what others too had told him in this matter: such as his wife Mandodari, his younger brother Vibhishan, and Suka, his messenger sent behind Vibhishan to spy on him, and Marich, the demon who was forced by Ravana to become a deer with a golden hide. A little later in the story, Ravana's brother Kumbhakaran too says a similar thing.

Refer:- (a) With respect to Mandodari—Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-10 that precede it; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Doha no. 7; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15; and (iv) Doha no. 35-b—to Doha no. 37.

(b) With respect to Vibhshhan—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and (ii) Doha no. 40 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede it.

(c) With respect to Suka—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 57.

(d) With respect to Marich—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26.

(e) With respect to Kumbhakaran—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 63.

²When Ravana had forced Marich to become a golden deer and sent to deceive Sita, he (Marich) too had enshrined this image of Lord Ram in his heart to derive solace in embracing death; Marich was very happy at the prospect of his seeing Lord Ram's captivating beauty from so close a quarter—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 26 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.

A similar vision was invoked by Kumbhakaran when he had to go and fight Lord Ram, albeit most reluctantly; he had felt joyous that he will have a chance to see this enchanting image of the Lord from up so close. He minced no words in expressing his joy, and even asked Ravana to embrace him for giving him this chance of enjoying this view and attaining salvation for his soul—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 63 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

³Kalnemi tells Ravana about the basic principle of metaphysics and spirituality: that the true identity of all living beings is their Atma, their soul, which is pure consciousness, an entity that is subtle, invisible, eternal, universal and holy, and which is the same in all creatures irrespective of whatever external form they might have. To wit, the physical gross body that the world sees and recognises as an individual person is not that individual's 'true self'; it is his Atma resides in this body. Whereas the physical body has its limitations and is specific to an individual, the Atma is not subjected to any such limitations; it is not butted and bounded by lines and physical boundaries.

Hence, who is an enemy of whom; what is the difference between 'him' and 'me' and 'you'; none whatever—because the Atma is the same in all.

So therefore, how come Lord Ram is Ravana's enemy; how and why the former should become the latter's enemy. Why does Ravana think that way; what is the cause of the animosity and its resultant war? None of course.

Truly then if Ravana thinks this way, then he is definitely under the influence of darkness caused by ignorance of the facts.

⁴The eternal coil of Time that represents a 'serpent' because of its fatal nature and coiled structure that continuously wounds and un-wounds like the spring in a clock that keeps the clock's hands moving, and which keeps the creature rotating in a continuous cycle of birth and death, even this otherwise in-conquerable and un-stoppable movement of Time can be stopped when the Supreme Being decides so; when he decides to bring to an end one cycle of creation and destruction, Time would come to a standstill.

The actual words used in this verse are "kāla, byāla, bhacchaka". 'Kaal' also means 'death'; or the god who presides over death. Since no one is immune to death, it is likened to a poisonous 'serpent' or the 'byala' that kills for sure when it bites.

Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram, has Garud, the celestial Eagle, as his mount, and this Garud has a special ability that it can easily devour serpents.

So in this verse it is said that Lord Ram can, if he so wishes, bring an end to Kaal, the god of death who kills all others, too, just like the Lord's mount known as Garud can kill and devour all sorts of serpents, who themselves can kill all those they bite. This being the case, can anyone be so powerful and strong that he would overcome Lord Ram, the killer of Death-God himself? The obvious answer is: No, there is no one who can do it.

⁵An almost similar declaration was made by others such as Mandodari, Marich, Suka, Kumbhakran on different occasions.

Refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 25 (by Marich); (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Vibhishan); (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes

Doha no. 6 (Mandodari); (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63 (Kumbhakaran).]

दो०. सुनि दसकंठ रिसान अति तेहिं मन कीन्ह बिचार ।
राम दूत कर मरौं बरु यह खल रत मल भार ॥ ५६ ॥

dōhā.

suni dasakaṇṭha risāna ati tēhiṁ mana kīnha bicāra.
rāma dūta kara maraur̥ṁ baru yaha khala rata mala bhāra. 56.

When the ten-necked Ravana (dasakaṇṭha) heard what Kalnemi had to say, he became wroth with exceeding wrath.

Observing Ravana's angry reaction and fearing for his life, Kalnemi thought to himself that if he has to die then why should it be an ignominious death at the hands of this pervert fellow who is burdened with sins and vices (that would make his soul go to hell); why should it not be an exalted death at the hands of a messenger of Lord Ram (that would ensure that his soul goes to heaven)¹. (Doha no. 56)

[Note—¹Why dying at the hands of Lord Ram's messenger Hanuman, who was also the Lord's great devotee, so much preferred by Kalnemi? It is because such a death would bless his soul with beatitude and felicity which is equivalent to dying directly at the hands of the Lord himself.

The greatness of Hanuman, Lord Ram's devotee and messenger, is explicitly endorsed in Ram Charit Manas by those who met him personally, albeit under different situations. For instance we read in (i) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 4 alone with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it about the declaration made by Lankini; (ii) then again in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 7 about the declaration made by Vibhishan; and (iii) finally in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 58 about the declaration made by the alligator who found its deliverance when he was killed by Hanuman. All endorse this view—that one is very fortunate to meet Lord Ram's devotee and messenger.

We read earlier that Marich too had thought in a similar fashion when he was forced by Ravana to assume the form of a deer with a golden hide so that Sita could be abducted—that it would be better not to die at the hands of Ravana who was home to all sins and vices. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26.}

The only difference between Marich and Kalnemi is the circumstance of their death, for while Marich was slayed by Lord Ram himself (apropos: Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 27), Kalnemi is now slayed by the Lord's favourite devotee named Hanuman (apropos: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 58).]

चौ०. अस कहि चला रचिसि मग माया । सर मंदिर बर बाग बनाया ॥ १ ॥
मारुतसुत देखा सुभ आश्रम । मुनिहि बूझि जल पियौं जाइ श्रम ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi calā racisi maga māyā. sara mandira bara bāga banāyā. 1.
mārutasuta dēkhā subha āśrama. munihi būjhi jala piyaum jā'i śrama. 2.

Saying this to himself (as said in Doha no. 55 herein above), Kalnemi went to intercept Hanuman. Somewhere on the way, he (Kalnemi) used his crafty ability to create deceit and illusions to generate an impression of the presence of a fresh water pond, with a shrine on its bank that was surrounded by a lush garden. (1)

When the son of the wind god ("mārutasuta"¹; Hanuman) saw this scene, he thought that it was the hermitage of a sage²; so he decided to go there to drink some fresh water to refresh himself and feel relaxed (i.e. overcome his tiredness of the long journey)³. (2)

[Note—¹The use of the word "mārutasuta", the 'son of the wind god', for Hanuman is intentional here to indicate that he was going on his way the way 'wind goes', i.e. by the path of the sky, by flying over land, the way wind travels from one point to another.

Hanuman had to cover an enormous distance from Lanka to the northern mountains and then come back with the required herb, all within a short span of time, during the night itself, and before daybreak the next day. So, the path of the sky, in a straight line like the bird flies, would not only be the shortest distance to be covered but it would also circumvent all obstacles that would naturally be encountered if he had gone by the land route. To wit, the flight path through the path of the sky would be free of all hindrances, and would make it possible to come back with the herb as quickly as possible.

Therefore it follows that Hanuman observed a beautiful garden with a pond and a shrine on the land below while he was cruising rapidly northwards in the sky. Remember: It was night time, so how did Hanuman see this hermitage? Surely there was some light burning in it that attracted his attention. Hence it follows that Kalnemi had played his trick to perfection; he took care to light a fire in the form of a small bonfire usually made in hermitages lying deep inside forests to ward off wild animals, or a fire-sacrifice pit where the remains of the fire lit during a religious ritual of the day was still burning.

²Another interesting point is this: In verse no. 1 herein above, it is merely said that "Kalnemi generated an impression of the presence of a pond, a shrine, and a surrounding garden", whereas in the present verse no. 2 it is said that "Hanuman saw a hermitage".

It clearly means that Kalnemi chose a place where a pond with an old shrine and a little garden already existed; what he actually did was to disguise himself as a hermit and went there to occupy it as its inhabitant. Then he quickly made arrangements for a fire so that its light would attract Hanuman's attention as he passed overhead. The result of Kalnemi's efforts was that the ancient place, which was probably un-inhabited and abandoned long ago, looked like a complete hermitage lived in by a lonely sage or a group of sages.

The next pertinent question that arises is this: Where was this artificial hermitage approximately located? The present verse clearly states that Hanuman decided to "visit the hermitage in order to refresh himself by drinking water that would also help him overcome his tiredness and fatigue of the journey". It implies

that he had been flying a very long distance till he reached the hermitage created by Kalnemi.

Surely some time must have passed between Hanuman's departure from Lanka and the spot where he saw the hermitage—because, first, sometime must have passed while Ravana went to Kalnemi and persuaded the latter to go and intercept Hanuman, then secondly, more time must have elapsed while Kalnemi first planned what to do, and then actually carry out the cunning device that he had devised to trap Hanuman. All the while Hanuman was making rapid progress northwards towards his destination through the sky. Hence, by the time Kalnemi gave finishing touches to his deceit, Hanuman must have travelled quite a long distance from the shores of the southern ocean where Lanka was situated, making him “tired and thirsty”, and longing for some fresh water for refreshment and the need for some quick relaxation.

Kalnemi needed time, and during this time Hanuman was constantly flying to his destination in the northern mountains, nearing them as fast as he could fly, and by the passage of each hour he was feeling more and more tired. So it follows that this artificial hermitage was somewhere close to Hanuman's destination in the north of the plains, some place close to the mountains in the north.

It is said in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 46-47 that: “When asked by Ravana to go and intercept Hanuman, Kalnemi went and created a deception of a hermitage at a place near the Himwan Mountain, or the snow-covered Mountains in the northern Himalayas. This particular mountain where the herb was to be found was known as Mandrachal. Near this place Kalnemi created a false hermitage, and disguising himself as a senior sage who had a number of disciples, he sat down (to wait for Hanuman).”

Kalnemi also preferred a spot far away from Lanka and very near Hanuman's destination for three reasons:

First, because he decided that by this time Hanuman would be physically worn out by the exertion of the long journey, and would therefore need some water to drink to quench his thirst, and a place to relax a bit to recover his energy.

Secondly, with the destination in sight and being very near to it, Hanuman would think that sparing a few minutes to refresh himself and relax a wee while to recover his energy would not affect or hinder his mission in any tangible way; rather it would be helpful to him because he has to carry a load in the form of the herb on his return journey. So the chances would be good of his falling in the trap easily.

And thirdly, it would be easier for Kalnemi to subdue Hanuman because the latter would be sufficiently fatigued out and lacking in energy by this time to put up a vigorous resistance to Kalnemi should the necessity arise for a fierce battle between the two. Kalnemi was weary of facing Hanuman when the latter was in his prime form.

{The episode of Kalnemi, his deceit, and his subsequent slaying by Hanuman, has been narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 46-59½ .}

This location of Kalnemi's artificial hermitage being close to the northern mountains is also indirectly indicated in the verses herein below, because we read that soon after the events associated with Kalnemi, Hanuman had reached the mountain containing the required herb, and the gap of time between the two events seems to be apparently very small—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 58 herein below.

³Another very interesting observation is to be made here. Hanuman goes against his own declaration made earlier to Mainak that “he is determined not to rest till Lord

Ram's work was done" (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 1). But now he wishes to "refresh himself by taking a break and drinking water in the pond"! So why was he overcome with thirst and weariness this time, while all through the battle, and the burning of Lanka earlier, he had never felt either thirsty or the need to take rest to recover his energy?

The answer is this: He committed the same mistake that Laxman had committed which resulted in his suffering from fainting when hit by Meghanad, and this mistake was: Hanuman did not pay his obeisance properly to Lord Ram by bowing his head and seeking the Lord's express blessings for success in the enterprise at the time of departure from Lanka to bring the herb. This is clear when we closely examine Doha no. 55 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it, as well as the note appended to them in the case of Hanuman. In the case of Laxman, it is Doha no. 52 with the notes appended to it.

To wit, all successes that Hanuman, Laxman and the rest attained were the result of Lord Ram's grace and blessings upon them, and not due to their own abilities.

The irony of the matter is this that Hanuman 'bows his head to Kalnemi who was disguised as a hermit or a sag' as find in the next verse. It implies that Hanuman's legendary ability to perceive the truth behind the veil of deception was also compromised. And this is also proved by the fact that he could not decide which herb was needed when he saw the mountain on which the herbs grew (apropos: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 58).

The simple lesson that is learnt from these episodes is that one must first and foremost pay one's obeisance to the Lord God, invoke his grace and pray for his blessings before embarking on any enterprise, small or big, and never to think that one would succeed in anything because one has the ability or the skill or the knowledge or the wherewithal needed for success.]

राच्छस कपट बेष तहँ सोहा । मायापति दूतहि चह मोहा ॥ ३ ॥

जाइ पवनसुत नायउ माथा । लाग सो कहै राम गुन गाथा ॥ ४ ॥

rācchasa kapaṭa bēṣa taham̐ sōhā. māyāpati dūtaḥi caha mōhā. 3.
jā'i pavanāsuta nāya'u māthā. lāga sō kahai rāma guna gāthā. 4.

The demon (Kalnemi) was present there in the hermitage in a fictitious form of a hermit or a sage. He was trying to deceive the messenger of the Lord who is the master of all tricks and deceptions (i.e. Lord Ram, the Supreme Being)! (3)

The son of the wind god (Hanuman) went to him and bowed his head¹. Seeing him, the hermit (i.e. Kalnemi) started praising Lord Ram and his glories². (4)

[Note—¹Why did Hanuman bow his head before this false hermit or sage? It is because this physical form, that of a learned sage, a hermit, a seer, an ascetic, or a saint, is deemed to be so holy and worthy of respect that it invites involuntary and automatic respect and reverence from the beholder.

We have read earlier a similar kind of thing happening when the great king named Pratapbhanu was also cheated by his enemy who was disguised as a hermit; this crooked fellow was previously defeated in a battle by the king, and he had

decided to assume the form of a hermit to escape detection till he waited for his time to take revenge upon the king. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 158; and Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 170.}

²Kalnemi thought that if he praised Lord Ram then he will easily gain Hanuman's confidence. This ploy served him a dual purpose: first it would help him disarm Hanuman's suspicion of him, and second, it will also give him an opportunity to purify his inner self and prepare for the deliverance of his soul by making some last minute gestures of repentance for his past sinful life as a demon in the service of Ravana, by singing the glories of Lord Ram, which a true 'demon' would never do.

It was this singing of Lord Ram's glories now, and his uttering the Lord's holy name at the time of his death at the hands of Hanuman a little later, that Kalnemi attained emancipation and salvation for himself; even Hanuman lavishly praised Kalnemi for uttering the Lord's holy name at the time of his death—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58 herein below.

It is to be noted that Kalnemi began to praise Lord Ram immediately after Hanuman bowed before him, even before Hanuman introduced himself to him or said anything about himself or his journey. This is the normal practice with saintly persons and devotees of the Lord—that they greet their guests and welcome their visitors by uttering the name of the Lord and saying his grace, or saying something else in the Lord's honour.]

होत महा रन रावन रामहिं । जितिहहिं राम न संसय या महिं ॥ ५ ॥
इहाँ भाँ मैं देखउँ भाई । ग्यान दृष्टि बल मोहि अधिकाई ॥ ६ ॥

hōta mahā rana rāvana rāmahim. jitiyahim rāma na sansaya yā mahim. 5.
ihām̐ bha'ēm̐ mair̐ dēkha'um̐ bhā'ī. gyāna dr̥ṣṭi bala mōhi adhikā'ī. 6.

Kalnemi said, 'A great war is underway between Ravana and Lord Ram¹. Well, there is no doubt in the fact that Lord Ram will win in it². (5)

I have a divine vision that I have acquired on the strength of my gnosis, the special empowerment that comes to me by my spiritual practices that have granted me self-realisation and enlightenment; it entitles and enables me to see things not physically visible to others, things that occurred in the past, are underway in the present, and would eventually happen in the future³. (6)

[Note—¹How did Kalnemi know that a fierce war was raging between Ravana and Lord Ram? Answer: Ravana himself had briefed him about it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 56 herein above.

²A similar prediction was made by Trijata, the pious female demon appointed by Ravana to guard Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 99 along with Chaupai line nos. 12-13 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede this Doha.

Even at the beginning of the war, when during the initial wave of attack by the Lord's army the demons had violently repulsed it, and it seemed that all was lost, the

reader is assured by the narrator of the Story, i.e. Lord Shiva, that ultimately the monkey and bears would emerge victorious—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.

³A similar boastful claim was made by another crooked person who had disguised himself as a hermit to cheat his adversary. It was a king who had been defeated by another great king named Pratapbhanu. The defeated king assumed the form of a hermit and lived in a hermitage in the forest, bidding his time to take revenge on Pratapbhanu. As destiny would have it, one day Pratapbhanu landed at his hermitage when he got lost in a hunting expedition. The impostor hermit had also made similar boastful claims of possessing exceptional spiritual powers as done by Kalnemi here, and he finally managed to trap the innocent king in his crooked design to manoeuvre things in such a way that finally Pratapbhanu was cursed by angry Brahmins to become a demon. It was Pratapbhanu who became Ravana in his next birth. For the purpose of our note, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 162 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that follow it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 164; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 168—all of which indicate that that crooked hermit had made similar claims of possessing some special powers others don't have like Kalnemi does here.

A question arises here: Was not Kalnemi committing treason and betrayal; was he not being disloyal and unfaithful to his own lord Ravana by predicting that the war would be won by his enemy? Well, Kalnemi's internal thoughts are abundantly clear when he had expressly told Ravana on his face that what he plans to do is wrong, that he should abandon all hostility with Lord Ram and worship him instead, and that no one can succeed by opposing the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 56.

So therefore, Kalnemi was not saying something that was new; he had always believed that Lord Ram would win as is evident from his interview with Ravana.

He had rather protected his lord Ravana's identity by saying that he knew about the war out of his own spiritual abilities. This lie served two objectives: first, it prevented Hanuman from directly knowing that he was a demon sent by Ravana to kill him, and second, it helped Kalnemi to convince Hanuman about his being a holy man so that the latter would easily fall in the trap laid out by former.

Thus, Kalnemi was duly fulfilling his duty to his lord Ravana; he was neither committing treason nor being disloyal to his master Ravana or the demon race.

How did Kalnemi planned to kill Hanuman? He wanted to poison him by making him drink poisoned water. It will be clear in the next verse below.]

मागा जल तेहिं दीन्ह कमंडल । कह कपि नहिं अघाउँ थोरें जल ॥ ७ ॥
सर मज्जन करि आतुर आवहु । दिच्छा देउँ ग्यान जेहिं पावहु ॥ ८ ॥

māgā jala tēhiṁ dīnha kamaṇḍala. kaha kapi nahim aghā'um̐ thōrēm̐ jala. 7.
sara majjana kari ātura āvahu. dicchā dē'um̐ gyāna jēhiṁ pāvahu. 8.

Hanuman asked for some water to drink (as it was the main reason why he had come to this hermitage in the first place), at which request Kalnemi gave him a water-pot called a Kamandal (which is normally kept by all hermits)¹.

The Kapi (Hanuman; literally the ‘monkey’) said that a little water would not satisfy him (for he felt very thirsty and needed some larger source of water not only to quench his thirst but also that he could sprinkle some water on his body to wash and feel relaxed). (7)

Kalnemi replied, ‘There is a pond in the yonder. Go there and wash yourself; then come here at the earliest so that I can bless you with Gyan (gnosis; some form of spiritual knowledge) after doing some formal rituals to prepare you for that purpose that would make you eligible to receive this great knowledge². (8)

[Note—¹It is very much evident what Kalnemi’s intention was: he had come to get rid of Hanuman, and not to help him in any way. So obviously, the water-pot contained poisoned water.

Hanuman was on Lord Ram’s mission; so he had the invisible shield of the Lord’s protection. Say, how can any harm come to someone who is an ardent devotee of Lord Ram? The lesson we learn from this episode is that if we put ourselves in the Lord’s charge, then even if we do not expressly ask the Lord for protection, the Lord would do it on his own; the Lord would never let his devotee come to harm as he always takes care of the latter’s welfare.

²Kalnemi found to his dismay that his planning was about to crumble; he feared that after drinking water and refreshing himself, Hanuman would proceed on his way. Kalnemi thought quickly how to prevent this from happening; so he threw a bait of granting knowledge. How stupid it was for Kalnemi to think of this device; Hanuman had not asked for any spiritual knowledge or for being initiated. Kalnemi was in such a hurry that he did not even think that this offer, without it being sought, must surely ring an alarm bell in Hanuman’s mind.

Hanuman too was so overcome with anxiety about the job to be done, that of searching the herb and taking it back to Lanka within the stipulated time, that this unusual offer of Kalnemi could not rouse any suspicion of foul play in his mind.

This also shows that the pond was not poisoned—for otherwise there was no question of Kalnemi asking Hanuman to come back for knowledge. Rather, he would have wished to escape forthwith from the spot in order to avoid the risk of incurring Hanuman’s wrath in case he had become suspicious of this hermit and just tasted the water of the pond, and did not gulp it down in sufficient quantity to have any fatal effect. Then it was certain that Hanuman would come back and trash Kalnemi’s light out of him.

Another proof of the pond not being poisoned is that an alligator, who was a cursed Apsara, a heavenly damsel, whom Hanuman would soon kill and grant freedom from the curse, lived in the same pond. Had it been poisoned, this Apsara would have died first.]

दो०. सर पैठत कपि पद गहा मकरीं तब अकुलान ।

मारी सो धरि दिव्य तनु चली गगन चढ़ि जान ॥ ५७ ॥

dōhā.

sara paiṭhata kapi pada gahā makarīm taba akulāna.
mārī sō dhari dibya tanu calī gagana caḍhi jāna. 57.

When the Kapi (i.e. Hanuman) entered the pond (to drink water, and to wash and refresh himself), a deadly alligator, that lived in it, immediately caught hold of his legs.

Hanuman instantly slayed the attacker¹ who left its mortal gross body to revert back to its original form that looked divine. In this ethereal form, its soul mounted an aerial vehicle and ascended to the sky (to go to heaven). (Doha no. 57)

[Note—¹Hanuman went inside the water of the pond and closed his eyes to wash his face and drink water. At that moment the alligator caught hold of his one leg and tried to drag him inside the pond. Hanuman grabbed the attacker and ripped apart its mouth. {Refer: (i) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 54-55; (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 21-23.}

Who was this alligator? An Apsara, who is a beautiful damsel who lives in heaven, usually as a heavenly courtesan in the court of Indra, the king of gods, named ‘Dhaanya-Maali’ was cursed to become an alligator. After Hanuman liberated her from this curse by slaying her form as an alligator, she resumed her original heavenly form and went back to her place. {Refer: (i) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 57; and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 24-25.}

In the following verses we read that this Apsara, who was in the cursed form of an alligator, tells Hanuman why she became so, and also alerts him about the reality of the hermit living in the hermitage, that he was actually a fierce demon contriving ways to kill him at the behest of Ravana.]

चौ०. कपि तव दरस भइउँ निष्पापा । मिटा तात मुनिबर कर सापा ॥ १ ॥

मुनि न होइ यह निसिचर घोरा । मानहु सत्य बचन कपि मोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kapi tava darasa bha'i'um' niṣpāpā. miṭā tāta munibara kara sāpā. 1.
muni na hō'i yaha niscara ghōrā. mānahu satya bacana kapi mōrā. 2.

Assuming a divine form, the alligator's soul spoke to Hanuman from the sky, ‘Oh Kapi! I have been cleansed of the negative effects of my sins by the good circumstance of having had the good fortune of seeing you.

My dear (tāta)! As a reward of meeting you, I have now been absolved of the consequences of the curse cast upon me by a learned sage in some past time¹. (1)

Be warned that this fellow (who has sent you to this pond) is not a hermit as you think him to be; on the contrary, he is a fierce demon. Oh Kapi, have faith in my words; I am telling you the truth.² (2)

[Note—¹Why was the Apsara cursed to become an alligator, and what was her name?

The answer is this: Though seeming to be incredulous because what happened does not behove good for the character of a so-called spiritual man, but the story goes that one sage, whose name is not disclosed by her, asked her for sexual favour, which

the Apsara refused. This enraged the sage who cursed her to become an alligator; but soon realising that she was being unjustly punished for no fault of hers, the sage blessed her that some time in the future Hanuman would free her from this curse while he would be on his way to the northern mountains on Lord Ram's errand, and then she would resume her original form and go back to heaven. The name of this Apsara was 'Dhānya-Māli'. {Refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 56-57.}

²What would make Hanuman believe in the truthfulness of the words of this ethereal form that emerged from the dead gross body of the alligator he had just killed? The very fact that the Apsara emerged in this ethereal body which had a divine aura around it, and the fact that she boarded a plane coming to fetch her to heaven, left no doubt in the mind of Hanuman that she was not a demon at least, for otherwise this remarkable heavenly form would not have appeared before him and neither would a plane come to fetch a sinful dead demon to take him to heaven, for sinful souls are destined to hell and not to heaven.

He had made one major mistake, of not being able to see through the deceit of Kalnemi and falling a prey to his sweet words, and now he should not make a second mistake, and definitely a fatal one, of not heeding an alert given to him.

The transmuting of an alligator into an Apsara jolted Hanuman and roused him from his stupor which was caused perhaps in part by the fatigue incurred by the stress of the long-haul journey from Lanka, and also due to the accompanying anxiety and worry concerning the success of the mission of finding the right herb, and then taking it back to Laxman in the allotted time.]

अस कहि गई अपछरा जबहीं । निसिचर निकट गयउ कपि तबहीं ॥ ३ ॥
कह कपि मुनि गुरदछिना लेहू । पाछें हमहि मंत्र तुम्ह देहू ॥ ४ ॥

asa kahi gaī apacharā jabahīm. nisicara nikaṭa gaya'u kapi tabahīm. 3.
kaha kapi muni guradachinā lēhū. pāchēm hamahi mantra tumha dēhū. 4.

When the Apsara went on her way after alerting Hanuman, he went near the demon (disguised as a hermit). (3)

The Kapi told him that he wished to make his offerings and pay his obeisance to him first, and after that he would accept the Mantra (spiritual initiation) that he (the false hermit) wished to grant him¹. (4)

[Note—¹The usual procedure for such initiation is that first the spiritual teacher, a Guru, gives a Mantra, a blessed spiritual formula, to his disciple, and then the latter offers his offerings to the former as a tribute. But Hanuman turns the table around full circle; he offers to pay his dues first and then accept the blessing.

Hanuman was responding to Kalnemi's advise that he should go to the pond and come back to accept the initiation—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57.

Hanuman did not wish to give Kalnemi a chance to either escape or play some other dirty trick; so he acted swiftly, without wasting a moment as is evident in the next verse.]

सिर लंगूर लपेटि पछारा । निज तनु प्रगटेसि मरती बारा ॥ ५ ॥
 राम राम कहि छाड़ेसि प्राणा । सुनि मन हरषि चलेउ हनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥

sira laṅgūra lapēṭi pachārā. nija tanu pragaṭēsi maratī bārā. 5.
 rāma rāma kahi chārēsi prānā. suni mana haraṣi calē'u hanumānā. 6.

Hanuman wrapped his long tail around Kalnemi's neck, tightened the grip like a hangman's noose, lifted his victim off his seat, and then dashed him violently on the ground, causing his instant death.

At the time of his death, Kalnemi reverted back to his original form (of a demon). (5)

He (Kalnemi) uttered the holy name of Lord Ram repeatedly while his soul left his mortal gross body of a demon¹.

When Hanuman heard it, he felt very glad internally in his Mana (heart and mind; inner-self)². After that he resumed his journey and moved ahead (in search of the required herb). (6)

[Note—¹Upon close examination of the story of the Ramayan we discover that there were a few more souls who had remembered or uttered or invoked Lord Ram's holy name at the time of their death, and each one of them got their due spiritual reward irrespective of the physical form of the body their soul had assumed while living in this mortal world. It is because the holy name of Lord Ram is called the 'Tarak Mantra', i.e. it is a divine spiritual formula which when used would invariably have its effect, which is to grant liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of the dying creature; it bestows beatitude and felicity and eternal bliss to the person, no matter who he or she is, or what sort of body the concerned creature possesses in this mortal world. {Refer: Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1; Canto 4, verse no. 7; and Canto 6, verse nos. 1-29. It tells us that Lord Ram's holy and divine name "Rām" is a Tarak Mantra, a spiritual formula empowered to deliver the soul of a creature and grant it emancipation and salvation which bestows eternal beatitude and felicity.}

The first instance is of course that of king Dasrath; he had uttered Lord Ram's name at the time of his death which was brought about by the deep grief from which Dasrath suffered at the separation of his beloved son Ram. The reward was that Dasrath went to the abode of the Gods in heaven. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155.}

The demon Marich, who was compelled by Ravana to assume the form of a deer with a golden hide so that Sita could be stolen, had uttered Lord Ram's holy name and remembered the Lord's grace and blessings at the time of his death; he was granted an exalted destination that is difficult even for great sages to attain. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 16-17 that precede Doha no. 27.}

The next example is that of Khar and Dushan along with their army of demons who had attacked Lord Ram in the forest at the behest of Supernakha. These demon warriors had uttered the Lord's holy name "Ram-Ram" at the time of their death, and every one of them attained emancipation and salvation. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20-a.}

Then we come to the unique case of the vulture king named Jatau. He had laid down his life in an attempt to save Sita while she was being taken away by Ravana. Jatau's case is unique in the whole of the Ramayan as Lord Ram performed his last rites himself as he would have done for his own father, thereby granting the vulture a rare honour and privilege that was denied even to Dasrath. Jatau too had invoked Lord Ram's holy name during the last moments of his life, entitling his soul to attain an exalted destination of eternal beatitude and felicity. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 31; and Doha no. 32.}

A similar destination of the soul was obtained by Sabari, the old tribal woman whose last rites too were performed by Lord Ram even as she burnt her mortal body in a fire lit for the purpose, repeating Lord Ram's holy name, invoking his grace, and enshrining the Lord's divine form in her heart. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}

The next example is that of Baali, the king of Kishkindha and the father of Angad, the monkey prince. Baali too had fixed his mind on the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram at the time of his death, and was rewarded with heaven as his destination. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 10.}

As we move along with the telling of this magnificent and enthralling Story, we shall see by-and-by that Kumbhakaran and the much reviled Ravana too were exceptionally fortunate like no one else was in the whole story, in as much as their soul had emerged from their bodies and entered directly into the holy body of Lord Ram in the form of a blazing shaft of splendourous energy; it was a visible proof of the fact that the destination of the soul has nothing to do with the body in which it has lived in this world as long as the soul has a burning and sincere desire to repent for its past sins and seek emancipation and salvation for its self. The way the soul of these two great demon warriors entered the body of Lord Ram was a vivid example of the merger of the creature's 'individual soul' with the 'universal supreme Soul of creation' represented by Lord Ram if the creature has an honest internal desire for this fate for himself, no matter what he pretends to be on the outside. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 in case of Kumbhakaran; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103 in case of Ravana.}

This establishes another important point: Lord Ram never distinguished between two individuals based on the sort of the physical body they have; Dasrath was his worldly father; Jatau was a vulture; Sabari was an out-caste tribal woman; Baali was a monkey by body; the rest of them, such as Marich, Khar, Dushan, Kalnemi, Kumbhakaran and Ravana, were all demons. What the Lord sees is the purity of the creature's soul, and the earnestness of his desire to attain him, to repent for his sins and past evil deeds in order to get liberation and deliverance from his present body, as well as a wish to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul that would grant him eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity—and all this must be sincere and without deceit, conceit and pretensions.

²“Hanuman felt glad when he heard Kalnemi utter Lord Ram's name”—why? Remember: Hanuman was a great devotee of Lord Ram; he himself constantly and consistently kept on muttering the Lord's holy name, and kept his mind and heart focused on the remembrance of the Lord. He had no personal grudge against or any animosity with Kalnemi, as a true devotee of Lord Ram ought not to have. He slayed Kalnemi only because the latter was trying to cheat him and obstruct him in his mission to fulfil the Lord's mandate, which was not acceptable.

So Hanuman felt elated that at last Kalnemi's soul would find deliverance; he felt happy that he became an instrument in providing liberation to one more soul which had become trapped in the evil body of a demon; he felt comforted that he had heard another creature utter his beloved Lord Ram's name, bringing him within the circle of the Lord's devotees. Hanuman also rejoiced that history would not accuse him for killing a hermit, but rather would praise him for providing emancipation and salvation to a creature who was suffering in a mortal, gross, and evil body of a demon.

Kalnemi's death was a matter of celebration for Hanuman for another reason also: it subtly made him realise about the invisible protection that he had of Lord Ram who ensures, constantly, consistently and invariably, that no harm comes to Hanuman from any quarter, even if he makes an inadvertent slip here and there in life. What a great assurance indeed for a creature; who is a more benevolent and gracious Lord than Lord Ram indeed is!]

देखा सैल न औषध चीन्हा । सहसा कपि उपारि गिरि लीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥

गहि गिरि निसि नभ धावत भयऊ । अवधपुरी ऊपर कपि गयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhā saila na auṣadha cīnhā. sahasā kapi upāri giri līnhā. 7.
gahi giri nisi nabha dhāvata bhaya'ū. avadhapurī ūpara kapi gaya'ū. 8.

When Hanuman saw the mountain, he could not recognize the needed medicinal herb. So (deciding not to waste any time) he immediately, and swiftly, lifted the mountain by uprooting it from the ground¹. (7)

Holding the mountain aloft on his hand, he cruised through the night sky as fast as he could.

On his way back, the Kapi passed over the city of Ayodhya². (8)

[Note—¹As has been noted earlier in a note to Doha no. 55, the mountain where the required herb was located was called 'Dronachal'. It was situated in the upper reaches of the mighty Himalayan range on the north of the Indian land mass, between Mt. Kailash and a mountain that had a golden hue. {Reference: (a) Valmiki's Ramayan, Uddha Kand (Lanka Kand), canto 74, verse nos. 29-30; and (b) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 46.}]

Now we learn here that unable to descry the correct herb from the countless similar herbs growing on the mountain's side, Hanuman decided to lift the whole mountain, which was, in all probability, a huge hill large enough to be called a 'mountain', and take it to Lanka in order not to waste any time in searching for the needed herb, and also to avoid the risk of picking up the wrong one by an error of judgment, which would not only be fatal for Laxman but would also mean complete failure of his own effort.

The interesting point to note here is this: We read that the monkeys and bears were using huge rocks and boulders as their missiles by which they attacked the demon warriors during the course of the war. The answer to the question 'from where did they get so many rocks and boulders' is found here—they used this mountain brought by Hanuman as a source for their crude forms of attack weapons, such as rocks and boulders and stones of all shapes and sizes, in the battle-field of Lanka.

Meanwhile, why couldn't Hanuman see and recognise the necessary herb? One answer is that in the darkness of the night all of them looked alike. There was not one or two or twenty herbs, but countless numbers of them, and all grew closely in large clusters all along the side of the mountain. In peaceful times one would have the patience to carefully examine which herbal plant he needed, but in this case it was an emergency of life and death, time was quickly running out, and a great distance was to be travelled on the way back to Lanka. All these factors played out simultaneously in Hanuman's mind; so there was no time for him to demure and examine each herb and plant like a scholar doing research work for his university thesis. He had to be quick and determined in his decision.

The other reason is that from a distance these herbal plants appeared to glow like a glow-worm, but when Hanuman came closer, this light disappeared. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 74, verse no. 64.}

To better understand this phenomenon, we can take the example of the moon's disc in the sky. From a great distance, from the surface of the earth, the moon appears to shine with a silvery glow, but upon getting closer and landing on its surface it is as ordinary, as full of potholes, as strewn with rocks, and has a landscape that is as wildly naked and foreboding as any other celestial body in the earth's neighbourhood. To wit, the moon shines only from a distance; up close it has a dark body consisting nothing but soil and rock.

So was the case with these herbs. From a distance they seemed to glow with a vague diffused light, but when looked closer they were like ordinary plants. This glow might have been caused by some natural trace element present in them; or probably it was caused by reflection of the refracted light falling upon them from the surrounding snow-clad mountain peaks, or some kind of reflection from heavenly lights resembling the Northern Lights that are seen in the sky near the arctic circle up in the northern hemisphere. But by the time Hanuman approached the plants, this reflection vanished.

Actually Hanuman was directed towards the mountain with the help of the diffused light on its side as he saw it from the sky, for it acted as a beacon for him to help navigate his way. When he landed, he was at sea; he was dumbfounded as now he could not see anything in the all-pervading darkness around him.

²A crucial fact emerges from a careful reading of this verse. Hanuman had gone by a different route on his way to the mountain as nowhere a mention of his flying over Ayodhya is found. But on his return journey he decided to take a detour, a diversion, which took him over the city of Ayodhya.

Why did Hanuman take a different route on his way back? Well, the answer is this: He has had a very close shave on his outward journey when he escaped from the trap laid by Kalnemi literally by the width of his skin. He felt that by this time, Ravana would surely have cooked up something new to trap him, and this time it would be a problem for him as he was burdened with a heavy mountain that he was carrying. There was no point in showing unnecessary dare devilry during such emergency times, and it would be wiser to avoid a difficult and dangerous situation. So he took a new route on his flight way back to Lanka to play it safe, and this detour brought him over Ayodhya.]

दो०. देखा भरत बिसाल अति निसिचर मन अनुमानि ।

बिनु फर सायक मारेउ चाप श्रवन लगि तानि ॥ ५८ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhā bharata bisāla ati nisicara mana anumāni.
binu phara sāyaka mārē'u cāpa śravana lagi tāni. 58.

When Bharat (the younger brother of Lord Ram) saw a huge form flying in the sky over the city, he thought that it was some kind of nocturnal creature (nisicara), probably a demon.

So he stringed his bow and pulled it taught to shoot an arrow that had no pointed tip on it at the figure flying overhead¹. (Doha no. 58)

[Note—¹Bharat spent the entire period of fourteen years, during which Lord Ram was in exile in the forest, at a place close to the city of Ayodhya, in its suburbs, living like a hermit, and spending his time in meditation and other spiritual practices. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326.}]

But at the same time Bharat was very conscious of his duties and obligations and responsibilities. He kept strict vigil at night to watch for any ominous sign in the sky, to look out for any spy drone hovering over the sky over Ayodhya. When he saw a huge figure coursing through the night sky, a sort of a flying saucer, an Unidentified Flying Object known as an UFO in modern parlance, he became suspicious. What was it, he wondered; is it something dangerous, such as a heavy rock or an explosive device, carried by someone sent by one of the many enemies of his kingdom, who may have dispatched his spy to drop it over the unsuspecting and sleeping city to cause extensive damage to it? Could it be a missile or an asteroid or a meteor or something else like a rocket or some explosive projectile that may prove to be dangerous for the city?

Bharat wished to examine it; he wished to abort a catastrophe before it happened. So he shot a blunt arrow, one without a sharp tip, which would only bring this thing down, and not blast it off the face of the firmament all together. So much the lucky it was for Hanuman, for otherwise the consequences for him are too obvious to be stated in explicit terms.

Now let us visualise this scenario more closely, and make some intelligent guess to arrive at a plausible sequence of events as to what actually might have happened during those crucial moments when Hanuman was cruising in the night sky over the sprawling city of Ayodhya down below.

It appears that some sort of system existed in those ancient times that would be like a radar system of our modern world; it was an integrated system that kept an eye over the city's skyline to detect and intercept any suspicious object flying over it. This vigilance was heightened during night time when chances of an aerial attack by one of the enemies of the kingdom of Ayodhya were great, as compared to daylight hours. This radar system was monitored by Bharat himself who, as the care-taking ruler of Ayodhya in the absence of its rightful king Lord Ram, wanted to ensure foolproof security of the city. Hanuman's bleep on this ancient system of vigilance and defence of the airspace immediately alerted Bharat, as this flying object was most unconventional and odd. It was of a huge size, was cruising at great speed, and its flight trajectory gave an impression that it was a star streaking from the northern borders of the kingdom towards its south, and flying right over the city of Ayodhya.

Deciding to examine what this suspicious-looking UFO was, Bharat shot a sort of an intercepting-missile that would only stop this mysterious object from progressing ahead, instead of destroying it in space. His arrow, in all probability, was like a modern-day missile and other weapon systems that work on computer-based data fed into the projectile at the time of its launch, giving it an ability to self-navigate and hit the desired object with the required force and impact it according to the data pre-fed into its on-board computers.

So, with some fine-tuning and skilful maneuvering, Bharat was able to manipulate his arrow in such a way that instead of blasting the target hit by it and reducing it into small fragments that would disperse in the void of the vast space of the firmament and burning themselves up without harming the city below, it simply stopped its flight and brought it down.

This arrow interrupted the flight of Hanuman and disturbed the dynamics of his flight, navigation and trajectory so much that the target of its strike suddenly lost speed and went into a tailspin, falling to the ground either following a curved parabolic path due to its speed, or it fell as a wild out-of-control tumble because it was suddenly stopped, spinning right and left and making somersaults to make a virtual nose dive and land on the ground below.

And how did Hanuman land on the ground; what happened to him? Was he gravely injured as would naturally happen when struck by a projectile at high speed in the air, and then by the impact of the fall? If not, then what could have possibly happened that saved him? What happened also to the mountain he was carrying?

These questions are answered as a note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein below.]

चौ०. परेउ मुरुछि महि लागत सायक । सुमिरत राम राम रघुनायक ॥ १ ॥

सुनि प्रिय बचन भरत तब धाए । कपि समीप अति आतुर आए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

parē'u muruchi mahi lāgata sāyaka. sumirata rāma rāma raghunāyaka. 1.
suni priya bacana bharata taba dhā'ē. kapi samīpa ati ātura ā'ē. 2.

He (Hanuman) fell down unconscious on the ground after being hit by the arrow, all the while remembering and uttering the holy name of Lord Ram, 'Ram-Ram', repeatedly¹. (1)

When Bharat heard² this name, which was very dear to him, he instantly rushed forward to investigate, and eagerly came near the Kapi (Hanuman) in great haste. (2)

[Note—¹Hanuman landed on the ground and fell 'unconscious'. He lost his consciousness because he had not expected being hit by a projectile while speeding in the sky; the jolt of the sudden strike that stopped his flight midway had caught him unawares and disoriented him; he lost his mental balance and bearing. The fall from a great height added to his mental confusion, and the worry of securing the safety of the herb-bearing mountain exacerbated his anxieties.

This sequence of events indicates that the arrow had hit Hanuman softly, and only with a force that was sufficient enough to stop his further progress and bring him down. Bharat had not intended to destroy the target as noted earlier in Doha no. 57

herein above; his intention was to neutralise it, bring it down to earth, and examine it. It is a natural deduction at which we arrive at because nowhere it is said that Hanuman had suffered any grave injury from the strike. He was merely 'unconscious'; he just 'fainted'; and that is a natural thing to happen to any person who is suddenly jolted by a close strike and stopped in his path, making him lose control of himself, swoon and fall to the ground.

One important factor appears to have certainly contributed to Hanuman escaping from any major injury to his person. He must have landed on soft soil cushioned by green grass, leafy plants, or some other soft vegetation, such as found in a farmland or a grassy meadow or a lawn of a garden that formed a green belt surrounding the hermitage where Bharat lived on the outskirts of Ayodhya. This is very much possible, because Bharat may have certainly created such an environment around his hermitage to replicate the aura of the surroundings of the forest, with its serenity and greenery and beauty where his beloved brother Lord Ram was spending his time of exile. This soft earth must have acted as a buffer for Hanuman, cushioning the impact of the fall and preventing any serious injury to him.

Another important reason why Hanuman escaped being injured was this: He was continuously chanting the name of Lord Ram. The Lord's divine name has mystical powers, and when a creature invokes it in distress, it extends its natural protection to the caller. It was this invisible protective shield of Lord Ram's holy name that cast its protective cover over Hanuman as he fell; it was his sure protection from any or all harm. In all sooth and without gainsay, this is why he suffered no grave injury except some momentary fainting.

Now, how can we say with certainty that Hanuman was not injured? Well, the answer is simple and straightforward: He would resume his journey shortly, after a little break and a short interview with Bharat.

Another proof of Hanuman not incurring any injury to his person is this: When he met Lord Ram at his camp near the battle-field of Lanka, the Lord did not find any mark of a wound on his body, for if the Lord had observed any he was sure to ask Hanuman about its cause.

And thereafter, after a little while, the battle resumed with its full ferocity the next day, and Hanuman played a leading role in it. It also goes to show that he was fit and fine to face the enemy the very next day of his adventure of bringing the mountain, meaning that he was not bodily injured, as that would have adversely affected his fighting abilities. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 65 where Hanuman strikes a vicious cuff to Kumbhkaran with his clenched fists.}

But what about the 'mountain' he was carrying? Nothing is said anywhere in the text concerning it; so we have to make an intelligent surmise. Hanuman was carrying the herb-bearing mountain aloft on one of his hands as he was cruising through the night sky. He was gripping the mountain from below, perhaps by firmly clasping some sturdy creeper or a protruding outcrop of its rock. When hit by Bharat's arrow, he instinctively intensified his grip over it so that he doesn't lose his charge. When he landed on the ground, this mountain did not break up—because it was made of solid rock that had hardened over time. Some of its surface soil and plants may have shaken off by the force of the impact of the fall to the ground, but no major damage was done to it.

²Bharat heard Hanuman saying Lord Ram's name. It clearly implies that Hanuman was saying it loudly, and not silently, as he fell through the sky, and even after

landing on the ground he called out this holy name aloud during the intervening moments of landing and losing consciousness. His call was loud enough for Bharat to hear and pay attention; it was loud enough to be heard over the noise of the fall.

Bharat was already on high alert; as soon as he heard someone calling out Lord Ram's name, he became amazed and sorely alarmed at the same time even as he rushed out to see who has been shot by him by mistake. He had thought that some nocturnal creature, probably a demon, was flying over Ayodhya, but such creatures won't call out the holy name of Lord Ram. So surely something was seriously amiss, thought Bharat as his hairs stood on their ends while he dashed forward to investigate, keeping his fingers crossed, hoping for the best, and praying to the Lord God for mercy and grace.]

बिकल बिलोकि कीस उर लावा । जागत नहिं बहु भाँति जगावा ॥ ३ ॥
मुख मलीन मन भए दुखारी । कहत बचन भरि लोचन बारी ॥ ४ ॥

bikala bilōki kīsa ura lāvā. jāgata nahim̐ bahu bhām̐ti jagāvā. 3.
mukha malīna mana bha'e dukhārī. kahata bacana bhari lōcana bārī. 4.

[By the time Bharat came to Hanuman lying unconscious on the ground, he had become certain that the creature whom he had hit was not an enemy but was someone who, in some or the other way, was related to Lord Ram, for otherwise he wouldn't have uttered the Lord's name when in distress and on the threshold of death. This realisation dismayed Bharat extremely, and sorrow and regret and despondency and deep sadness overwhelmed him.]

Bharat observed that the fallen creature was very agitated and seems to be suffering much¹. So Bharat embraced him, but no matter how much he tried to revive him from his unconscious state, he could not. (3)

Bharat was overcome with sadness, sorrow and grief so much so that his face became pale, and his Mana (mind and heart) was shrouded with darkness that intuitively precedes some bad news (because he feared for the worst).

However, he gathered his wits together and said with tears filling his eyes --- (4),

[Note—¹Hanuman's suffering was not so much at the physical level of his body as it was at the mental level—for even while he lay unconscious physically, yet his sub-conscious mind continued to work overtime, pricking him and cursing him that he has failed to carry out Lord Ram's mission. He also worried that if he could not reach Lanka in time, and the designated time frame during which the herb would revive Laxman expired, then everything would be lost. These and such like thoughts kept swirling wildly in his mind as he lay unconscious on the ground, making him very uneasy. He was filled with regret and remorse and despondency and hopelessness; he felt helpless and hapless. He silently cursed himself and his life.]

जेहिं बिधि राम बिमुख मोहि कीन्हा । तेहिं पुनि यह दारुन दुख दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

जौं मोरें मन बच अरु काया । प्रीति राम पद कमल अमाया ॥ ६ ॥
 तौ कपि होउ बिगत श्रम सूला । जौं मो पर रघुपति अनुकूला ॥ ७ ॥
 सुनत बचन उठि बैठ कपीसा । कहि जय जयति कोसलाधीसा ॥ ८ ॥

jēhim bidhi rāma bimukha mōhi kīnhā. tēhim puni yaha dārūna dukha dīnhā.

5.

jaurm mōrēm mana baca aru kāyā. prīti rāma pada kamala amāyā. 6.

tau kapi hō'u bigata śrama sūlā. jaurm mō para raghupati anukūlā. 7.

sunata bacana uṭhi baiṭha kapīsā. kahi jaya jayati kōsalādhīsā. 8.

Bharat sadly observed, ‘Why, it is the same malevolent Creator who had earlier devised my separation from Lord Ram, who has now once again shown his harsh and un-emotional character by giving you this great suffering! (5)

[Staking the gain accruing to him for all the spiritual practices done by him, and invoking their combined rewards to bear on him right now in order to make Hanuman regain consciousness, Bharat implored most earnestly and pleadingly—] If I have true affection for Lord Ram and true devotion for his holy feet, if my affection and devotion is unpretentious, selfless, honest and without deceit, if it involves my whole being that includes my heart and mind, my words and my actions, as well as my body, and added to it if Lord Ram (Raghupati) is indeed pleased with me and favourable towards me (and has not held me guilty for all the pain and suffering he had to undergo when my cursed and unfortunate mother Kaikeyi sent him to forest)—then I invoke the combined good effects of all these blessings to pray that let it so happen that the Kapi (Hanuman) is freed from his weariness caused by the stress of the journey, as well as any other form of suffering and misery caused to him, so that he is revived; whatever be the cause of his fainting should be nullified.¹ (6-7)

No sooner had Bharat said these words, than Hanuman, the chief amongst the monkeys (kapīsā), got up with a spring, raising a cry of applause for the glory of Lord Ram and the majestic powers of his holy name, proclaiming ‘Hail the glory of the king of Kaushal (“kōsalādhīsā”; Lord Ram), Glory to him, again and again repeatedly².’ (8)

[Note—¹We note here that Bharat assumes Hanuman has fainted because he was tired due to the stress of the journey, especially when he was carrying a weighty mountain on his hand, and so when the arrow hit him he was dazed and numbed by its impact, because whatever energy that was left in him was sapped by this sudden jolt, causing him to lose his bearing, swoon, and fall down.

Then Bharat thought that may be there was some other reason for Hanuman’s experiencing excess of stress that led to his exhaustion and his consequent inability to resist the arrow’s impact and continue with his journey.

Therefore, while staking the blessings and all the good rewards that accrued to him for his meritorious deeds and spiritual practices to bear directly upon Hanuman now and facilitate in his quick recovery, he uses an all-inclusive caveat by saying that “whatever be the cause of his fainting” should be nullified.

Let us examine this development of Hanuman's fainting more closely, and see what the precarious condition in which Lord Ram was during that night, and what subtle spiritual message is intended in this episode.

It was the second calamitous set-back to Lord Ram during the short period of one single night. Back near the battle-field Lanka, his dear brother Laxman, who had shared his pains and grief arm-in-arm, being his constant companion and comrade and soul-mate and aide in thick and thin, was also lying on the ground unconscious and on the verge of death. And the Lord's other trusted aide Hanuman, his other constant companion and comrade-in-arm during the fateful war, was lying in a similar condition far away in Ayodhya.

Laxman had Lord Ram himself by his side, and Hanuman had the Lord's representative in the person of Bharat by his side. In effect and for all practical purposes, Bharat was an image of Lord Ram and his love for the creature. Bharat was extremely dear to Lord Ram more than anyone else, and Lord Ram was dear to Bharat more than anyone else. Here is the proof: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 169 (these are the words of mother Kaushalya); (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184 (these are the words of all the citizens of Ayodhya, including sage Vasistha, the chief minister of the kingdom, and of the queen mother); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 208 (these are the words of sage Bharadwaj); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210 (these are also the words of sage Bharadwaj); (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 266 (these are also the words of the guru of the gods, sage Vrihaspati, who explicitly calls Bharat a "shadow" or an "image" of Lord Ram); (vi) Chaupai line nos. 2 and 5 that precede Doha no. 289 (these are also the words of king Janak); and finally, (vii) Doha no. 326 (these are concluding verses of Ayodhya Kand). Say, what more proof is needed when it is proclaimed that "Bharat and Ram are reflections of each other".

Well then, coming back to our narrative, Lord Ram was by the side of unconscious Laxman, and Bharat was by the side of unconscious Hanuman. Now the difference arises, a difference that has a profound spiritual importance and a message for all of us. It is to be noted here that inspite of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram himself being by his side, wishing most earnestly for his recovery, Laxman could not be revived. But Hanuman was instantly revived when an image and ardent devotee of the same Supreme Being in the form of Bharat invoked the holy name of the Lord and prayed for his recovery!

How wonderful and fantastic it is when we compare the two events, and how clear is the implied message—for it unambiguously and irrefutably shows that the Lord's devotee is more powerful and more empowered with spiritual powers that he possesses by the virtue of his devotion for the Lord than the Lord himself is, and that the Lord's holy name is also singularly more powerful and profoundly more majestic than the principle to whom this name belongs, i.e. the Lord himself. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 265 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it; and (ii) Baal Kand, from Doha no. 23—Doha no. 25.}

This is why Laxman could not be revived while Hanuman could be—for Bharat had prayed for Hanuman's recovery, and his prayer and request cannot go in vain no matter what happens, because Bharat was a devotee of Lord Ram, he had the Lord enshrined in his heart like a deity is in a temple, and was constantly repeating the holy name of the Lord every single moment of his existence.

These two closely related incidences are intended to motivate and inspire a creature to realise and understand the fact for his own sake that he will be the wiser if

he becomes a devotee of the Lord, if he remembers the Lord and his holy name in his life, because then there is no fear for him, because he is assured of constant protection and solace.

The creature must realise and understand that relying on the Lord's grace and blessings and benevolence and munificence is a sure-shot formula for happiness and joy in his life; it's a magical wand, a charm that would help him tide over all his secret worries, his concealed fears and his hidden consternations in life. It would give him strength, courage and support to face all adversities in life; it will make life so much the easier for him to live; it would help him to confidently face the vagaries and uncertainties life; it will give him stability and a rock-like foundation to stand upon; it will make him feel that he is not alone in this world, but has a powerful, albeit an invisible, hand to support and protect him.

And last but not the least is this resounding message: "that at the end of every dark night there is the dawn of a day"; "that no matter how doomed the present is, the tomorrow is going to be bright and cheerful for those who have faith in the Lord God". The Lord God will take upon himself the suffering of his devotee, he himself would sacrifice his own happiness but ensure that his devotee is happy. In the episode concerning Laxman and Hanuman fainting, we observe that Lord Ram has suffered and lamented gravely; perhaps worse was in store for both Laxman and Hanuman if one were to leave the Creator, whom Bharat calls stone-hearted and harsh, to have his own way, but their destined suffering was suffered by Lord Ram instead, thereby reducing its gravity and intensity, and the malevolent Creator could not harm them as he would have otherwise liked it to happen—because he is "harsh and emotionless and stone-hearted".

It was both Bharat's and Hanuman's unwavering faith in Lord Ram's holy name and devotion to him that saved the day for everyone, for first Bharat's faith saved Hanuman as we have read in the present verse, and this subsequently paved the way for Laxman's revival because a little while later Hanuman arrived at Lanka within the designated time for the administration of the herb brought by him that saved Laxman's life, as we shall soon read in Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it herein below.

²Now, let us close our eyes for some moments and apply a basic knowledge of science to examine closely the event of Hanuman being hit by Bharat's arrow and the physical forces that came into play: what might have happened during the crucial moments when the arrow struck him, and what might have been the cause of his quick revival in such a fit state of mind and body as if nothing had happened.

Hanuman was constantly chanting, constantly humming Lord Ram's holy name as he cruised through the sky. This chanting and humming produced vibrations that radiated out from his body in the form of sound waves that covered his whole body as a blanket. It was virtually like a moving dynamo which produced electromagnetic energy that moved along with its source, i.e. Hanuman as he cruised through the firmament. Added to it was his speed, which created kinetic energy. And then there was heat energy and static electric energy produced by friction with the air as he and his mountain moved with great speed across the atmosphere, rubbing its layers of air and gases.

All these physical forces interacted with each other in a complex way, and the pocket of hot air that was created around Hanuman as he zoomed through the sky, helped to trap these energies tightly around so that when he moved ahead he dragged these energies along with him.

To wit, Hanuman was surrounded by a shield of stupendous energy created by many physical forces acting simultaneously and trapped around his body in the air pocket thus created, and this shield moved along with him as a shimmering glow of incandescent light. Therefore, from a distance, from the perspective of an observer on the ground, he appeared like a fast moving comet, or meteor streaking across the night sky.

It has been established that even earth produces a humming sound heard from space, and it is caused by a combined effect of the earth's magnetic field and its rotation on its axis. The earth also has charged particles in its outer atmosphere that help to protect it from many harmful radiations hitting it from outer space. So it was something similar with Hanuman.

Bharat's arrow was fully charged with energy too; it was meant to strike and bring down the object it hit. In today's modern world we are aware of heat-seeking cruise missiles, and we also know that in the darkness of the night their path appears to be like a fire-ball moving rapidly in a particular direction. So was the case with Bharat's arrow too.

It rapidly closed in on Hanuman and rammed into him. What would one expect? There was an exceptionally bright flash of light as the two phenomenal energy sources, moving in opposite directions, clashed with each other. It was like two high-tension overhead electric cables touching each other over farmland due to some cause: there would be a sudden burst of dazzling light, for a fleeting moment, and then everything would be dark again as the electric circuit snaps.

This above scenario would give us an idea what might have actually occurred during those crucial moments when Bharat's arrow hit Hanuman: There was a mighty flash of lightening; the energy crippled the arrow and reduced it to a mangled and twisted piece of metal that either vaporized in air due to the heat generated by the impact, or it fell to the ground in bits and pieces like debris of an exploded object falling on earth from the sky. It is also possible that Bharat had visualized this scenario beforehand, and since his objective was to investigate this mysterious object flying over the night sky of Ayodhya rather than blow it out, the arrow he shot was a special one which could withstand the impact and its consequences in that it would not disintegrate, but instead cling to the object it hit and bring it down. So this arrow clung to Hanuman and pulled him down in such a way that he glided softly to the ground.

How come this was made possible? Yes, it was made possible because of the upward thrust that the arrow provided from below to the weighty body of Hanuman as it plummeted down towards the earth, much like choppers or reusable rockets used for space missions of the modern world use the upward thrust of their in-built rocket-engines to make a soft landing after finishing their mission. These modern machines don't dash to the ground as this would break them to pieces; they make a soft and delicate landing.

But at the moment when the arrow struck Hanuman, the protective shield of energy trapped around his body was short-circuited; the arrow punched a hole through them and ruptured the air pocket that trapped these energies. As a result, the energies began hissing out of this fissure; they began to dissipate and depressurize the protective shield. The violent impact of the arrow deflected Hanuman from his chosen flight path and pushed him in the direction the arrow pointed. This change of course was aided by the thrust exerted by the escaping spout of energies through the hole punched by the arrow; the thrust thus created by them was in the direction opposite to the point where the arrow struck. The combined effect was that Hanuman went on an

uncontrolled spin, spiraling down towards earth in a sort of vortex with its base resting somewhere close to the ground.

Though the shock of the arrow's strike dazed Hanuman, yet he continued to chant Lord Ram's name—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 58 herein above. And this saved him from a worse fate.

When Bharat realized he had committed some grave mistake (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that follow Doha no. 58), he immediately used his skills to 'repair the damage caused by his arrow to the protective shield around Hanuman' much like a modern-day mechanic would repair the unintended damage caused to a flying drone, or some other thing that is very important and has to be urgently retrieved, in order to make it functional once again. So Bharat plugged the hole and sealed it once again. How did he do it? He invoked the holy name of Lord Ram because he knew of its majestic mystical powers to heal and repair, as well as all the benefits that accrued to him by his meritorious deeds, and his other spiritual and religious practices. He focused them all at one point like a welder focuses his welding-torch to weld broken joints.

Once the hole was sealed, once the repair was done, the energy that was being continuously generated by Hanuman by his incessant chanting of Lord Ram's holy name, but was leaking out till that moment, began accumulating once again within the 'healed' or 'repaired' shield surrounding him, and sooner rather than later, he came to himself; he was revived back to life.

And when he did come to, when he did regain consciousness, it was as if nothing had happened. It was like the case of a creature living in hibernation mode for some time when all his physical activities cease and his metabolism stops for the period, but when he wakes up he is up and going with the same energy and enthusiasm as when he had first entered into hibernation mode. This is also the way Yogis (those ascetics who practice meditation) manage to live for long periods in a suspended mode when all the physical activities of the body are put on hold.

So in this way Hanuman also lived in a suspended animation mode for the period between the moment the arrow first struck him and when he was revived. Remember: Hanuman was an incarnation of Lord Shiva's eleventh form known as Rudra, and Shiva is the patron deity of all Yogis; there is no one more proficient in practicing Yoga than Lord Shiva. So it was quite natural for Hanuman to do something to which he was accustomed, and survive the ordeal.

The bubbling energy and great enthusiasm for doing Lord Ram's work, which was so characteristic of Hanuman, was there in its prime form once again as it was prior to the time when he was hit by the arrow. Rather, it was made more vigorous and forceful as he discovered that it was this one factor—that he was on the Lord's mission and that he was continuously chanting his holy name—that had saved his life that day. It renewed his commitment; it renewed his devotion and faith, making them more robust; it invigorated him; and it made him raring to go instantly with a burning zeal and confidence in Lord Ram.]

सो०. लीन्ह कपिहि उर लाइ पुलकित तनु लोचन सजल ।

प्रीति न हृदयँ समाइ सुमिरि राम रघुकुल तिलक ॥ ५९ ॥

sōraṭhā.

līnha kapihi ura lā'i pulakita tanu lōcana sajala.
prīti na hr̥dayam̐ samā'i sumiri rāma raghukula tilaka. 59.

As soon as the Kapi (Hanuman) regained consciousness, Bharat eagerly embraced him most affectionately¹; his body was thrilled and his eyes welled up with tears (of happiness and for thanksgiving).

Emotions of affection and love for Lord Ram swelled so much in Bharat's inner-self when he remembered the Lord that he could not contain them in his heart (as a result of which they overflowed to cause excess of thrill in his body, as well as to make tears ooze out of their glands and fill his eyes). (Doha no. 59)

[Note—¹Really indeed, Hanuman comes out as being the single most fortunate, privileged and lucky character in the whole Story of the Ramayan in as much as he was blessed with the honour of receiving an embrace from Lord Ram more than once*, and as if still something was wanting, he is now being embraced by the Lord's "image" and his own devotee-brother Bharat himself to complete the picture of his exceptional good luck and unique blessedness. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62.

And, how does it feel to embrace a great devotee of Lord Ram? The answer is here—one feels thrilled, and tears well up in eyes. Since Hanuman is a great and blessed devotee of Lord Ram, what embracing such a devotee feels like is being experienced by Bharat here, and was experienced by both Vibhishan and Hanuman earlier when they met while Hanuman was in Lanka during the latter's expedition to search Sita (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 6). In this latter instance we find that 'both' felt exhilarated because 'both' were ardent devotees of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. तात कुसल कहु सुखनिधान की । सहित अनुज अरु मातु जानकी ॥ १ ॥
कपि सब चरित समास बखाने । भए दुखी मन महुँ पछिताने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāta kusala kahu sukhanidhāna kī. sahita anuja aru mātu jānakī. 1.
kapi saba carita samāsa bakhānē. bha'e dukhī mana mahum̐ pachitānē. 2.

After the exchange of initial greetings and introductions, Bharat asked Hanuman about the welfare of Lord Ram: 'My dear (tāta)! Tell me about the well-being of Lord Ram, who is an embodiment of joy and happiness, along with the good news of the younger brother (Laxman; "anujā")¹ and mother Sita (Janki; "mātu jānakī")².' (1)

The Kapi (Hanuman) briefed Bharat about everything, and this tidings filled the latter with extreme sorrow, sadness and gloom; he felt very despondent and lamented gravely³. (2)

[Note—¹While enquiring about Laxman Bharat simply uses the word “*anuja*”, meaning ‘younger brother’. It therefore assumes a dual meaning; it refers to Laxman as Lord Ram’s younger brother, as well as Bharat’s younger brother.

²Laxman’s mother Sumitra had also advised him to treat Sita as his ‘mother’ and Lord Ram as his ‘father’ at the time of granting her permission to him to accompany them to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75.

Hanuman too calls Sita his mother repeatedly and in quick succession during their first interaction in the Ashok grove of Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede it; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 17.

Did Sita acknowledge that Hanuman was her ‘son’? Surely she did so—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16; and Chaupai line nos. 2, 9 that precede Doha no. 17.

³Bharat sorely regretted and intensely lamented that he could not help his beloved brother Lord Ram in his time of need; that it was he who had been the cause of the Lord having had to face such hardship and trouble in the forest. The bad news of Sita’s abduction and its attendant sufferings for Lord Ram, the bad tidings of Laxman’s fainting and the horrors of the war that was underway in Lanka—all cast a pall of deep gloom on Bharat’s mind. He became pale and forlorn; he was dismayed and distressed beyond description. But what could he do; he had no choices left at that time but to pray and hope for the best.

A very pertinent question that comes to the mind is this: Why did Bharat not decide to send his well-trained and equipped army of the kingdom of Ayodhya to Lanka to help Lord Ram? Well, the answer is simple and easy to guess: no time was left for it to be actually implemented in practice.

The reason is this: Lanka was very far away, and the army would take a lot of time to reach it by first marching across the huge distance from Ayodhya to the shore of the southern ocean, and then crossing it to land on the shores of Lanka. This was impossible to achieve in a short frame of time because the war was already raging.

So, Bharat drew a deep breath in utter frustration and regret even as he lamented and grieved most woefully. But he recovered himself quickly, for it was a waste of time allowing emotions to take control over wisdom and prudence. Hence, Bharat decided to give some practical help instead, and in the present circumstances it was that all haste must be made to ensure Hanuman reaches Lanka in time with the mountain to save Laxman. Bharat also knew that if Laxman is saved, no harm would come to his beloved brother Lord Ram, for he knew well the abilities of Laxman.

Therefore, he devised a method to send Hanuman extremely fast, and it was to ask the latter to sit on his arrow which will move so fast through the sky that it would make up for the time that has been lost till now, enabling Hanuman to land in Lanka well in time.

All these things are narrated in the verses that follow herein below.]

अहह दैव मैं कत जग जायउँ । प्रभु के एकहु काज न आयउँ ॥ ३ ॥

जानि कुअवसरु मन धरि धीरा । पुनि कपि सन बोले बलबीरा ॥ ४ ॥

तात गहरु होइहि तोहि जाता । काजु नसाइहि होत प्रभाता ॥ ५ ॥
चढु मम सायक सैल समेता । पठवौं तोहि जहँ कृपानिकेता ॥ ६ ॥

ahaha daiva mairṁ kata jaga jāya'umṁ. prabhu kē ēkahu kāja na āya'umṁ. 3.
jāni ku'avasarū mana dhari dhīrā. puni kapi sana bōlē balabīrā. 4.
tāta gaharu hō'ihi tōhi jātā. kāju nasā'ihi hōta prabhātā. 5.
caṛhu mama sāyaka saila samētā. paṭhavaum tōhi jahamṁ kṛpānikētā. 6.

Bharat lamented sorely, cursing himself that he could not be of any help or service to Lord Ram. He said with a sad and distressed voice with genuine grief and despondency in his expressions, 'Alas oh God; why was I born in this world as a cursed one who could not even be of a single service to the Lord, nor could extend any kind of help to him?'¹ (3)

Bharat paused for a while as he pondered over the situation and its gravity, and realising that the time was not favourable for yielding to negative thoughts and emotions as they would be of no help, the brave and courageous Bharat gathered his wits together and said to Hanuman after a while, (4) ---

'My dear, you may be late in your journey back, and everything would be ruined if the night ends and dawn appears². (5)

[Therefore, not much time is to be wasted, and all haste is to be made.]

Hence, I suggest that you mount my arrow with your mountain, and I shall shoot it to send you back speedily to where Lord Ram, who is a treasury of mercy and grace, is present. [Well, I will send you virtually with the speed of sound as the arrow thunders across the sky towards Lanka. You can rest assured of that.]³ (6)

[Note—¹Bharat has lamented very gravely in a similar fashion when he came back to Ayodhya from his maternal uncle's home to learn about Lord Ram's exile to forest. He had cursed his birth then too for being the cause of Lord Ram's exile. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 160; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 161; (iii) Doha no. 162; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 168; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178; (vi) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 179; and etc.}]

²This shows that either Bharat was briefed by Hanuman of the urgency of reaching Lanka before dawn to make the herb effective, or this technical detail was already known to Bharat.

Bharat thought to himself: "Hanuman must be exhausted by the journey and the hit by the arrow. He may be feeling sore in his muscles, and there is no time for rest. It would be very hard for him to travel a long distance with a sore body which has to carry this heavy mountain under the prevailing situation. Even if wishes to travel on his own strength, it will be slow progress as he would be bogged down by the weight of this great mountain. Besides this, he has already lost some crucial moments during this sad episode, and any further delay would jeopardise Laxman's chances of survival. So I must help him. If I send him riding my arrow then it would be very helpful, as, one, he would have time to relax, two, he would arrive in time, and three, when Lord Ram sees the arrow and enquires him about it, the Lord will

know that I had sent him astride this arrow, and this bit of information would tell the Lord though I was so unfortunate that I could not extend any help to him but at least I could offer this small service as a token of my unflinching love and constant remembrance of him. I'll be glad if the Lord comes to know how much I miss him."

To wit, Bharat devised this device of offering to send Hanuman astride his arrow to help him overcome his guilty conscious that "he was of no help or service to Lord Ram"—apropos: verse no. 3 herein above.

So Bharat said to Hanuman: 'If you are not able to reach before dawn then it would not be possible to revive Laxman as the herb would lose its effectiveness. Already so much time has been wasted while you were unconscious. I understand that you must be fatigued and must be having some muscular soreness due to your falling down to the ground as well as the stress incurred by carrying the heavy mountain in your hand. This mountain would act as a drag on you, slowing you down considerably and sapping your energy further. The result would be that you might be late in arriving in time. So I suggest you rid piggy-back on my arrow which I shall shoot in the direction of Lanka. This will make your journey comfortable and easy, and when you land there you will be in the proper frame of mind and body to enter the battle refreshed the next day.']

सुनि कपि मन उपजा अभिमाना । मोरें भार चलिहि किमि बाना ॥ ७ ॥

राम प्रभाव बिचारि बहोरी । बंदि चरन कह कपि कर जोरी ॥ ८ ॥

suni kapi mana upajā abhimānā. mōrēm bhāra calihi kimi bānā. 7.
rāma prabhāva bicāri bahōrī. bandi carana kaha kapi kara jōrī. 8.

When Bharat made this offer (that he would like to send Hanuman back to Lanka astride his arrow if he would ride it with the mountain in his hand), Hanuman wondered how an arrow would be able to move speedily while carrying the weight of his body (along with that of the mountain). (7)

But he soon recovered his senses and concluded that it would be made possible by the virtue of Lord Ram's glory and grace, so he should not doubt it nor wonder at it².

Then he bowed at the feet of Bharat and said humbly: --- (8)

[Note—¹Another reason why Hanuman overcame his doubt that Bharat would be able to actually shoot an arrow that would be strong and powerful enough to carry the combined weight of his own body and that of the mountain all the way to Lanka is that just a while ago he had witnessed the stupendous abilities and astounding powers of Bharat when an arrow shot by him brought Hanuman down. Not only that, Bharat had quickly revived him back to his former energetic self in such a miraculous way that he did not feel the after-effects of the deadly blow of the arrow or of the fall to the ground.]

दो०. तव प्रताप उर राखि प्रभु जैहउँ नाथ तुरंत ।

अस कहि आयसु पाइ पद बंदि चलेउ हनुमंत ॥ ६० (क) ॥

भरत बाहु बल सील गुन प्रभु पद प्रीति अपार ।

मन महुँ जात सराहत पुनि पुनि पवनकुमार ॥ ६० (ख) ॥

dōhā.

tava pratāpa ura rākhi prabhu jaiha'um' nātha turanta.
asa kahi āyasu pā'i pada bandi calē'u hanumanta. 60 (a).
bharata bāhu bala sīla guna prabhu pada prīti apāra.
mana mahum' jāta sarāhata puni puni pavanakumāra. 60 (b).

[Hanuman replied to Bharat—] ‘Oh Lord! I shall enshrine your majesty’s glory in my heart, and proceed speedily (to reach Lord Ram)’¹.

[To wit, you need not worry; I am hale and hearty. Please don’t feel afraid about my safety. No one could have stopped me except you, as you are an image of Lord Ram himself. By bowing to you I am symbolically bowing to my beloved Lord Ram. So have no fears; I will reach there in time.]’

Saying this and obtaining Bharat’s permission, Hanuman bowed his head at his feet and started on his journey once again, with great firmness of purpose, strength of resolution, and vigour of action. (Doha no. 60-a)

The son of the wind god (Hanuman) was so exceptionally impressed by Bharat and his exemplary character that on his way back to Lord Ram, he kept on thinking of Bharat most reverentially all along the way, about the strength and might of his arms, about his polite, friendly and courteous nature, about his virtues and glories, and about the depth and intensity of his love for Lord Ram.

Hanuman repeatedly praised Bharat for these stellar virtues. (Doha no. 60-b)

[Note—¹One practical reason why Hanuman chose to go alone without the aid of riding Bharat’s arrow, and probably it is also the reason why Bharat granted him permission though it would mean a bit difficult journey for Hanuman, is this:

When Lord Ram, who would be eagerly waiting for Hanuman’s return, and in all probability would be watching the sky for signs of him, finds that he was riding an arrow, the Lord would be alarmed. He would think that some enemy had captured Hanuman and tied him to the arrow to force him to take this missile to where the Lord and his army were, and then explode the weapon in an attempt to wipe them out.

Or the Lord would think that Hanuman was gravely wounded and devised this contraption to come there, and this would cause immense pain to the heart of the Lord as he would lament that Hanuman had to suffer injury for him.

The Lord’s confidence in Hanuman’s valour and ability would be shaken, and also out of pity for his sufferings and weakness, or exhaustion caused by the arduous task of bringing the heavy mountain from afar, the Lord would henceforth feel reluctant to employ Hanuman in any combat, preferring to give him some rest. As a result, Hanuman’s skills during the war would not be fully used. That would be disastrous for everyone, as a powerful warrior would be inadvertently side-lined or neglected, and his martial skills would be not fully exploited.

Even if none of the above possibilities actually happened, still there was a certain chance that Lord Ram may at least enquire about the arrow, and then when Hanuman tells him about Bharat, the Lord would be plunged in a new bout of grief and sorrows as he remembers his dear and loving brother.

The situation on the ground at Lanka was very delicate and serious; no newer emotions ought to be aroused in the bosom of Lord Ram that would negatively impact

his mind and disturb him, even in the least. The episode of Laxman's fainting must have already sapped Lord Ram's energy and hurt his emotions enough, so nothing should be done again to worsen things further by making him plunge in a new vortex of sorrow generated by the memory of Bharat.

The wisest thing then would be not to remind Lord Ram of Bharat or his native Ayodhya while the ferocious war rages, so that he can concentrate all his energies on the battle-front and the war that he has to fight with zeal; it had to be ensured that he remains un-encumbered by negative emotions of remembering his far-away land, his family members, his loving brothers Bharat and Shatrughan etc. as they are bound to disturb his mind, making him feel sad and overcome with regret and grief, as they would be counter-productive at this juncture.]

चौ०. उहाँ राम लछिमनहि निहारी । बोले बचन मनुज अनुसारि ॥ १ ॥

अर्ध राति गइ कपि नहिं आयउ । राम उठाइ अनुज उर लायउ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

uhām̐ rāma lachimanahi nihārī. bōlē bacana manuḥa anusārī. 1.
ardha rāti ga'i kapi nahim̐ āya'u. rāma uṭhā'i anuja ura lāya'u. 2.

* In the meantime, there (in Lanka) Lord Ram watched Laxman gloomily (as he lay unconscious and critically wounded before him), with great sadness and despondency reflecting in his countenance. The Lord, behaving like an ordinary human being¹, lamented gravely for him, and in his sorrows he said the following remorseful words - -- (1)

'It is past midnight, and the Kapi (Hanuman) has not come back (with the herb which could revive Laxman).'

Saying these woeful words expressing extreme sadness and grief, the Lord lifted Laxman and clasped his body to his own bosom². (2)

* {Let us—the narrator of this fantastic and wondrous Story, as well as its listener, the author and his reader—imagine that we are travelling in some sort of a Time Machine that makes us travel through time and space, back in an age long past, extremely rapidly, almost in the time taken to blink an eye. This Machine has some special and distinguishing qualities—it transports us over long distances of space in a very short span of time of a few hours; it accelerates and decelerates very speedily; it can move forward and backward at stupendous speed and also stand still in the air to monitor developments on the ground below; and it can take the travellers to their destinations at their own pace and convenience.

What proof do we have for the above observations concerning the Time Machine, and that we are travelling in it? Well, there are very obvious and ample proofs if we just pause a while to look at things more closely.

First let us see about the ability of this Time Machine to traverse great distances in a short time. A short while ago we find ourselves in Lanka, witnessing that moment in the night when the wounded Laxman was lying unconscious before Lord Ram, and the medicine man named Sushen, who was brought from inside the city, prescribed the herb which could revive Laxman, but it was located far-away in the northern mountains. Hanuman was ordered to bring it. Now, it was a huge

distance that had to be covered in a small time slot; this mountain was located thousands of miles away from the land of Lanka, far away in the north of the mainland. First going to that place and then coming back from there doubled the distance needed to be covered, and everything had to be done within a few hours of darkness, between the hours of the early night after sunset and the hours late in the night that preceded dawn of the next day when the sky was still dark and the sun was yet far away below the horizon.

So, we have first become a witness of the events on the battle-field of Lanka and watch Laxman being injured, and then Hanuman being commissioned to bring the herb from the northern mountains. Then we leave Lanka at this point of time to travel alongside Hanuman all along to the northern mountain, deep inside the range of lofty mountains to somewhere near its northern fringes, somewhere near Mt. Kailash, where the mountain with the needed herb was located. And let us remember that in the meantime we have witnessed the incident of the demon Kalnemi trying to trap and kill Hanuman. Some time is lost in Kalnemi's fictitious hermitage, and some more time is wasted in searching for the herb in vain. Finally, realising that the time was fast running out, Hanuman plucks the mighty mountain from the ground and starts his long journey back to Lanka.

We accompany him as he takes a detour and flies over the city of Ayodhya where we see him being shot by Bharat's arrow, and we record what transpired there and how he was revived back to life by Bharat's intercession, we witness Hanuman's interaction with Bharat, and then we resume our journey back to Lanka by the side of Hanuman who was cruising through the night sky in great haste like a streaking star.

Since we are accompanying Hanuman and observing the developments as scribes and witnesses, it will now be easy for us to understand why this present verse starts with the following phrase: "In the meantime, there (in Lanka) Lord Ram watched Laxman gloomily, with great sadness reflecting in his countenance ---". It is because we will now be describing what is happening at a place that is far away in Lanka while we are still in the midst of the journey with Hanuman who is sailing through the firmament of the night. Remember: Hanuman is still on his way and we are with him, and not with Lord Ram and Laxman at Lanka. So we have to use words and phrases that convey the idea that we are then, at that moment, talking about something happening far away, at some distant place.

This indicates that this Time Machine of ours is equipped with some wondrous instruments that keep us updated with news from the battle-field: These equipments now tell us about how Lord Ram is grieving for Laxman while Hanuman is fast approaching him with the herb still rooted in the mountain, and a while ago they made us aware of Ravana approaching Kalnemi and forcing him to become a false hermit in an attempt to get rid of Hanuman.

An important clarification is needed here regarding the way we travel to record the events, and the way Hanuman travels to bring the herb. We are travelling in our Time Machine, while Hanuman is travelling independently on his own power; to wit, Hanuman and we, the scribes and witnesses, are travelling independently. This is why Hanuman could not be warned of the impending danger from Kalnemi because he was travelling separately from us!

Then we come to the next point about this Time Machine, that it has the ability to stand still in the air like a hover-craft or a drone to record the events on the land below from a safe distance up in the sky in such a way that its presence remains secret. From its perch high up in the sky, this Time Machine can record sound and videos of what's being said and done down on the ground below, made possible with

the help of special devices having sensitive sensors. Don't we have geo-stationary satellite today that aren't seen by us but which can map even small areas with great clarity, and eavesdrop on private conversation by means of special microphones equipped with secret sensors. These spying activities are standard practice employed world-wide in espionage.

Therefore we conclude that this Time Machine had some remote sensing and recording device that did the trick for the scribe, the narrator or the author of this wonderful Story, and the witnesses, the listeners and the readers, who were aboard it.

Hence, when we narrate about the incidents concerning Kalnemi and Bharat, as well as the uprooting of the mountain by Hanuman, we can say with positive authority that they are trust-worthy accounts as to what had actually happened then, and not something cooked-up as an imaginary cock-and-bull story, for they are a first-hand account that was recorded for posterity by the scribe in such a way that none of the parties concerned with the Story, either the hero Hanuman or Kalnemi and Bharat, could get the wind of the proceedings being recorded.

The next point about this miraculous Time Machine is this: "it can take the travellers to their destinations at their own pace". Well, it is easy to understand what is meant here. The 'traveller' is the reader of this fascinating Story. The incidents that are covered by the 'scribe', who happens to be the narrator or the author of this Story, are recorded in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62. It is the period between Meghanad hitting Laxman with his powerful spear when the latter fell down on the ground unconscious, and the time when Laxman was revived back to life and Sushen, the doctor, was safely put back in Lanka by Hanuman.

Now, different readers would read these verses at different speeds, at their own paces. Some will finish reading them in one sitting, and the time taken in this read also depends upon an individual's reading speed; some others would read them in pieces in a day or two; and still there are some others who would spread this reading over many days or weeks. So therefore, the same set of incidents are virtually being made known to different individuals at different speeds, which symbolically means that these individuals are travelling in the Time Machine at different speeds!

In our modern world we are used to hearing about 'Artificial Intelligence' and 'Virtual Reality', so why wonder about the existence of this fantastic 'Time Machine' during an age when air-planes could travel without the help of a physical pilot, directed by the mere wish of the chief passenger aboard, as is evident in the case of the self-driven air-plane known as the 'Pushpak Viman' that was used by Lord Ram and his entire entourage to return to Ayodhya directly from Lanka after the Lord's victory. The scribes of yore used some variation of such Time Machines, in existence at the time of the period of their writing, to record for posterity great wars and singularly important epoch-changing developments in a truthful manner, in the actual way they happened, without any kind of tampering with facts, or manipulating details to suit their own whims and fancies.

Thus, the account of the great Story of the Ramayan that has come down to us from Tulsidas in the form of 'Ram Charit Manas', or from Veda Vyas as 'Adhyatma Ramayan, is true and correct. As for some variations in their details, it is because the cycle of creation—right from its origin, through its development and ending with its conclusion—runs in an endless rotation like a gigantic wheel set in slow motion by its cosmic creator known by the name of Brahm, the Supreme Being. As the Wheel turns and completes one cycle, to go on to its next cycle of rotation, it is quite possible that at a particular point of its rotation, at a specific point of time when it reaches a

specific point in its rotation, the incident that occurred in its second rotation may vary in its details of happening and take some different shade of colour than what it looked like during the previous cycle. This results in variations in some finer details, some minor aspects, within the general framework of the Story of the Ramayan; but these slight differences do not affect the general structure and the outline of the Story. This fact has been recorded by Tulsidas himself in ‘Ram Charit Manas’—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 114; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124.

Another reason for variation in finer details of the Story is that each bard or poet who decided to record it did it according to how he understood and saw it, so that one aspect was highlighted by one scribe, and another aspect by another scribe, giving rise to different versions of the same Story. This fact is explicitly said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124.

Coming back to our narrative, till this point of time we have read (from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Doha no. 55) that Laxman was lying unconscious on the ground after being hit by a powerful spear used by Meghanad against him, and Hanuman was ordered to go to the northern mountains to bring a herb that could neutralise the deadly effect of Meghanad’s weapon and revive Laxman. Then we have read how Hanuman was shot by Bharat on the suspicion that he was some unknown intruder who may pose a danger to Ayodhya, and how Hanuman recovered and resumed his journey to Lanka with the mountain and the herb—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 60 herein above.

Hence, from this present verse no. 1 we resume our narrative from where we had left it last, at Lord Ram’s camp near the battle-field of Lanka where Laxman is lying unconscious before him.

To wit, what a wondrous and fantastic Time Machine is this indeed!}

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram behave “like an ordinary human being”? Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this Story, explains this himself in Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 61 herein below.

Lord Shiva says that “though Lord Ram is always steady and unchanging, yet he showed how a human being would ordinarily respond for someone who is totally devoted to him when that faithful follower is somehow harmed.”

Well, Lord Ram had to wail and lament like an ordinary man so as to conform to and fulfil a boon given by Brahma, the Creator, to Ravana that he would die at the hands of a human being. This is the primary reason why Lord Ram, who otherwise could do everything in this world by his mere wish as he was in incarnation of the Supreme Being, acted and behaved like an ordinary man. The Lord is an expert in everything in this creation, so he was also an expert actor. As such, he acted his role of a human being to such perfection and finesse that inspite of the many miraculous things happening, no one could doubt that he was not.

Hence, here also the Lord took special care not to do anything that would reveal his true identity; so he lamented and grieved for his wounded brother like any other man would ordinarily do.

²So, what was so alarming that made Lord Ram become so worried and desperate with despair when Hanuman could not come back by midnight?

The answer is this: The herb would lose its ability to revive an injured person if it was not administered in the night itself, much before dawn. Besides this, Lord Ram's anxiety increased by each passing moment as he thought, in his worries and nervousness, that he could perceive that life was slowly ebbing out of Laxman. So he was worried that if the herb was used late there were chances that its effectiveness would be lost, as by that time Laxman's life would be irretrievably lost.

When one is overcome with grief, small frames of time appear to look like ages. Each passing hour seemed to be one lost era of life to Lord Ram; he was on an edge, and uncertainties added to his nervousness which made the matters worse for him.]

सकहु न दुखित देखि मोहि काऊ । बंधु सदा तव मृदुल सुभाऊ ॥ ३ ॥
मम हित लागि तजेहु पितु माता । सहेहु बिपिन हिम आतप बाता ॥ ४ ॥
सो अनुराग कहाँ अब भाई । उठहु न सुनि मम बच बिकलाई ॥ ५ ॥

sakahu na dukhita dēkhi mōhi kā'ū. bandhu sadā tava mṛdula subhā'ū. 3.
mama hita lāgi tajēhu pitu mātā. sahēhu bipina hima ātapa bātā. 4.
sō anurāga kahām'aba bhā'ī. uṭhahu na suni mama baca bikalā'ī. 5.

Lord Ram wailed sorrowfully, 'My dear brother. You had never tolerated if you had seen me sad in any manner¹. It has been your nature always to be kind, soft, amiable and gracious. (3)

It is for my sake that you abandoned your parents², and then suffered gravely, but graciously endured, for my sake, all the sufferings, pains and inconveniences that you had to encounter in the forest, such as extremes of cold and heat, of hailstorms and hot scorching winds (because of your decision to accompany me)³. (4)

My Brother! Where is that affection for me now; how and why do you now tolerate my intense grief and sadness without responding? Say, why don't you rise even after hearing my earnest pleas and words soaked in abject grief and despair; why don't you respond when you see me so agitated and full of anxiety?⁴ (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 198 where this fact is clearly hinted. Now Lord Ram has acknowledged it expressly himself.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233 where Laxman became very agitated on seeing worry on the face of Lord Ram at the time when news arrived that Bharat was headed towards their hermitage with a large retinue that also included a huge detachment of the kingdom's army.

Earlier, at the time of the Bow-Breaking ceremony at Janakpur, when sage Parashuram came angrily to the venue and threatened Lord Ram to punish him for breaking Lord Shiva's bow, Laxman had interceded on behalf of the Lord and had fearlessly as well as sternly rebuked the sage, even going to the extent of teasing him repeatedly that amounted to insult. This verbal spat between Laxman and Parashuram

is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Doha no. 278. {The whole episode, however, is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76 where we read about Laxman's resolve to accompany Lord Ram to the forest.

³The horrors and sufferings of the forest are outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 63.

⁴Lord Ram wailed for Laxman: “Tell me, why are you lying unmoving; why have you suddenly developed a sternness of heart and indifference of countenance that you seem not to be moved by my plight, whereas you had always acted to the contrary in the past, and whenever you saw me worried or upset, you were up in arms to protect me. Had you not done that when news arrived that Bharat was coming to our hermitage at Chitrakoot with an entourage that consisted all the main members of the royal court of Ayodhya as well as large detachment of the army? You had seen me worried then, and you had thought that I was worried that Bharat was coming to fight with me and get rid of me so that he could permanently usurp the throne of the kingdom, whereas that was not the case as Bharat was actually coming to take me back home. Had I not told you this that time that there was no fear from Bharat. Nevertheless, you had picked up arms and got ready to face Bharat and kill him if I was harmed; does it not prove that you could not imagine any harm or pain coming to me from any quarter, even if it meant killing our brother and all the rest who were accompanying him? It was only after my assuring you that there was no fear of any danger that you had relented and calmed down. {This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233.}

You had kept awake to keep guard while I slept—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90.

You had been serving me most diligently and faithfully in the forest. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 139; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142.}

Whenever you found that I am in a sad and despondent mood, you too reflected my emotions by being overcome with equal sadness and despondency. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precedes Doha no. 141.}

At the time when Sita was stolen and I had all but lost the will to live, it was you who had supported me at that critical moment of my life; it was you who had helped me tide over my mental state of abject dejection and utter hopelessness by encouraging me to make efforts to search for her. Had it not been for you, I would have fallen then and there; it was this advice of yours that motivated me to look ahead with hope of finding her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8, 16 that precede Doha no. 30.}

Well then, where is now that unflinching devotion and sturdy commitment of yours; why do you not get up and assure me that you are alright and you will not allow any harm to come to me. Listen dear: If you do not rise, if you are revived, then I too

will die with you, because I can't live without you. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 9-10 herein below.}”]

जौं जनतेउँ बन बंधु बिछोहू । पिता बचन मनतेउँ नहिं ओहू ॥ ६ ॥
 सुत बित नारि भवन परिवारा । होहिं जाहिं जग बारहिं बारा ॥ ७ ॥
 अस बिचारि जियँ जागहु ताता । मिलइ न जगत सहोदर भ्राता ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ janatē'um̃ bana bandhu bichōhū. pitā bacana manatē'um̃ nahim̃ ōhū. 6.
 suta bita nāri bhavana parivārā. hōhim̃ jāhim̃ jaga bārahim̃ bārā. 7.
 asa bicāri jiyam̃ jāgahu tātā. mila'i na jagata sahōdara bhrātā. 8.

Had I been aware that I would have to suffer separation from my dear brother in the forest, then surely I would not have obeyed the words of my father¹. (6)

In this world, one can have more than one chance to have a son, money, wife, home and a family [7], ---

--- But one cannot have another chance to be fortunate enough to have a dearest-of-dear brother, someone for whom no one and no thing ever matters more in this world than the former to whom the latter is totally devoted, and whom the latter adores like no one else would ever do². Think over this thing and wake up (you're your slumber, because I am feeling very distressed and extremely distraught by seeing you lying in this condition) [8]. (7-8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had to keep his father Dasrath's words that the latter gave to Kaikeyi, the step-mother of the Lord, according to which she had demanded that Lord Ram be sent to forest for fourteen years so that her own son Bharat could be anointed as a prince-regent who would become the future king. {This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, specifically in (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 41.}]

²Here, the phrase “dearest-of-dear brother” that Lord Ram uses refers to Laxman who was totally devoted to him. For Laxman, there was no one and no thing that ever mattered more than the Lord. The next verse endorses this view with emphasis.]

जथा पंख बिनु खग अति दीना । मनि बिनु फनि करिबर कर हीना ॥ ९ ॥
 अस मम जिवन बंधु बिनु तोही । जौं जड़ दैव जिआवै मोही ॥ १० ॥

jathā paṅkha binu khaga ati dīnā. mani binu phani karibara kara hīnā. 9.
 asa mama jivana bandhu binu tōhī. jauṁ jaṛa daiva ji'āvai mōhī. 10.

My woefully precarious condition is as miserable and grief-stricken as a poor bird that has lost its wings¹, or a serpent that has lost the gem-like luminescent globule of condensed sap present on its hood², or an unfortunate elephant that has lost its trunk³. (9)

Oh my dear brother! This is the gloomy way my life would be if unfortunately the malefic Creator, who is so opposed to me, forces me to live, compelling me to survive even after you are separated from me⁴. (10)

[Note—¹The bird's wing is the most important part of its body because it is the wing that enables the bird to fly and live a happy life. If the wing is lost, then the poor bird would be forced to live a life which would be as good as being dead for it.

The importance of the wing for a bird and how a person suffering from some grave misfortune when something without which he can't live is compared to a bird losing its wings is given elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas.

For instance, in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76 we read that the citizens of Ayodhya were sore overcome with grief when they learnt that Lord Ram was being sent to forest exile, and their condition is being compared to 'a bird who has lost its wings'.

Again, in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 148 we read that the condition of king Dasrath was also like a bird who has lost its wings. This was the time when Dasrath was lying on his death bed lamenting for Lord Ram, and his minister Sumantra returned to tell him the bad news that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman have refused to return.

²There are some special species of serpents on whose hoods, according to legends, a small luminescent sac resembling a small globule is seen. It contains a sap that has oozed out of the serpent's hood and has solidified there. The reptile emerges out of its hole in the darkness of the night, and it is believed that the light emanating from this sac enables the serpent to see its way. If the sac is lost, the serpent becomes blind. In this grief, the serpent repeatedly dashes its hood on the hard ground to express its sadness, and this causes it to die.

This phenomenon is cited as a metaphor to indicate that Lord Ram would be blind and helpless without Laxman by his side.

Other instance is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154 where the condition of king Dasrath is compared to it just prior to his death after he learnt that Lord Ram would not return.

³The elephant depends upon its trunk for food; without the trunk this poor creature won't be able to gather its natural food such as branches and leaves of trees etc. and would consequently die. The trunk is also the elephant's defence; it is used to catch hold of an attacking enemy and thrash it to ground. The trunk is used by it to drink water, to forage for food, to fend off its enemies, to defend itself, to sound the trumpet to establish its majesty amongst other animals in the forest, to shoo away flies from its body, and so on and so forth. In fact, the trunk is a pride of the elephant like a tail is for all other animals. The trunk is one muscular organ that is most valued by the elephant in its body.

Here Lord Ram says that his personal glory and the most valuable part of his identity was Laxman, and if the latter is lost then a good part of himself, which is the better part of him, will also be lost. So what's the good in living a lustreless life thereafter; what's the point in living without any glory and identity?

⁴Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, Laxman was like high pole over which the flag of Lord Ram's fame and glory fluttered majestically—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 17.

Then say, what would be the fate of this ‘flag’ if the ‘flag-post’ was lost?]

जैहउँ अवध कवन मुहु लाई । नारि हेतु प्रिय भाइ गँवाई ॥ ११ ॥
 बरु अपजस सहतेउँ जग माहीं । नारि हानि बिसेष छति नाहीं ॥ १२ ॥
 अब अपलोकु सोकु सुत तोरा । सहिहि निदुर कठोर उर मोरा ॥ १३ ॥

jaiha'um̐ avadha kavana muhu lā'ī. nāri hētu priya bhā'i gamvā'ī. 11.
 baru apajasa sahatē'um̐ jaga māhīm̐. nāri hāni bisēṣa chati nāhīm̐. 12.
 aba apalōku sōku suta tōrā. sahihi niṭhura kaṭhōra ura mōrā. 13.

Alas! With what face would I go back to Ayodhya (in case I survive this ordeal of my separation from you) with the ignominy dogging me all the way back—that I lost my dear brother for the sake of my wife¹? (11)

In any case, I could have coped somehow with the infamy of losing my wife and being unable to retrieve her from the clutches of her captor because I was incompetent and incapable of giving her protection in the first place, and then being able to free her from her captors because I did not have the valour, the strength and the power to do so.

Aside of the infamy, the ignominy, the shame, the sneer and the scorn that I would have inevitably invited throughout my remaining life on this account, it would not be of an insurmountable cause of grief for me, as losing one's wife (or a woman) is not much of a great misfortune and an irreparable loss for a wise man² (as it is of losing you, my dearest of dear brother, for this loss is in-compensable, this damage is irreparable, this vacancy cannot be filled). (12)

But my dear son (suta)³, my loss and its associated grief is much more profound and deeper. Woe to me that now my stern, emotionless and merciless heart (that did not burst with sorrow when it first saw you lying unconscious) will force me to suffer intensely and immensely from combined agony arising from the infamy and shame at having lost my dear brother for the sake of my wife, as well as the grief and sorrow arising directly due to your loss itself. Verily, it will compound the misery and grief for me; it will be misery and grief compounded for me! (13)

[Note—¹Lord Ram woefully lamented for Laxman. He despondently said with great sadness in his voice and profound regret effusing from his words: “What a shameful thing would it be; what face I would have to show to my kin and the citizens of Ayodhya when they ask me about you? I will be forced to tell them that I lost Laxman in the war to retrieve Sita, my wife. I have just now told you that “one may have a chance to have another wife in one's life should he lose one and decides to remarry, but never a second chance to have a loving brother who is faithful and devoted to him”—apropos: verse no. 7 herein above.

²A wise, self-realised and enlightened man is expected to adopt the path of renouncing all his worldly attachments—and this includes his wife and home—after a certain age to spend the rest of his life in pursuing his spiritual objectives; doing meditation, contemplation and introspection, going on pilgrimage, and generally living away from

the turmoil and worries of a householder's life to prepare himself for a peaceful final exit from this mortal world.

To wit, a self-realised man who wishes to pursue spiritual calm and peacefully prepare for deliverance of his soul at the time of his death would renounce the world, and this entails his voluntarily severing all his ties with his wife one day. Even if a man wishes to continue to live as a householder and for some unfortunate reason has lost his wife, he can always remarry. So therefore, losing a wife is no big deal; it's not a loss that can't be compensated for.

³Remarkable: Lord Ram calls Laxman his "son—*suta*". Truly it was so; even Laxman's mother Sumitra had advised him to treat Lord Ram and Sita as his parents in the forest, and serve them accordingly with due diligence—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 74; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 75.

And of course it goes without saying that Laxman obeyed his mother's instructions in letter and spirit—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 139 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142.]

निज जननी के एक कुमारा । तात तासु तुम्ह प्रान अधारा ॥ १४ ॥
 सौंपेसि मोहि तुम्हहि गहि पानी । सब बिधि सुखद परम हित जानी ॥ १५ ॥
 उतरु काह दैहउँ तेहि जाई । उठि किन मोहि सिखावहु भाई ॥ १६ ॥

nija janani kē ēka kumārā. tāta tāsū tumha prāna adhārā. 14.
 saumpēsi mōhi tumhahi gahi pānī. saba bidhi sukhada parama hita jānī. 15.
 utaru kāha daiha'um̐ tēhi jāī. uṭhi kina mōhi sikhāvahu bhāī. 16.

Oh Son (*tāta*)! You are the only son of your mother (Sumitra); for her you are a source of succour and solace that supports her during her lifetime*¹. (14)

She had held your hand and put you my safe custody thinking that you will be very happy and safe with me (at the time of our leaving Ayodhya)².

[Woe to me! How miserably I have betrayed her faith and trust in me! What face will I show her when she finds I have returned to her without you? Brother, let me die with you.] (15)

Say, what answer would I give her when I return? Oh my brother; arise and tell me this.' (16)

[Note—*This verse can be read as follows also: "You are your mother's only son; you are the one who gives her life meaning and for whom she would like to live."

This interpretation is also correct because the word "*tāta*" meaning a 'son' has been strategically placed in the centre of the verse, serving both its first and second halves simultaneously. So this word can mean either that Lord Ram calls Laxman his son, or that he calls Laxman as the son of Sumitra.

¹Sumitra had two sons: One was Laxman, and the other was his younger brother named Shatrughan. What Lord Ram means here is that Sumitra loved Laxman more because he was her elder son, and his long separation from her must have made her long for him very intensely. Shatrughan, on the other hand, was by her side at Ayodhya, so since she could see and talk with him as often as she wished, this longing was not there. She must be always thinking of Laxman, always remembering him, and always praying for his safety and quick return. It is an age-old adage that “distance creates a stronger bond of love between two individuals”.

Sumitra herself has acknowledged that she loved Laxman more (than Shatrughan) because he was devoted to Lord Ram when she tells him that “a woman who bears a son who is devoted to Lord Ram is a most fortunate mother; otherwise it is better to remain childless and barren”—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 74 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²At the time when Laxman told Lord Ram that he has decided to accompany him to the forest, the Lord sent him to take his mother Sumitra’s permission. Sumitra was overcome with sadness and grief upon learning what had happened, but she had no reservations in granting her permission to Laxman to go with Lord Ram. She was unambiguous and very emphatic in giving her consent, saying that there would be nothing better for Laxman to do than to go with the Lord and serve him in the forest. She also told Laxman that he was safer with the Lord than if he would chose to live in Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73—to Doha no. 75.}]

बहु बिधि सोचत सोच बिमोचन । स्रवत सलिल राजिव दल लोचन ॥ १७ ॥
उमा एक अखंड रघुराई । नर गति भगत कृपाल देखाई ॥ १८ ॥

bahu bidhi sōcata sōca bimōcana. sravata salila rājiva dala lōcana. 17.
umā ēka akhaṇḍa raghurāī. nara gati bhagata krpāla dēkhāī. 18.

What a wonder it is that Lord Ram who is a remover of all sorts of sorrows and grief tormenting a creature would himself be overcome with sorrow and grief!

He shed tears from his lotus-like eyes that rolled down their lids which resembled dew drops dripping down from the petals of the lotus flower¹. (17)

[Lord Shiva tells goddess Uma, his divine consort, why Lord Ram shed the tears. He said—] ‘Oh Uma! Lord Ram (“raghurāī”; the Lord of the Raghu line of kings of Ayodhya) is steady and unchanging, one who remains the same under all circumstances.

So therefore, he is shedding tears and expressing grief here just to act his role of a human being to perfection (in order to conform to Brahma’s boon given to Ravana that he would only be killed by a human being, and it was necessary for Lord Ram to behave like a human being to achieve this objective)².

To wit, Lord Ram is also acting in the way he does to show how a human being is expected to respond when someone who is totally devoted to him is harmed in anyway; or how a wise lord ought to treat his servant and dependant who has offered to serve the lord with everything in his command, even to the extent of

sacrificing his personal comforts and happiness if it makes the lord happy and contented like Laxman had done for Lord Ram.’³ (18)

[Note—¹What an excellent and wonderful example of poetic imagery we find here. Lord Ram’s eyes are likened to the lotus flower, and the tears that are falling from the edges of the eye-lids are compared to dew-drops falling from the tips of the petals of that lotus.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177.

Lord Ram has no worldly emotions; normally he should not have cried. But he had to act like an ordinary man to fulfil the condition of the boon given to Ravana by Brahma—that only a human being would be able to kill the demon.

Lord Shiva is the first and the primary narrator of the Story of the Ramayan which he had narrated to his wife Uma, also known as Parvati. During the course of the reading of Ram Charit Manas we observe that on many an occasion, Shiva is quoted as saying something to Parvati or Uma to clarify certain points that may arouse some kind of doubt in her mind. She was listening attentively, without interfering in the narrative by way of asking questions. But Lord Shiva was an expert narrator; he could guess that his wife wanted to ask a question but was hesitant to disturb his flow. So the Lord himself would pause to clarify a particular point before moving on.

Here, when the narrative came to the point where it is said that “Lord Ram shed tears”, Uma raised an eyebrow, as it seemed incredulous to her that the Supreme Being should cry. Hence, Shiva paused to explain the reason to her, the circumstances surrounding the episode that compelled Lord Ram to weep like an ordinary man.

³Lord Ram here shows not only how Laxman was important for him, but by Laxman’s example the Lord also wishes to show the world how any one who is his ardent devotee—one who has vested all his trust and faith in the Lord, one who trusts the Lord for his security and welfare, one for whom there is no other creature dearer than the Lord, one who serves the Lord with all the diligence, efforts and sincerity in his command, one would sacrifice his own life and its pleasures in order to serve the Lord—is loved most dearly by the Lord and is close to the Lord’s heart.

Lord Ram is extremely merciful and obliging; he showers all the love and grace he has on his devotee as he has done for Laxman here. The Lord says that for him a wife, son, wealth, home and family are of no consequence if his devotee is suffering—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-10 herein above that we have just read a while ago.]

सो०. प्रभु प्रलाप सुनि कान बिकल भए बानर निकर ।

आइ गयउ हनुमान जिमि करुना महँ बीर रस ॥ ६१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

prabhu pralāpa suni kāna bikala bha'ē bānara nikara.

ā'i गया'u hanumāna jimī karunā maham̐ bīra rasa. 61.

Hearing the woeful wailings and lamentations of Lord Ram, the entire horde of monkeys¹ forming the Lord's army, its rank and file, was overcome with sadness; sorrow, despondency and despair cast a pall of gloom over all of them.

Just at that critical juncture² (when everything seemed to be lost, when everyone was distraught and overcome with the dread of what untold misfortunes were in store for them, that would suddenly upset everything and sink the boat midstream), Hanuman came back³ as if the dynamic energy associated with the glorious virtues of heroism, bravery, gallantry and valour suddenly interposes to lift the sagging spirits of those who are burdened by and are on the verge of collapsing under the mighty weight of loss of hope, the feeling of helplessness, of sadness, despondency, grief and dejection. (Sortha no. 61)

[Note—¹An interesting observation can be made here. 'Monkeys' are specifically mentioned as being overcome with gloom reflecting the general sad mood of the hour. But Lord Ram's army had a large number of 'bears' too; what about them?

Well, the chief of the bears was Jamvant, the aged bear who is believed to be an incarnation of Brahma, the creator, himself. Jamvant was well aware of Hanuman's abilities; it was he who, being privy to the greatness of Hanuman, had motivated the latter to show his true form and fulfil Lord Ram's mission when the monkeys and bears were in a similar situation of hopelessness and despair on the shore of the ocean while on a mission to search for Sita. At that time, it was Jamvant whom Hanuman asked for instruction as to what he is supposed to do in Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}

In the present case also, it was Jamvant who had advised that Sushen be brought from Lanka, and had sent Hanuman to fetch him. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 55.}

So therefore, Jamvant was absolutely clear that nothing would stop Hanuman from coming back. This confidence was lacking in the monkey group; none of their leaders, such as Sugriv and Angad, had this secret knowledge about Hanuman. Hence, Jamvant collected his troops and told them to remain calm, as there was nothing to worry or panic.

²Everything seemed to be lost at that point of time. A deep sense of sadness, gloom, helplessness, haplessness and dejection permeated everywhere, and had a sway over everyone present. Just at that time, during those critical moments, a sudden ray of hope emerged like the sun's brilliant rays that pierce through the veil of dark clouds that shroud the firmament to shine its splendorous light on the world below, eliminating darkness and despondency, and replacing it with cheer and energy.

Before midnight everyone waited patiently for Hanuman's return, as they were aware that he has to go and back from afar, a distance of thousands of miles; so ample time must be given to him. Besides this, ample time was left before dawn as it was still before midnight, and hence sufficient time was available during which the herb, once brought, could be immediately administered to Laxman to revive him.

But once midnight passed and yet there was no sign of Hanuman, the situation changed and things became alarming, so much so that even Lord Ram seemed to lose hope and started wailing for Laxman—apropos: Chaupai no. 2 that follows Doha no. 60 herein above.

When the commander-in-chief of the army, or for that matter any leader who is supposed to lead others by being an example of courage, strength, resilience and

steely nerves at times of adversities and down-tides, begins to lament and wail himself in the way the Lord behaved then, one can easily visualise the negative reaction it would produce on those who depend upon him, who look up to him for guidance, courage and support for themselves.

What lesson one learns from this episode is this: A leader ought always to be extremely careful with how he behaves and responds to emergencies and adversities if he wishes others who are under his wings and who he commands to stand firm against the onslaught of misfortunes in order to be able to finally turn the tide in their favour. For, if the leader fails to control his emotions, if he shows signs of losing hope and the will to fight back, then no matter how powerful and resourceful his followers are, the battle will be lost even before it is fully fought to the end.

This is why Lord Shiva paused for a while and explained to Uma, his listener, why Lord Ram behaved in the way he did. It was not because the Lord was ‘weak’ in any sense, but it was because he had other things of greater import in his mind that Lord Shiva has himself hinted in verse no. 18 that precedes this Sortha no. 61 herein above.

³My dear readers; do you recall the Time Machine we referred to earlier while reading Chaupai line no. 1 that followed Doha no. 60 herein above, in which we were following Hanuman and recording the events unfolding at a fast pace?

Well, during the time when Lord Ram wailed for unconscious Laxman before him on the ground, back at Lanka, Hanuman was making rapid progress through the night sky, holding the mountain, with the required herb, in his hand. He was in all haste as he wanted to make up for the precious time that was lost during his encounters with Kalnemi and Bharat. So he zoomed past the firmament like a streaking star. And of course, the ‘scribe and the witnesses’, travelling in the Time Machine, followed him closely!

We will observe here that normally a Doha or a Sortha is preceded by eight lines of a standard Chaupai. But here we find that there are ‘eighteen lines’ in the Chaupai. It is done with a purpose: to indicate that some length of time had elapsed between midnight and the moment when Hanuman actually arrived. To wit, the ‘elongated Chuapai’ symbolized a stretching of the time frame for this particular event.

Meanwhile, all those present on the ground were huddled together, in small and large groups, in eager anticipation of Hanuman’s return, and all had their eyes fixed on the northern sky because it was from this direction Hanuman was expected to come back, as it was in this direction he had gone on his mission of bringing the herb.

Suddenly they could descry a streaking star heading straight towards their camp. Lo and behold—there came their dear Hanuman, dashing like lightening that pierced through the dark cover of the overhead firmament.

At this wonderful and most welcome sight, there was a spontaneous burst of thunderous applause. Everyone was elated and on his feet instantly; cheering and dancing in mad abandon.

Hanuman glided down to land before Lord Ram; he was rushed upon by his waiting companions who embraced and kissed him, and who shed tears now once again, but these tears were of joy and happiness and rejoicing and hope.]

चौ०. हरषि राम भेंटैउ हनुमाना । अति कृतग्य प्रभु परम सुजाना ॥ १ ॥

तुरत बैद तब कीन्हि उपाई । उठि बैठे लछिमन हरषाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

haraṣi rāma bhēṇṭē'u hanumānā. ati kṛtagya prabhu parama sujānā. 1.
turata baida taba kīnhi upāī. uṭhi baiṭhē lachimana haraṣāī. 2.

Lord Ram affectionately embraced Hanuman by clasping the latter to his bosom¹. The Lord felt highly obliged to Hanuman because it is the nature of the gracious and kind Lord to feel obliged for even a small service that is rendered to him by his devotees. (1)

The doctor (**baida**) wasted no time in applying the herb and doing whatever that was needed to revive Laxman. His efforts were successful as Laxman immediately arose and sat up cheerfully (as if nothing had happened to him)². (2)

[Note—¹How fortunate was Hanuman indeed, for it is the second time Lord Ram has thus embraced him. The first opportunity was when he had brought back the news of Sita from Lanka, and at that time the Lord had explicitly said that he will forever remain indebted to Hanuman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 32—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

No other character in the Story of the Ramayan has had this honour and privilege.

²We must acknowledge the expertise of the doctors of that time who were so skilled in their art and craft of using medicinal herbs and plants to cure patients. Laxman woke up fresh and energetic, as if he was fast asleep and was now woken up.

Even as a man feels rested and rejuvenated and fresh after sound sleep, with all his fatigue and weariness of the previous day removed after a restful sleep, Laxman too was revived as if he was fast asleep a while ago, and now was ready to face the challenges of the war.

During the intervening period between being hit by Meghanad's weapon when he fell down unconscious, and when he was revived back to consciousness, Laxman had lain like a Yogi or an ascetic doing deep meditation. During such meditative trance, the practitioner holds his breath and goes into a virtual hibernation mode, when all the activities of his body and metabolism cease. When he ends his trance, he is back to normal. Laxman too knew this trick; so he practiced Yoga by holding his breath for the time he appeared to lie unconscious.

This served an important medical function also—for it helped to contain the spread of the poison that was injected into Laxman by the tip of the spear that struck him. The doctor, Sushen, applied the herb that sucked out the clotted blood and neutralised the poison. So when Laxman was prodded to get up, he was fit and fine.

Credit must be surely given to Sushen who lived up to his profession of a 'doctor' for whom a patient is a patient first and foremost, irrespective of whether he is a friend or a foe, and therefore the doctor is obliged to give his best to his patient even if it means treating his arch enemy.

Sushen was playing with fire, for he was in the pay-roll of Ravana, the arch enemy of Laxman and Lord Ram; Ravana could have roasted him alive for helping revive Laxman.

Now this brings us to another fascinating observation—it is that Ravana should also be given equal credit for not punishing Sushen for reviving Laxman. Ravana accepted and acknowledged the fact that Sushen was merely doing his professional duty of treating a patient to whom he is called to attend. This shows the greatness of Ravana's soul and the high standard of his thinking even though he unfortunately had become a 'demon'. Surely Lord Ram acknowledged the greatness of Ravana's soul, because the Lord, who was actually the Supreme Being in this human form, allowed Ravana's soul to enter his own body at the time of his death, so that the soul of this unfortunate creature could find eternal rest and beatitude—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 104.]

हृदयं लाइ प्रभु भेटेउ भ्राता । हरषे सकल भालु कपि ब्राता ॥ ३ ॥
कपि पुनि बैद तहाँ पहुँचावा । जेहि बिधि तबहिं ताहि लइ आवा ॥ ४ ॥

hr̥dayam̐ lā'i prabhu bhēṭē'u bhrātā. haraṣē sakala bhālu kapi brātā. 3.
kapi puni baida tahām̐ pahum̐cāvā. jēhi bidhi tabahim̐ tāhi la'i āvā. 4.

Lord Ram picked up Laxman and embraced him by clasping him to his bosom. Meanwhile, all the bears and monkeys¹ were exhilarated and felt extremely happy. (3)

In the mean time, the Kapi (Hanuman) then took Sushen back to Lanka and replaced his home in the same spot from where it was earlier lifted and brought along with its occupant. (4)

[Note—¹This clearly means that both the bears and monkeys were standing or sitting around Lord Ram. In this context, the reader ought to refer to note appended to Sortha no. 61 herein above where attention is drawn to the mention of only monkeys for feeling sad when they saw Lord Ram, and not of the bears. The reason is explained there itself.]

यह बृतांत दसानन सुनेऊ । अति बिषाद पुनि पुनि सिर धुनेऊ ॥ ५ ॥
ब्याकुल कुंभकरन पहिं आवा । बिबिध जतन करि ताहि जगावा ॥ ६ ॥

yaha br̥ttānta dasānana sunē'ū. ati biṣāda puni puni sira dhunē'ū. 5.
byākula kumbhakarana pahim̐ āvā. bibidha jatana kari tāhi jagāvā. 6.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard of this development (that Laxman had regained consciousness, is hale and hearty as earlier, and that he seething with anger and full of wrath, raring to face the demons in the battle-field with renewed vigour and vengeance), he was crestfallen, gloomy and flabbergasted.

Being overcome with a sense of hopelessness, despondency and consternation, and fearing for the worst, Ravana repeatedly beat his head in frustration and exasperation¹. (5)

Agitated and exasperated, Ravana went to Kumbhakaran (his younger brother), and employed different methods to wake him up from his deep slumber². (6)

[Note—¹Ravana was elated when he heard earlier that Laxman was fatally wounded and lay unconscious in the battle-field. He welcomed this news because if something ill happened to Laxman, it would mean Lord Ram would be extremely demoralized, and that would bear negatively on his will to fight the rest of the war with vigour and enthusiasm. Not only the Lord himself, but his whole army too would be overcome with gloom and loss of hope with Laxman fallen, and it is an axiom that an army with low morale has lost the battle even before it actually commences. So the news of Laxman's fainting at the end of the previous day's battle was a matter of rejoicing for the demons.

Ravana had done all he could to stop Hanuman from bringing the required herb that would revive Laxman; or at least delay him from bringing it within the allotted time slot. But all his hopes were dashed when the news came that Laxman has got up hale and hearty, and he is cheerful and full of vigour as earlier. Ravana was astonished that Laxman would not show any signs of fatigue or pain, and from what he was informed of Laxman it seemed that the latter was completely comfortable and relaxed as if he had just got up from a refreshing sleep.

This unexpected development unveiled Ravana's darkest fears lurking in his heart, stoking terror in him, for now he feared for the worst. He was sure that now Laxman would unleash the full force of his wrath and unreserved vengeance upon him and the rest of the demons army as a means of punishing them, and to exact the severest retribution from the whole demon race. And Laxman's wrath was no ordinary anger; he was a personified form of Seshnath, the legendary thousand-headed celestial Serpent, and when this Serpent begins to pour out his scorching venom, it would virtually boil the whole demon race in a cauldron of fire from which there is no escape.

Ravana also feared that the monkey and bear army would now fight with extra vengeance and renewed energy, and with the knowledge and experience of what they could do with the demons as witnessed in the previous days of battle, the future seemed hopelessly dark, gloomy and doomed.

Moreover, Ravana was highly worried and full of consternation about the safety of his son Meghanad, because it was he who had wounded Laxman the previous day in the battle-field, and hence it was natural that Meghanad would be Laxman's first target to be brought down in the next day's battle; Meghanad would have to bear the brunt of Laxman's wrath if he was seen by the latter in the battle-field.

This is the simple and obvious reason why Ravana chose not to send Meghanad into the battle ground the next day; instead he decided to request Kumbhakaran, Ravana's younger brother, to lead the demon forces in the next day's battle.

The question is: Why did Ravana showed exasperation and beat his head so much?

The answer is as follows: Like Lord Ram playing his role of a human being to perfection, Ravana too decided to play his role as a vicious demon and an arch enemy of the Lord—to ensure that the Lord certainly kills him so that his soul can, at last, find its liberation and deliverance; so that his soul can find the emancipation and salvation that eludes it; so that his soul can attain the much sought-after beatitude and felicity; so that his soul does not miss its only opportunity to attain eternal bliss and

happiness, a chance to attain which would be lost for good should, for some reason, Lord Ram shows his characteristic grace and mercy upon him (Ravana) and spares him for all his sins and mischief that he has committed all along.

And one more final question: Why would Ravana feel so upset by Laxman's revival? The answer is obvious: it is the time of war, and every fallen great warrior in the enemy's side was celebrated as one point nearer to final victory over him. Laxman was not an ordinary warrior; he was the second-in-command of Lord Ram's army, his brother, and equally powerful and able as the Lord. This meant that if Laxman was out of the way, if he was fatally incapacitated, then Lord Ram would be so demoralized, so greatly overcome with grief, so much handicapped, and so deeply ruined emotionally that he would lose the will to fight the war any longer, and even if he continued to wage it then it would be a half-hearted effort that would certainly lead to his defeat.

So during the night, while Laxman lay unconscious on the ground, the demons must have been celebrating an imminent victory that would be theirs the next day when they would easily be able to rout the Lord's demoralized army. When Ravana's spy rushed to him to convey the news that Laxman had been revived, and is hale and hearty enough that he is raring to go to the battle-field as soon as the day broke, Ravana felt that all was lost; he trembled in consternation and the fearful thought of facing a raging Laxman in the battle-field, as it was now certain that Laxman would hit back with full force and vengeance at the demons, pouring all the fiery venom that he has at his command on them—for remember, Laxman was a manifestation of the legendary Seshnath, the serpent with a thousand hoods.

Ravana was not only worried for the demons in general, he was particularly concerned all the more gravely for his own son Meghanad, because it was he who had shot Laxman the day before, and so certainly he would be the primary target of Laxman's seething anger. This is the reason that when the battle resumed the next day, which was the third day of the war, he persuaded his brother Kumbhakaran to go and face the enemy, instead of Meghanad. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-12 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

Ravana's beating of head is a visible sign of his extreme exasperation and frustration; it shows that he felt all was lost and the danger to the demons was all the more aggravated. The hour of celebration for the demons when Laxman fell to the ground wounded and unconscious now transmuted into an hour of despair and despondency when he was revived, while the reverse was the case that prevailed in Lord Ram's camp.

²Kumbhakaran had got a boon from Brahma, the creator, that he would sleep for long times at a stretch, for six months continuously. It was because when Brahma saw his huge body and excellent appetite, he felt that if this fellow were to eat daily then the whole creation would suffer from a virtual famine as he would devour everything worth eating sooner rather than latter. So the creator asked goddess Saraswati, the goddess of speech and wisdom, to corrupt his mind so that he asks for a boon to sleep, which Brahma would gladly grant instantly, without losing a moment and giving Kumbhakaran a chance to realize the stupidity of his request. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.}

If we closely examine the narrative of the Ramayan, any version we chose to read, one thing will be found to be common—that Kumbhakaran came to learn about the destructive war, and the reason why it started, only now when Ravana went to arouse him from his deep sleep and asked him to help by joining the war for the

honour of the family and the demon race. Kumbhakaran was astonished by this request, and he saw Ravana's face pale and ridden with worries, something he had never ever seen before. So he asked his brother what has happened, upon which Ravana disclosed about Sita's abduction, and the subsequent developments leading to the current war.

It is because he had been fast asleep all through; and he was not at all aware of what calamity had befallen upon the unfortunate demon race due to the madness of his brother Ravana. As we shall soon read below, when Kumbhakaran comes to learn about the ill developments, he chided Ravana and remonstrated with him in the strongest possible terms.

That Kumbhakaran would sleep for long periods of time suited Ravana well enough though, because with Vibhishan too kept out of the way and marginalized by allowing him to follow his religious practices privately in seclusion, Ravana ensured that he was free to do whatever he wished to do, with no one to oppose him. And when Vibhishan dared to oppose Ravana once, he was kicked out of the kingdom unceremoniously (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 41).

Since Kumbhakaran was in deep slumber, it was difficult to wake him up easily. So many methods were employed: perhaps loud music was played right beside his ears; perhaps he was poked by sharp pointed weapons; perhaps something was inserted in his nose and ears and mouth to titillate him; perhaps his creeper-like body hairs were pulled; perhaps giant demons danced and thumped on his chest.]

जागा निसिचर देखिअ कैसा । मानहुँ कालु देह धरि बैसा ॥ ७ ॥
कुंभकरन बूझा कहु भाई । काहे तव मुख रहे सुखाई ॥ ८ ॥

jāgā nīsicara dēkhi'a kaisā. mānahum' kālu dēha dhari baisā. 7.
kumbhakarana būjhā kahu bhāī. kāhē tava mukha rahē sukhāī. 8.

When at last the demon (Kumbhakaran) woke up, he looked like a gigantic and fearful personification of Kaal, the god of death, itself. (3)

Looking around he saw Ravana close by. Observing that Ravana had a pale face and a countenance that seemed to be overcast with dark clouds of fear and worries, Kumbhakaran enquired, 'Oh brother, what is the matter; why is your face so pale, and why is your countenance so lifeless, dry and withered? What is so serious a thing to afflict you so much?' (4)

कथा कही सब तेहिं अभिमानी । जेहि प्रकार सीता हरि आनी ॥ ९ ॥
तात कपिन्ह सब निसिचर मारे । महा महा जोधा संघारे ॥ १० ॥
दुर्मुख सुररिपु मनुज अहारी । भट अतिकाय अकंपन भारी ॥ ११ ॥
अपर महोदर आदिक बीरा । परे समर महि सब रनधीरा ॥ १२ ॥

kathā kahī saba tēhim abhimānī. jēhi prakāra sītā hari ānī. 9.
tāta kapinha saba nīsicara mārē. mahā mahā jōdhā saṅghārē. 10.

dur mukha suraripu manuja ahārī. bhaṭa atikāya akampana bhārī. 11.
apara mahōdara ādika bīrā. parē samara mahi saba ranadhīrā. 12.

Ravana proudly told him about the whole affair, about how he had stolen Sita and brought her to Lanka¹. (9)

Ravana said, ‘My dear (tāta). The monkeys have slayed a greater part of the demon army; all the great among demon warriors have been killed. (10)

The most formidable demons warriors, such as the ones who had the most ferocious countenances (dur mukha), those who were renowned enemies of the gods and terrified them with their mere presence (suraripu), those who devoured human beings and used them as their fodder (manuja ahārī), those warriors who had huge bodies (atikāya --- bhārī), those were steady and sturdy in the battle-field (akampana)--- (11),

--- In addition to them, the great demon named Mahodar, and many more like him (apara mahōdara ādika bīrā)—well, unfortunately, all have fallen dead in the battle-field.’ (12)

[Note—¹What was there for Ravana to be so proud of? Well, Ravana meant that it was a matter of great pride for him to have been able to bring Sita because it was not an easy task. Why was it not an easy task? It is because her husband, Lord Ram, was a mighty brave warrior, one who had broken the formidable bow of Lord Shiva to marry Sita in Janakpur, and was an incarnate Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, and therefore fact that Lord Ram could not protect his wife Sita while Ravana took her away was naturally a great feat in its own right, something to boast of.

This above reason is from the perspective of this gross mortal world. But if we are to go deeper, then the meaning changes: from the spiritual perspective Ravana rejoiced that at last he has found a way to compel the Supreme Being to come all the way from heaven right up to his doorstep, in Lanka, to grant his soul liberation and deliverance from the cage of a sinful demon-body in which it is trapped, and thereby grant emancipation and salvation to him, all done so easily and without the hassles of having to undergo hardships associated with the usual methods that lead to this exalted destiny of the soul, such as doing Tapa (penance, austerity), Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Vairagya (renunciation), Yagya (sacrifices), Vrat (religious observances) etc.

Great sages, ascetics and hermits spend their lifetime searching for the Lord but fail; yet Ravana managed to get the same Lord come fact-to-face before him, and then compelled the Lord to free his soul from the evil body of a demon by piercing it with his arrows to let the soul escape from it. So was this not a great achievement by Ravana to be worthy of being proud of? Surely it was; and so he was.]

दो०. सुनि दसकंधर बचन तब कुंभकरन बिलखान ।

जगदंबा हरि आनि अब सठ चाहत कल्याण ॥ ६२ ॥

dōhā.

sunī dasakandhara bacana taba kumbhakaraṇa bilakhāṇa.
jagadambā hari āṇi aba saṭṭha cāhata kalyāṇa. 62.

Hearing the words of Ravana, the one with ten shoulders (*dasakandhara*), Kumbhakaraṇa was taken aback; he lamented gravely and expressed his displeasure unreservedly.

Sternly admonishing Ravana for his misadventure, Kumbhakaraṇa said, ‘Oh you wicked and stupid one. After having abducted the Mother of the World (*jagadambā hari āṇi*), how foolish it is of you to expect anything good for yourself? Say, how incongruous and incredulous it is for you to expect wellness after what you have done!’¹ (Doha no. 62)

[Note—¹One will not fail to observe that Kumbhakaraṇa’s advice is on the same lines of what Vibhishan had said earlier at the time when Ravana kicked him out. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 38; and Doha no. 40 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}]

Let us take a deeper look at the episode of Kumbhakaraṇa—from the moment he was woken up by his elder brother Ravana, the way he reacted when first informed by him of Sita’s abduction, the way he has blessed and congratulated his younger brother Vibhishan for taking refuge with Lord Ram a little while later when the two met each other in the battle-field, and the final moments of his death when his soul, his Atma, emerged from his body as a brilliant shaft of light to go straight and enter the divine body of Lord Ram—because we have much to learn and know from it.

My dear reader, do thou wot what is so special about this episode? Well, read on: let us have an open mind, a broad perspective, and let us have knowledge that is eclectic and wide-angled.

First, it is known that Kumbhakaraṇa used to sleep for six months at a time, wake up for a single day, and then go back to sleep for another six-month period. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.} When he was woken up by Ravana and told about his abduction of Sita, Kumbhakaraṇa was not only astonished but also expressed excessive shock and horror at this news. This clearly implies that when he last went to sleep approximately six months ago, Sita hadn’t been stolen by Ravana by then, and she was abducted sometime after Kumbhakaraṇa last went to sleep—because he was totally ignorant of this incident of Sita being abducted and kept hostage in Lanka, for if he had been aware of it then previously there is no sense in Ravana informing him about it now, and besides this, the way Kumbhakaraṇa reacted with utter dismay and great shock on being informed of Sita’s abduction clearly shows that he was totally ignorant of this development. {Apropos: Doha no. 62 herein above.}

These facts lead us to conclude that ‘not more than six months had elapsed between the time Sita was abducted by Ravana and the outbreak of the war’. Remember: Kumbhakaraṇa had yet not completed his normal sleeping time of ‘six months’ as is evident from Ravana forcing him awake by employing many different means. {Apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62 herein above.}

And, soon after the war ended, Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya with his entourage aboard an air plane known as Pushpak. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 119.}

This leads us to conclude that the War of Lanka was fought at the fag end of Lord Ram’s fourteen years of forest exile, for immediately after than he returned to Ayodhya.

The second important observation is this: At the time of death, Kumbhakaran's soul had emerged as a brilliant shaft of light to enter the divine body of Lord Ram, leading to his final deliverance and attainment of emancipation and salvation. This rare happening had even surprised the gods and sages who were astonished that a demon would attain such an exalted destiny for himself, when his 'Atma' would merge with the 'Parmatma', the supreme Atma, to become one with it, a destiny that is extolled in laudatory terms in the Upanishads. From the perspective of metaphysics, Kumbhakaran had attained true 'Moksha', a destiny which marks dissolution of the soul and its merger with the cosmic Soul from where there is no return. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 71 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Well, come to think of it—not every one has this great privilege; not even the greatest of sages and ascetics and hermits who spend their entire lifetime doing meditation, contemplation, austerities, penances, sacrifices, and practicing many assorted religious vows and observances are able to achieve this kind of end. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 104 said in reference to Ravana, the only other character in the Story of the Ramayan to attain this exalted stature that grants exemplary beatitude and felicity to the soul of a dying creature.}

What does this mean? Surely it points to the fact that Kumbhakaran's Atma, his 'true self', his soul, was very pure and holy, though the body might have been evil and sinful. But no, that was also not the case as it appears to be on the face. Kumbhakaran had not indulged in cruelty and mayhem like Ravana, he had not indulged in tormenting the creatures and making life hell for them like Ravana. How come so? Because he had been sleeping for six months, and on the one day he woke up he spent it on eating and drinking, only to retire to sleep once again. This clearly and irrefutably means that he had not gone on any bloody campaigns to terrorize the world; he had not soaked his hands with blood of poor creatures. So therefore, even his demon body was not spoiled with the blood of innocent creatures like the way other demons' bodies had been.

Then, this was not all. The world thought that Kumbhakaran was 'sleeping', but a wise man who has read the Upanishads and understands their philosophy would have a completely different take on it. To wit, Kumbhakaran had been lying in a "Yoga Nidra", a deep sleep state of consciousness entered into by enlightened ascetics when they rise to a higher level in the practice of Yoga (meditation). It's that state when the Atma, the 'true self', which is pure consciousness, completely detaches itself from the body of a creature, both at its gross level that is related to the sense organs and known as the 'Jagrat or waking state', as well as at its subtle level related to the mind-intellect complex known as the 'Swapna or dreaming state', to attain the third exalted state of existence of the consciousness that is known as 'Sushupta or deep sleep state'. This latter state of existence is a transitional stage between the first two states and the fourth state of spiritual bliss known as the 'Turiya state', beyond which is the fifth and final stage marked by full attainment of beatitude and felicity and is known by the name 'Turiyateet', i.e. that which is 'beyond Turiya'.

Now well, so Kumbhakaran was not sleeping the way we understand someone to be asleep; he was in a 'Yoga Nidra' for six month period when the ignorant world thought he was sleeping the way we understand the word to mean.

So that means he was silently doing Yoga (meditation) by practicing Pranayam (breath control exercises prescribed in Yoga) during those six months.

If this is so, if it is argued that he was doing Yoga during sleep as explained above, then how do we explain his eating and drinking heartily on the day he was

awake? Well, well, my dear readers. Haven't I said at the beginning of this note that those who understand the philosophy of the Upanishads would think differently about Kumbhakaran sleeping and eating?

Let us explain. Kumbhakaran was not eating food to feed his gross physical body, or to enjoy food for its taste or flavour, but he was eating as an offering made to the 'Pran', the vital life-giving force of Nature, known as the vital winds, which personify Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, that resided in his body. It was just like the way food is offered to the sacred fire during a fire sacrifice. The food-offerings put in the fire pit of a fire sacrifice are meant for the fire god who represents the cosmic fire element, known as the 'Vaishwanar Agni', which provides strength and energy and nutrition to all other gods representing other elements of creation. To wit, the offerings made to the sacred fire are actually meant for the different gods who represent the many elements of creation that are essential for existence of the world.

We have ample proof of this esoteric concept in the Upanishads. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad, which is the 16th Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 52-53 says that the best form of a fire sacrifice is not done internally when the worshipper offers all that he eats as an offering to Brahm, the Supreme Being, represented by the pure cosmic Consciousness that resides in his own body in the form of the 'Pran', the vital winds that keep his body alive.

The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, which is the 29th Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 15 clearly states that the cosmic 'Pran', the life infusing and life sustaining factor of Nature, is known as the Vaishwanar (Pran) as well as the Viraat Purush (the cosmic Male; the Supreme Being). Since the entire creation is a manifestation of this Viraat Purush, it follows that the Pran residing inside the body as the life-sustaining vital winds (such as Pran, Apaana, Udyana, Vyana and Samaana) are the microcosmic revelation of the cosmic Vaishwanar.

The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 2 enunciates the Mantra for sanctifying food offered to Brahm, the Supreme Lord who resides in the body of the worshipper in the form of his Pran, the vital winds that keep him alive.

And then, the Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 12 describes the Mantras which are used to honour the five vital winds as representative of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

So therefore, when we read that upon waking up Kumbhakaran had gulped down buffaloes and jars of wine, it must be kept in mind that in ancient times animal sacrifices were normal during the rituals associated with a formal fire sacrifice, and so was the use of wine in some secret and obscure forms of worship rituals practiced by certain ancient tribes. This form of worship was not mainstream though, but nevertheless it was practiced; it was called 'Vaama pantha', the path of worship that is not normal and away from the routine. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64.}

The third remarkable thing we observe is the way Kumbhakaran has lavishly praised Vibhishan for his decision to surrender to Lord Ram and take refuge with the Lord. He has called Vibhishan a 'jewel' of the demon race, and has asked him to continue with his devotion to Lord Ram. This also means that Kumbhakaran's soul was as pious as that of Vibhishan. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 64 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-9 that precede it.}

A question now arises: If all what is said herein above is true, then why did Kumbhakaran fought ferociously with the monkey and bears, without any mercy?

Well, the answer is this: He wished to remain loyal to his race and family; he wished not to go down in the pages of history as a betrayer of his own people like

Vibhishan had been; he wished to die a martyr's death, as a brave warrior, instead of as a coward who turned his back to the enemy who was at the throat of his clan. His brother Ravana had pleaded with him to go join the battle for the honour of his family and race, so Kumbhakaran could not turn this request down.

There is one more outstanding point to note: When Vibhishan had told Ravana that he had committed a grave error by abducting Sita and he should give her back to Lord Ram, Ravana had become fierce with anger, kicking Vibhishan out of the kingdom. But remarkably no such outrage was expressed by Ravana when Kumbhakaran says almost the same thing. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede it (relating Vibhishan); (ii) Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63 (Kumbhakran's advice).}

What may have been the probable reason for Ravana overlooking Kumbhakaran's apparent favour of Lord Ram? The answer is simple: A fierce war was underway, and Ravana needed strong hands to tackle a formidable enemy. Ravana knew well enough that Kumbhakaran was a mighty warrior who had virtually the same potential as he himself had. So it would not have been wise and prudent to antagonize him at this crucial juncture, because his services were immediately needed. Vibhishan, on the other hand, was not a great warrior; he was of a pious mind and a peaceful person; he did not have the same quality of ruthlessness, viciousness and battle-field valour as his other two brothers, Ravana and Kumbhakaran, had.

So therefore, keeping in mind the requirements of the war and one's usefulness in it as viewed from Ravana's perspective of the things, Vibhishan was dispensable, but Kumbhakaran was not. Hence, Vibhishan was kicked out, but Kumbhakaran was tolerated.

Not only this, Kumbhakaran has openly thanked his fate that he was so fortunate that he would now be able to see a personified beautiful form of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram straight before his eyes; how lucky was he. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 63 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

This thought is remarkably similar to that of Marich who too had felt similarly happy that he would get a chance to see the beauteous form of Lord Ram at close quarters. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 26 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}

Lord Ram, the all-knowing and omniscient Lord of the world, knew these secret thoughts of Kumbhakaran, and so he provided both of them, Marich earlier and Kumbhakaran now, an exalted destiny for their souls. Both were shot by the arrow of Lord Ram, and both attained deliverance for their souls.

There is another very interesting interpretation of the event of "Ravana waking up Kumbhakaran from his deep slumber". Ravana thought to himself that if Kumbhakaran was not woken up now, but allowed to sleep in his usual way, then he will miss the golden opportunity of finding deliverance at the hands of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, himself, who has come all the way to his very doorstep to provide this reward to him? How will Kumbhakaran's soul, i.e. his Atma—which Ravana knew to be holy and pure consciousness like his own Atma—attain freedom from the gross body of a demon if he keeps on sleeping and avoids being killed by Lord Ram in the battle-field, because only when his body gets pierced by the arrows of the Lord would his Atma find a chance to escape from it and migrate to its parent form known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma that is represented by Lord Ram?

So it was necessary to wake him up and motivate him to go and voluntarily offer his body as a sacrifice so that his ‘pure conscious self’, his Atma, could find emancipation and salvation.

The war was to end very soon, and Lord Ram would then immediately return home to Ayodhya. All those demon warriors, including Ravana himself, who had joined the war, would be granted the spiritual reward of liberation and deliverance of their souls by the grace of the Lord. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

To wit, this was not an ordinary war waged by Ravana; it was a sort of a ‘fire sacrifice’ undertaken by him to ensure that his sinful demon friends, the whole lot of them, find a chance to break free from the cycle of sins and evils to which they were ignorantly and involuntarily hooked, by offering themselves to the sacred fire symbolized by the war in which the Supreme Being has himself come to accept such offerings. Just as gross things are burnt when put in a raging fire and only pure metal survives, just as all impurities of gold are burnt when it is put in the fire, leaving pure gold in its wake, the sinful and evil gross body of the demons were reduced to ashes in a symbolic way when they got killed in the battle-field—because for a true warrior, death in the battle-field, fighting the enemy bravely and gallantly, is equivalent to the greatest of sacrifices that can be done by a person during a religious fire ceremony, which is ‘self-sacrifice’—thereby granting deliverance, emancipation and salvation to their soul which is always pure and holy.

If Kumbhakaran was allowed to sleep and escape being slayed by Lord Ram while every one of the demon race got this rare honour of personally having a chance to see the Supreme Being from such close quarters while engaging in a hand-to-hand war in close proximity with him, and dying while uttering his holy name to attain emancipation and salvation, it would be a grave injustice done to Kumbhakaran if he was also not made a part of this great self-sacrifice ceremony organized by Ravana, the king of the demon race.

Verily indeed and forsooth, it would have been him very selfish and unjust for Ravana if he had not first sent all those who were loyal to him to receive the spiritual reward of liberation, deliverance, emancipation, salvation, and attainment of eternal peace and beatitude before he himself stood up to receive it.

If this is the logic behind Ravana pushing all the demons to the battle-field to get themselves killed in order to enable them to attain deliverance from their gross demon body, then why did he spare Vibhishan from attaining this exalted fate? It is because Vibhishan was the only one in the entire demon race who lived a life that was visibly saintly, pious and holy, while all the other demons lived a life that was visibly sinful, evil and cruel. Ravana left Vibhishan behind to carry forward the family’s name to future generations, as well as to lead all those demons who survived the war by being anointed as the next king of Lanka. And this is actually what had happened—for after the war ended, Vibhishan was appointed as the next king of the kingdom of the demons of Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 116.}]

चौ०. भल न कीन्ह तैं निसिचर नाहा । अब मोहि आइ जगाएहि काहा ॥ १ ॥

अजहूँ तात त्यागि अभिमाना । भजहु राम होइहि कल्याणा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhala na kīnha tair̥n nīsicara nāhā. aba mōhi ā'i jagā'ēhi kāhā. 1.
ajahūṁ' tāta tyāgi abhimānā. bhajahu rāma hō'ihī kalyānā. 2.

[Kumbhakaran said to Ravana—] ‘Oh you lord (king) of the demon race (nīsicara nāhā)! What you have done is not at all good and advisable. Now that the damage has already been done, what is the use of your waking me up now at this late stage (for nothing can be done now by me to rectify the grave mistakes committed by you)¹? (1)

But still I would like to advise you that it is never too late to make amends for one's errors that are committed inadvertently by him due to some reason, while there is still time for doing it. So you ought to discard your ego and abandon your haughtiness even at this stage, and instead seek your welfare and well-being by worshipping Lord Ram and paying your obeisance to him (before the things go out of hand)². (2)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran essentially says that if his brother Ravana had woken him up earlier for consultation before stealing Sita, which was done to avenge the insult of Supernakha by Lord Ram for her pervert behaviour and attempt to corrupt the Lord, and which has ended in the start of this devastating war, then Kumbhakaran would have surely stopped Ravana from taking this rash action. If he still wanted to avenge Supernakha's insult, some other less dangerous means could have been devised.

But that chance has been lost now; for the war has already commenced. Kumbhakaran laments this and says that it would have been so much better if Ravana had woken him earlier before the situation went out of control.

²However, still there was hope; still something can be done to salvage the situation and prevent a calamity from happening. But for this it was obligatory that Ravana would have to overcome his ego and stubborn nature; he would have to prepare to make compromises; he would have to become polite and amenable. He will have to send a hint to Lord Ram that he was ready for a peaceful settlement; that he was ready to pay a tribute to end the war. It's worth it.

Vibhishan too had advised Ravana in the same way as Kumbhakaran does now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.]

हैं दससीस मनुज रघुनायक । जाके हनूमान से पायक ॥ ३ ॥
अहह बंधु तैं कीन्हि खोटाई । प्रथमहिं मोहि न सुनाएहि आई ॥ ४ ॥

hair̥n dasasīsa manuja raghunāyaka. jākē hanūmāna sē pāyaka. 3.
ahaha bandhu tair̥n kīnhi khōṭā'ī. prathamahir̥n mōhi na sunā'ēhi ā'ī. 4.

Oh ten-headed Ravana. Can the Lord of the Raghus (i.e. Lord Ram) be an ordinary human being if Hanuman serves him and becomes his messenger; is it ever possible that Hanuman would serve an ordinary man¹? (3)

Oh my dear brother; you have committed a serious mistake, a grave error, by not coming to me earlier and telling me everything. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, it is not possible that Hanuman would ever serve someone who is an ordinary human being. It is because Hanuman is a manifestation of Rudra, the eleventh form of Lord Shiva, the Great God and the third Deity of the Trinity.]

Kumbhakaran draws Ravana's attention to the many stupendous and heroic deeds of Hanuman, such as his crossing the ocean, the burning of Lanka, the single-handed crushing of a huge demon army, the bringing of the mountain with the herb, and so on. Is this the feat of an ordinary monkey? Is Ravana blind not to see what stares in his eyes? Say, why would Hanuman, who has such magnificent abilities, ever wish to serve a human being? Naturally there is more than what meets the eye.]

कीन्हेहु प्रभु बिरोध तेहि देवक । सिव बिरंचि सुर जाके सेवक ॥ ५ ॥
नारद मुनि मोहि ग्यान जो कहा । कहतेउँ तोहि समय निरबहा ॥ ६ ॥

kīnhēhu prabhu birōdha tēhi dēvaka. siva birañci sura jākē sēvaka. 5.
nārada muni mōhi gyāna jō kahā. kahatē'um' tōhi samaya nirabahā. 6.

What a stupid folly have you indulged in by creating animosity with the Lord (Sri Ram) who is served (revered, worshipped and adored) by all the gods, including Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation and the third god of the Trinity) and Biranchi (i.e. Brahma, the creator of this physical world)¹. (5)

I would have enlightened you about the information that sage Narad had given me in long time back (if you had told me about your plans earlier), but it is too late for it now². (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed by others also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance (i) Malyawant has advised the same thing to Ravana in Lanka Kand, Doha no. 48-b; (ii) the teacher of Kaagbhusund has said the same thing to the latter in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 106; (iii) Vibhishan too reiterates this thing to Ravana in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 38; (iv) Mandodari, Ravana's wife, has done it in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6; (v) and Ravana's messenger named Suka endorses this view in Sundar Kand, Doha no. 56-a.

To wit, everyone who could muster courage felt that Ravana was committing a grave error by being hostile to Lord Ram, and that he would be doing great favour to the demon race by apologizing and making amends with the Lord.

²What was this knowledge that Narad had imparted to Kumbhakaran which he refers to here? It is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 59-65.

Kumbhakaran told Ravana about this meeting as follows: "I once met sage Narad while spending a night in a large city. When I asked the sage from whither he was coming, he told me he had been to the court of the gods in heaven. There I heard the gods talking about their prayer to Lord Vishnu to help them overcome the horrors from which they are suffering due to Ravana's cruelty. Lord Vishnu has promised them that he would personally take charge of the matter, come down to the mortal world in the form of Lord Ram, and eliminate their tormentor. Narad then went his way. If I had had a chance I would have told you about this meeting and warned you,

but unfortunately that chance was missed, perhaps because the Lord did not wish to alert you, so he prevailed upon my mind and made me forget it.”

We have read earlier that Vibhishan has also told Ravana about the impending doom as soon as he was informed about it by a messenger of sage Pulastya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 39-b.]

अब भरि अंक भेंटु मोहि भाई । लोचन सुफल करौं मैं जाई ॥ ७ ॥
स्याम गात सरसीरुह लोचन । देखौं जाइ ताप त्रय मोचन ॥ ८ ॥

aba bhari aṅka bhēṇṭu mōhi bhā'ī. lōcana suphala karaūṁ mairi jā'ī. 7.
syāma gāta sarasīruha lōcana. dēkhaūṁ jā'i tāpa traya mōcana. 8.

But anyway, whatever has happened has happened for good (for Lord Ram is so merciful and kind and compassionate that it certainly cannot be otherwise).

[And what is this 'good'? It is this—] Now embrace me affectionately and bless me, for now I shall go and feel blessed by seeing the beautiful form of Lord Ram (which will be an excellent reward for my eyes and their ability to see)¹. (7)

[What will I see that would make me feel so blessed and fortunate?] I shall go and see, to my heart's content, the divine form of the Lord that has a dark complexion and lotus-like eyes; it is a holy form that grants liberation and deliverance from all the three torments that are associated with this mundane gross world; it is form that eliminates all the sufferings from which a creature suffers interminably in this world². (8)

[Note—¹Wonderful indeed! Kumbhakaran embraces his dear brother Ravana to bid him good-bye, and to thank him for not forgetting to remember him when the time came for the deliverance of the souls of the members of the demon race. He heartily thanked Ravana for waking him up so that he does not miss the bus by not being able to avail of this golden chance of attaining freedom from the ignominy of having a demon body, as well as attaining an eternal form of life as compared to a mortal one that he has at present.

Let's elaborate this a bit more. The body of a creature is mortal and perishable; it takes a birth and dies. Any thing that has a beginning (birth) and an end (death) does not come within the definition of being eternal; it is mortal with a limited span of life. The soul of the creature, called his Atma, is his 'true self', and it is pure consciousness, which is an eternal entity, as opposed to his body which is gross and mortal.

As long as this Atma lives inside the body and thinks, though erroneously, that the body is its identity, the creature remains mortal and gross. But when the Atma of a creature overcomes this ignorance and finds freedom from this delusion, it realizes that its true nature is eternal and pure consciousness. When this enlightenment dawns inside the creature, he is said to be self-realised. He also realizes that his Atma is but a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma, the Supreme Being. This Atma transcends the limitations of time and space; it is an eternal and universal entity.

Hence, when a chance is afforded to a wise, enlightened and self-realised person to discard his mortal, gross and perishable body, and give his Atma the chance

to attain eternity by escaping from the body, to fly out of it like a freed bird escaping from its cage into the broad wide space of the sky beyond, never to return to the cage and get trapped again, the lucky person who gets a chance to voluntarily shed his body and let his Atma emerge from it to find eternal freedom from this bondage would profusely thank his stars and feel ecstatic, exuberant and exhilarated.

This fortunate person would especially thank, feel highly grateful and obliged to someone who makes this exalted destiny possible for him. So therefore, Kumbhakaran now thanks and feels highly grateful to his brother Ravana for giving him this chance; he expresses his happiness by affectionately embracing Ravana and telling him that he will forever remain thankful to him for letting him “have the rare reward of possessing eyes and their ability to see by being able to look at the divine form of Lord Ram from so close quarters”.

Now, come to think of it. Kumbhakaran knew very well that he is going to die soon, but still he feels so happy. Well, he was not going to die an ordinary death that would keep his soul trapped in the cycle of birth and death—for that would have been a matter of concern, and certainly nothing to rejoice. But he was going to gain an eternal life, to become immortal, to attain emancipation and salvation, to enjoy the fruit of beatitude and felicity.

Kumbhakaran was to meet the Supreme Being personally in the form of Lord Ram; he was to offer his gross evil body of a demon as a sacrifice to ensure liberation and deliverance of his pure and sinless Atma that was unfortunately trapped in it. So then, there was no cause for any regret; such a death was not dying, but it was the stepping stone to an eternal life.

Remember the sacred words of the Holy Bible when it is said: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” {Holy Bible, New Testament, St. John, Chapter 11, verse nos. 25-26.}

And once again, a creature who has faith in the Lord, who believes in the mercy of the Lord, who decides to go and face the Lord, who mentally surrenders before him, is blessed by the Lord never to perish for he grants them eternal life. Has it not been said in the Holy Bible that “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” {Holy Bible, New Testament, St. John, Chapter 10, verse nos. 27-28.}

So, Kumbhakaran was indeed very fortunate and privileged that he had this wisdom inspite of being a demon. And Lord Ram, who is omniscient and all-knowing, duly appreciated his sentiments and inner thoughts—for at the time of Kumbhakaran’s death his Atma emerged from his gross body in the form of a brilliant shaft of light and was welcomed by Lord Ram who allowed it enter his own body and become one with his own self. Indeed, forsooth, truly and without gainsay, what an excellent form of death did Kumbhakaran have—for he merged with the Supreme Being to become one with him!

Well, well, my dear readers—who says that Kumbhakaran was ‘killed’? No he wasn’t killed; he was rather granted an exalted existence by being one with the Supreme Being, by being one like him. Come to think of it: even great sages, hermits and ascetics yearn for it, but it eludes them; but it was so easily available to the so-called sinful demon Kumbhakaran.

One very important point, from the spiritual perspective, is proved by it. Lord God does not care of what kind of body a creature has; the Lord is only concerned by

the purity of the inner thoughts of the creature and the readiness of his soul to embrace the Lord.

²The three ‘Traitaaps’, or the three types of sufferings that torment a creature in this world, are the following: Adhibhautik = related to the physical world; Adhidaivik = related to opposed stars and gods; and Adhyatmik = related to spiritual aspects.

When Marich went to Lord Ram’s hermitage in the form of a golden deer so that he could entice the Lord to come after him in order to catch him when requested to do so by Sita, because she wished to keep this strange deer as a pet, Marich felt overjoyed that he would get a rare privilege, which was an honour and a spiritual reward, of repeatedly glancing at the divine form of Lord Ram as the Lord pursued him from behind, trying to overcome and catch him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 26 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}

दो०. राम रूप गुन सुमिरत मगन भयउ छन एक ।

रावन मागेउ कोटि घट मद अरु महिष अनेक ॥ ६३ ॥

dōhā.

rāma rūpa guna sumirata magana bhaya'u chana ēka.

rāvana māgē'u kōṭi ghaṭa mada aru mahiṣa anēka. 63.

Kumbhakaran was overcome with a surge of emotions as he remembered the divine glories and virtues of Lord Ram; he closed his eyes and remained silent for a moment¹.

Recovering himself from his spiritual reverie that for a moment had lifted his soul to a transcendental plane of existence where one feels the nectar of profound bliss and ecstasy overflowing in his inner-self, Kumbhakaran regained his composure after a while, reverting back to the physical world. He asked Ravana to provide him with multiple jars of wine and hordes of buffaloes (to make a hearty meal before he sallies out of the fort to take on the enemy)². (Doha no. 63)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran was immersed in a sea of bliss when he realized that his final chance to attain liberation and deliverance of his soul has arrived. As has been said earlier, he was actually practicing Yoga Nidra, a meditative form of sleep wherein the physical gross body appears to be sleeping but the creature remains awake internally at the subtle level of existence and practices meditation. Kumbhakaran felt that his meditation has borne him its due rewards; that now his dream of attaining freedom from the gross body of a demon will be fulfilled.

From a spiritual point of view, he closed his eyes for a while and drew in a deep breath to enjoy a blissful state of transcendental existence. From a worldly point of view, he braced himself for the horrors that he would face soon in the battle-field, and harden himself and firm his resolve to face bravely the pain of certain death like a true warrior.

²Once again, from the spiritual point of view, he was finishing his symbolic fire sacrifice by making the last offerings to the Pran, the presiding deity residing in his body that represent the vital winds that keep the body alive and active, by offering it the buffalo and wine that he requested. When a fire sacrifice was done, such offerings

were normal at the end of the ritual. This concept has been described earlier in detail as a note to Doha no. 62 herein above.

But from the worldly perspective, he was eating and drinking and refreshing himself before going out to the battle front.]

चौ०. महिष खाइ करि मदिरा पाना । गर्जा बज्राघात समाना ॥ १ ॥

कुंभकरन दुर्मद रन रंगा । चला दुर्ग तजि सेन न संगी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mahiṣa khā'i kari madirā pānā. garjā bajrāghāta samānā. 1.

kumbhakarana durmada rana raṅgā. calā durga taji sēna na saṅgā. 2.

After having eaten the buffaloes and drunken wine, Kumbhakaran roared with a thunderous noise resembling a clap of thunderbolt¹. (1)

Kumbhakaran was intoxicated with the will to fight, and was enthused with dare devilry. He sallied out of the fort of Lanka, leaving for the battle-field alone, not even bothering to take his army of demon warriors with him in his rash excitement². (2)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran perhaps belched loudly after a hearty meal, and it produced a thunder-like noise. The wine prepared him for the battle as it helped him to become so excessively intoxicated that all the fears and doubts that he may have had were overcome, and so were all his inhibitions and reservations, making him rash and bold.

Remember: He was certain of his death; and if a person is sure that he is walking to his own death he needs a lot of self-control and motivation to push him forward. Wine was a sure-shot formula that dulled his mind and suppressed his wisdom. Kumbhakaran willingly used this formula because he was not sure of himself; he thought that may be at the last moment he might stop fighting and surrender himself to Lord Ram just like the way Vibhishan had done. That was something he would not prefer, for that would mean his soul will not be freed from the cage of a demon-body in which it is trapped. Kumbhakaran wanted to attain emancipation and salvation, and what better chance will he ever get in life if he missed this present golden opportunity of having Lord Ram kill his body by piercing it with his arrows, thereby allowing his soul, his Atma, to escape from this cage like a freed bird.

Even Baali, the monkey king and brother of Sugriv, had preferred to die this way—to die before Lord Ram, to die while seeing the divine form of the Lord: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 and Chanda line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 10.

Earlier we read that the vulture Jatau has said the same thing at the time of his death: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 31.

So therefore, Kumbhakaran drank gallons of wine and ate tonnes of buffalo meat to get sufficiently intoxicated and energized to valiantly face the horrors of the battle, as well as to avoid becoming emotional and come under the influence of the weakness of his heart at the last moment when he sees Lord Ram face-to-face. He did not want to live; he wished to die with Lord Ram standing before him—first with the objective of attaining deliverance of his soul, second with the objective of receiving

Lord Ram's grace and blessings that are bound to come to him unasked for, and third with the objective of dying like a warrior who would gladly embrace martyrdom rather than surrender timidly before his enemy.

²Kumbhakaran left the fort of Lanka and walked cheerfully to the battle-field all alone. He was not afraid of anything as he knew that he was brave and strong and competent enough to tackle all worldly enemies and armies, and he was not afraid of death either as he knew that the so-called impending 'death' was limited to his gross physical body which he knew is destined to die one day or the other, because the body of a living being is mortal and perishable like the world in which it lives; he also knew that this so-called death is actually a chance for his soul, his Atma that is his pure conscious 'true self', to attain eternal freedom from the cage of a demon body in which it is trapped at the moment.

Hence, it was a moment to rejoice and welcome, and not something to be afraid of or regret about. So why should he need the support of any army; why should he let the world think that he was a timid demon who was afraid to face his enemy—because for Kumbhakaran Lord Ram was not an enemy but a redeemer of his soul. Kumbhakaran rather thanked his stars that he has got this opportunity to see the Lord up close, and this thought made him so elated and ecstatic and exhilarated that he did not care who is with him or not with him.

Besides this, there was one more thought in Kumbhakaran's mind. He was certain that death would come to him that day, and that he was willingly and cheerfully embracing this death because it would free him from the cycle of birth and death, and provide him with the chance to attain eternal life—because it would not be an ordinary death, it would be a blessing-in-disguise for him as it would be granted by the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram himself. But not all demons thought that way; not all demons had this eclectic wisdom; not all demons were willing to offer their mortal body to attain eternity for their soul. So why should he drag reluctant fellow creatures to the sacrificial fire pit symbolized by the battle-field against their free will?

Spiritual path is a path that ought to be chosen voluntarily and out of one's free will, and not under any kind of duress, for then its sublime purpose is lost. Therefore, forcing the demon warriors to jump in the fire pit of death if they were unwilling to do so would be tantamount to committing sin from the viewpoint of Kumbhakaran because he had different views of death as compared to the ordinary demons—for he had the good fortune of being wise, enlightened and self-realised enough to understand that this 'death' is actually liberating for his soul, something others might not have, something others might not think.

So Kumbhakaran thought: why should he force other demons to join him in battle to die, as this would be like forcing them to commit suicide, and this would taint his Atma during the last moments of his worldly existence when he was on the threshold of attaining eternal deliverance? Why should he commit avoidable sin? He wisely concluded therefore that he should not do anything that would act as an unwanted impediment to his deliverance, emancipation and salvation at the last moment.

Of course from the worldly point of view it seems that he did not bother if the demon army was following him or not as he was very intoxicated with gallons of wine inside him, but if we delve deeper into the thought processes of Kumbhakaran we would conclude that he had other thoughts in his mind as outlined herein above when he decided to go it alone in the day's battle with Lord Ram.]

देखि बिभीषनु आगेँ आयउ । परेउ चरन निज नाम सुनायउ ॥ ३ ॥
 अनुज उठाइ हृदयँ तेहि लायो । रघुपति भक्त जानि मन भायो ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi bibhīṣanu āgēm āya'u. parē'u carana nija nāma sunāya'u. 3.
 anuja uṭhā'i hṛdayam' tēhi lāyō. raghupati bhakta jāni mana bhāyō. 4.

When Vibhishan saw Kumbhakaran coming to the battle-field, he came forward to meet the latter. Vibhishan paid his respects to him by falling at his feet (i.e. by prostrating before him) and introducing himself by name¹. (3)

He (Kumbhakaran) lifted his younger brother (Vibhishan) and clasped him to his bosom. Realising that Vibhishan was a devotee of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram), Kumbhakaran liked him very much; he felt very glad in his heart while embracing Vibhishan². (4)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran had got so excessively drunk and intoxicated that he could not recognize Vibhishan when the latter came to bow before him. So Vibhishan had to tell him who he was by identifying himself by his name.

²Kumbhakaran was happy that at least one member of his family was pious and devoted to the Lord. This would ensure that the family blood would continue to the next generation; that the name of his family would not be obliterated for all times to come because of the recklessness and madness of his elder brother Ravana.

We shall read in the verses that follow herein below that Kumbhakaran would bless Vibhishan and tell him that he has taken the right decision of surrendering himself to Lord Ram.]

तात लात रावन मोहि मारा । कहत परम हित मंत्र बिचारा ॥ ५ ॥
 तेहिं गलानि रघुपति पहिं आयउँ । देखि दीन प्रभु के मन भायउँ ॥ ६ ॥

tāta lāta rāvana mōhi mārā. kahata parama hita mantra bicārā. 5.
 tēhiṁ galāni raghupati pahim āya'um'. dēkhi dīna prabhu kē mana bhāya'um'. 6.

Vibhishan explained his position and why he left the family by saying, 'My dear brother (tāta)! Ravana had kicked me even though I was telling him something that I had thought over and decided was the best for him¹. (5)

I felt very sad and humiliated with this treatment; it was because of it that I was filled with remorse and decided to come to Lord Ram². Fortunately for me, the Lord liked me and welcomed me when he realized that I was sad, miserable and unfairly treated³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 41.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 41.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 45 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.]

सुनु सुत भयउ कालबस रावन । सो कि मान अब परम सिखावन ॥ ७ ॥
 धन्य धन्य तैं धन्य बिभीषन । भयहु तात निसिचर कुल भूषन ॥ ८ ॥
 बंधु बंस तैं कीन्ह उजागर । भजेहु राम सोभा सुख सागर ॥ ९ ॥

sunu suta bhaya'u kālabasa rāvana. sō ki māna aba parama sikhāvana. 7.
 dhan'ya dhan'ya tair̥ dhan'ya bibhīṣana. bhayahu tāta nīsicara kula bhūṣana.
 8.
 bandhu bansa tair̥ kīnha ujāgara. bhajēhu rāma sōbhā sukha sāgara. 9.

Kumbhakaran affectionately replied, ‘Listen my son (sunu suta)¹! Ravana is under the influence of Kaal (death), and so would he ever listen to any advice to the contrary, no matter how good and sincere it may be²? (7)

Vibhishan, you are very lucky, you are very fortunate, and I repeat it that you are extremely lucky and exceptionally fortunate. Verily indeed, you are like a jewel in the family, as well as in the race of the demons. (8)

My dear brother, you have brought great glory and honour to our clan and to our family name—that in spite of being born as a demon you had the wisdom and the foresight to devote yourself to Lord Ram, to adore the Lord and worship him.

Go, be devoted to Lord Ram, and worship him who is an embodiment of all good virtues and glories³! (9)

[Note—¹One must note how Kumbhakaran addresses Vibhishan; he calls him a “son”. It is an extremely endearing way in which Kumbhakaran addresses his younger brother, hinting to the latter clearly that he was full of appreciation for his decision to leave Lanka and take refuge with Lord Ram.

Further, Kumbhakaran hinted to Vibhishan that he was fighting this battle as it was his worldly duty and moral obligation to do so on behalf of Ravana as the latter was the king of the demon race and head of the family, and therefore his orders had to be carried out; but personally he (Kumbhakaran) was against it and he fully endorsed Vibhishan’s approach.

An honourable man is one who does his duty, no matter what it is, with full diligence and to the best of his abilities. So Kumbhakaran silently told Vibhishan that he would fight with everyone who comes to face him, and this would include Vibhishan if he steps forward to engage him in a duel. But let Vibhishan know and be assured that there is no ill-will in Kumbhakaran’s heart against him; that he blesses

Vibhishan with the best in life and a great future like he would have blessed his own 'son'.

²To wit, Ravana's end has come. He is in the grip of Kaal, the god of death. This being the case, he will never pay heed to anything that could save him from death, as it is now his fate, as it is destined to happen that way, and it cannot be otherwise because it is the decree of his destiny.

³To wit, my dear son and brother, I truly salute you for it. I laud you; I thank you; I honour you; I love you; and I am proud of you. God bless you with all the blessings in this world. I am so happy that at least one of us had the wisdom and the prudence to abandon sins and vices, and instead live a quiet life of piety, holiness and purity, a life dedicated to the Lord, a life of devotion and worshipping of the Lord, a life away from sin, evil and perversion.

You are praise-worthy. I hereby grant you permission to be devoted to Lord Ram who is a personified form of the Supreme Being. Both I and Ravana are your elder brothers, so now you have the permission of one of them to pursue your spiritual path with diligence. Go; find peace and happiness in your life. Remember: You have my full and heart-felt blessings.]

दो०. बचन कर्म मन कपट तजि भजेहु राम रनधीर ।

जाहु न निज पर सूझ मोहि भयउँ कालबस बीर ॥ ६४ ॥

dōhā.

bacana karma mana kapaṭa taji bhajēhu rāma ranadhīra.
jāhu na nija para sūjha mōhi bhaya'um' kālābasa bīra. 64.

Worship and be devoted to Lord Ram, who is a resolute warrior in the battle-field¹, with your words, your deeds and your thoughts. [To wit, serve the Lord diligently to the best of your abilities; employ all your means to serve him.]

But go away now, for I have become virtually blind under the influence of my own Kaal (death), and I am unable to distinguish between a friend and an enemy². (Doha no. 64)

[Note—¹The word “ranadhīra” that is used in the text can be applied to Lord Ram as well as to Vibhishan. If it is applied to Vibhishan, then the 1st line of the Doha would read as follows: “Oh my brother who is firm and steady in the battle-field. I advise you to be fully devoted to Lord Ram, and employ all the means at your command, such as your words, deeds and thoughts, to keep serving him.”

Howbeit, if it is applied to Lord Ram, then the version given above in the main text will hold good. This author personally feels, though, that the interpretation as given in the paragraph above of this note is nearer to the spirit of the interview between Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan. But at the same time, the word can also be applied to Lord Ram equally well because immediately Kumbhakaran engages in a battle with the Lord who firmly stands his ground inspite of the demon's ruthless and brutal charge at him, and finally bringing Kumbhakaran down after a ferocious battle.

²Kumbhakaran tells Vibhishan to go away because all eyes were riveted on them; all the demons and the monkeys were closely watching their meeting. They were supposed to be rivals; so Kumbhakaran thought that if Vibhishan lingered any longer than needed, then his new friends in Lord Ram's camp, the monkey and bear chiefs, would immediately become suspicious of him and his intentions. They will think he was plotting something against them. Then there were fair chances that they would go and poison Lord Ram's ears against Vibhishan; perhaps even point out to the Lord their meeting at a distance. Though Kumbhakaran was sure that Lord Ram would not so easily be misled against Vibhishan, yet it was the time of war, and during such times even a harmless incident can prove fatal and arouse suspicions, as nerves are on edges, and trust and faith and friendship become very fragile and the first victims of suspicion and doubt.

So therefore, it was not good for Vibhishan to stay near Kumbhakaran any longer; rather it was dangerous for him. Vibhishan got the hint, for we read in the verses that follow herein below that he immediately went and informed Lord Ram of Kumbhakaran's arrival in the battle-field. It was certainly a very wise move by Vibhishan because it prevented the seed of doubt and suspicion from germinating in the minds of the monkeys and bears.]

चौ०. बंधु बचन सुनि चला बिभीषन । आयउ जहँ त्रैलोक बिभूषन ॥ १ ॥

नाथ भूधराकार सरीरा । कुंभकरन आवत रनधीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bandhu bacana suni calā bibhīṣana. āya'u jaham' trailōka bibhūṣana. 1.
nātha bhūdharākāra sarīrā. kumbhakarana āvata ranadhīrā. 2.

Hearing the words of his brother (Kumbhakaran), Vibhishan left him immediately and came to the place where Lord Ram, the jewel of the whole world consisting of three divisions (trailōka bibhūṣana) was present. [To wit, after meeting his brother and paying his respects to him, Vibhishan came back to Lord Ram's place.]¹ (1)

On reaching Lord Ram, Vibhishan reported, 'Oh Lord! The mighty Kumbhakaran who has a colossus body resembling a living mountain, and who is very resolute and firm in battle, is coming to the battle-field.' (2)

[Note—¹When the news arrived that Kumbhakaran has emerged from the gates of the fort of Lanka, Vibhishan went to meet him. He was with Lord Ram at that time like other senior commanders of the Lord's army, and so naturally it follows that he had the Lord's permission to go and meet Kumbhakaran. Even if it is argued that there is no proof that Vibhishan was by the side of Lord Ram when Kumbhakaran stepped into the battle-field, but it certainly Vibhishan would not dare to take the bold step of going to meet his elder brother without the Lord's explicit permission, as it would not be taken lightly by his fellow commanders in the Lord's army who were always suspicious of him and doubtful of his intentions because he was Ravana's brother; besides this, it would be tantamount to breach of discipline and against probity for him to openly go and meet someone from the side of the Lord's enemy.

So therefore, Vibhishan had gone to meet Kumbhakaran with the full knowledge of Lord Ram.

As to why he came directly to the Lord immediately after meeting his elder brother, this has already been explained in a note to Doha no. 64 herein above. Remember: Kumbhakaran has explicitly told him to go away, but he implicitly meant to tell Vibhishan that he should go to Lord Ram and report to him that Kumbhakaran is coming his way.]

एतना कपिन्ह सुना जब काना । किलकिलाइ धाए बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥
लिए उठाइ बिटप अरु भूधर । कटकटाइ डारहिं ता ऊपर ॥ ४ ॥

ētanā kapinha sunā jaba kānā. kilakilā'i dhā'ē balavānā. 3.
li'ē uṭhā'i biṭapa aru bhūdharma. kaṭakaṭā'i dārahim tā ūpara. 4.

As soon as the brave monkey (and bear) warriors heard this (and received a signal from Lord Ram, their supreme commander), they rushed forward with a shrill cry and a sharp yell. (3)

They picked up huge boulders and large trees, and dumped them violently upon him (Kumbhakaran). (4)

कोटि कोटि गिरि सिखर प्रहारा । करहिं भालु कपि एक एक बारा ॥ ५ ॥
मुख्यो न मनु तनु टर्यो न टार्यो । जिमि गज अर्क फलनि को मार्यो ॥ ६ ॥

kōṭi kōṭi giri sikhara prahārā. karahim bhālu kapi ēka ēka bārā. 5.
muryō na manu tanu ṭaryō na ṭāryō. jimi gaja arka phalani kō māryō. 6.

The monkeys and bears simultaneously hurled countless rocks that were as large as summits of mountains upon him, and such attacks were repeated in quick succession. (5)

But none of them had any effect on Kumbhakaran, for he remained firm on his ground and stuck to his position, neither feeling intimidated internally in his heart and mind, nor showing any external sign of fear or alarm by turning back in the same way as hurling fruits of the swallow wort plant (*Calotropis Gigantea*; “arka phala”) makes no effect on a mighty elephant (i.e. the elephant is not at all hurt or distracted in any way if someone hurls fruits of the swallow wort plant on it)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran was not deterred or distracted in the least by the ferocity of the attack by the monkeys and bears. He not only stood his ground, but even moved ahead fearlessly and relentlessly as if nothing bothered him, bludgeoning his way through the rank and file of the monkey army like a gigantic battle-ram, crushing some underfoot and devouring others whom he grabbed and squeezed tight in his hands before tucking them in his cave-like mouth—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precedes Doha no. 67 herein below.

We read about a similar attack by the monkeys in Valmiki's Ramayan, in its Lanka Kand, Canto 66, verse nos. 10-11.]

तब मारुतसुत मुठिका हन्यो । पश्यो धरनि व्याकुल सिर धुन्यो ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि उठि तेहिं मारेउ हनुमंता । घुर्मित भूतल परेउ तुरंता ॥ ८ ॥

taba mārutasuta muṭhikā han'yō. paryō dharani byākula sira dhun'yō. 7.
puni uṭhi tēhiṁ mārē'u hanumantā. ghurmita bhūtala parē'u turantā. 8.

Observing the predicament of his companions, the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) stepped in the fray; he punched Kumbhakaran with his clenched fists so ferociously that the demon couldn't bear the force of it and fell down on the ground quite agitated, beating his head in frustration and annoyance¹. (7)

Not to be outwitted, he (Kumbhakaran) gathered courage and got up, and then retaliated by hitting Hanuman viciously. This hit made Hanuman swoon and fall to the ground immediately². (8)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran was so confident of his own strength and invincibility that he had never, even in his wildest of dreams, imagined that someone would dare to hit him so powerfully and with such a mighty force that he would swoon and fall down under its impact. So when Hanuman posted a clenched fistful on him, Kumbhakaran was for a shock of his life; he was stunned and confounded that it would actually come to happen one day to him. He beat his head in disgust and to curse himself that he wasn't prepared for this eventuality; that he had not taken due precautions and kept himself alert when he saw Hanuman approaching him menacingly. Kumbhakaran swore to himself that if he had been a little more careful, this wouldn't have happened.

²Both Hanuman and Kumbhakaran were mighty warriors of unmatched valour. Hanuman first punched and fell his opponent Kumbhakaran, and then the latter got up and hit back, felling the former. This description of the duel makes it look very natural and as likely to have actually happened, and lends a sense of reality and earthiness, a sort of worldliness to a war that otherwise appears to be a fable right out of a fantasy tale.]

पुनि नल नीलहि अवनि पछारेसि । जहँ तहँ पटकि पटकि भट डारेसि ॥ ९ ॥
चली बलीमुख सेन पराई । अति भय त्रसित न कोउ समुहाई ॥ १० ॥

puni nala nīlahi avani pachārēsi. jaham̐ taham̐ paṭaki paṭaki bhaṭa ḍārēsi. 9.
calī balīmukha sēna parā'ī. ati bhaya trasita na kō'u samuhā'ī. 10.

Being outraged by Hanuman's dare devilry, he (Kumbhakaran) lost his cool and went on the offensive. Lunging forward angrily, he grabbed Nala and Neela (the other two great monkey warriors accompanying Hanuman) and dashed them violently on the ground; then he grabbed any of the monkey or bear warriors whom he managed to lay his hand on, and dashed them to the ground in a similar fashion, here and there wherever he could. (9)

The result was that the army of monkeys and bears started beating a hasty retreat; they were so terrified that none gathered courage to stand his ground and retaliate¹. (10)

[Note—¹When Kumbhakaran showed his true wrath, the army of monkeys and bears scattered like dry leaves scattering under a powerful storm; they fell under his onslaught like nine pins crumbling en-masse. There was utter chaos in the army, and no monkey or bear warrior dared to look back as they scampered to safety.]

दो०. अंगदादि कपि मुरुछित करि समेत सुग्रीव ।

काँख दाबि कपिराज कहूँ चला अमित बल सींव ॥ ६५ ॥

dōhā.

aṅgadādi kapi muruchita kari samēta sugrīva.

kām̐kha dābi kapiṛāja kahūṁ calā amita bala sīnva. 65.

Kumbhakaran made Angad, Sugriv and other monkey warriors faint and fall down.

Then he (Kumbhakaran), who was endowed with stupendous valour, might and strength, grabbed the unconscious Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, and tucked him under his arms (in his arm-pit) as he moved on in the battle-field¹. (Doha no. 65)

[Note—¹A question here arises: How could Kumbhakaran take away Sugriv cocked under his arms when Hanuman, the bravest of the monkey warriors, was present in the battle-field; why did Hanuman not intervene and free Sugriv; why did he not stop Kumbhakaran from grabbing an unconscious Sugriv and take him away unchallenged?

The answer is simple, and it is this: Hanuman was already unconscious and lying on the battle ground—apropos: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha. So obviously he couldn't intervene to help any of his friends who bore the brunt of Kumbhakaran's ire.

We shall also read about it in Chaupai line no. 4 that follows Doha no. 65 herein below where it is said that as soon as Hanuman regained his consciousness he began searching for Sugriv. This clearly means that when Kumbhakaran had tucked Sugriv under his arm-pit, Hanuman was unconscious and unaware of anything.

The other question is this: Why did Kumbhakaran select Sugriv instead of Angad to be taken as a hostage? The answer is this: Angad's father Baali had humiliated Ravana in some time in the past by tucking him under his arm (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24). So Kumbhakaran wanted to settle scores; he thought to himself thus: "Baali had carried off my brother Ravana under his arms, so I will now carry Baali's brother Sugriv to square the old pending account."

Another reason is this: Sugriv was not only the king of the monkey race but also the chief commander of Lord Ram's army, as well as the Lord's chief advisor. Sugriv's capture would demoralize the rank and file of the monkey army, and would also make Lord Ram feel despondent and worried. The news that other brave warriors were already lying unconscious would aggravate the sense of loss and hopelessness amongst the Lord's warriors.

Remember: It was war-time, and during such times any small thing that could act as a demoralizing factor for the enemy was welcome. So therefore, thought Kumbhakaran, such small steps would go a long way to help his brother Ravana

during the course of the war. If the monkey army felt that their king Sugriv was dead, if Lord Ram got the impression that Sugriv was no more, he and his brother Laxman would be rudely shaken; and with them losing hope of victory, Ravana would have won the war in a symbolic way. This view is endorsed in Valmiki's Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 67, verse no. 71.]

चौ०. उमा करत रघुपति नरलीला । खेलत गरुड़ जिमि अहिगन मीला ॥ १ ॥

भृकुटि भंग जो कालहि खाई । ताहि कि सोहइ ऐसि लराई ॥ २ ॥

जग पावनि कीरति बिस्तरिहिहिं । गाइ गाइ भवनिधि नर तरिहिहिं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

umā karata raghupati naralīlā. khēlata garuṛa jimi ahigana mīlā. 1.

bhṛkuṭi bhaṅga jō kālahi khāī. tāhi ki sōha'i aisi larāī. 2.

jaga pāvani kīrati bistarihahiṁ. gā'i gā'i bhavanidhi nara tarihahiṁ. 3.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this magnificent Story, continued with his narration and told his consort goddess Parvati, whose other name was Uma, as follows—]

‘Oh Uma! Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) is playing around in the battle-field sportily with the demons like an ordinary human being would just like Garud, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, would play around with serpents¹. (1)

Verily indeed, does this kind of (cat-and-mouse; seesaw) war that Lord Ram is engaged in with the demons behooves the Lord who can exterminate even Kaal (the deity of death; the deity of time and age) by merely raising his eyebrows against the latter? [Surely not; but he acts in the way he does for the following reason:-] (2)

Surely he does it (i.e. he fights a war like an ordinary human would do in this world) so as to leave behind a legendary Story that would help to spread and establish his glories and fame in the world for generations to come when they are read, listened to and recited. This would purify the world and the heart of the Lord's devotees who will find an easy means to cross over this symbolic ocean of mortal existence to reach its other shore to attain deliverance and bliss by singing and narrating this magnificent Story of the Lord's wondrous deeds (that defy logic and explanation)². (3)

[Note—¹To wit, though Lord Ram is the Supreme Being in his primary form, because his true form is Lord Vishnu, the cosmic Lord of the universe, yet he acts like an ordinary human being while being engaged in a war with the demons. The Lord could have exterminated the demons by his mere desire, but still he goes through the act of waging a war, and suffering setbacks and making gains in it, just like a human knight would have done. But one must not be misled by this adventure to doubt the Lord's supremacy.

Why then did he act in such an ordinary way? This question is answered in verse no. 3 here—it was to give the world a magnificent story which the people would be able to easily relate to and understand, a story that would be so wonderful and fascinating that it would be read and repeated over and over for generations to come, providing a simple means to ordinary people to remember the Lord and sing his

glories in a way that would be charming, interesting and enjoyable for them, a story that would capture their imagination and keep them enthralled.

Garud is an inveterate enemy of serpents; he gobbles up the most poisonous of snakes easily. But if we read that Garud had been surrounded by serpents and fought a seesaw, pitched battle with them, sometimes chasing them away and at other times being chased by them, at one moment gaining an upper hand on them and at other moment seeming to lose ground to them, then this would be very interesting for the reader.

And just like Garud merely playing around with the serpents for his own joy and entertainment, for he could have easily devoured them if he had so wanted, Lord Ram too plays with the demons just for the fun of it, for had the Lord wanted to eliminate them then he could have done it even without a war, for Lord Ram is the Lord of Death; he is the Lord who controls death and destiny of all living beings.

²Here is the clue: If the war of Lanka was not fought, if there was no characters like Ravana and Kumbhakaran, how would we have had the Story of the Ramayan, and how would the world have known of Lord Ram? There were so many kings in the illustrious family of the line of King Raghu; all were great and famed kings and righteous rulers in their own rights. Not only them, the world has a rich history of great and illustrious kings and emperors whose exploits and virtues have been glorified and recorded as histories and biographies by scribes, and sung by bards down the centuries. But they are not regarded as manifestations of the Supreme Being. Therein lies the wonder and glory of the Story of Ramayan.

Had the Supreme Being brought to an end the demon race by merely invoking the normal Laws of Nature—that everything and everyone that comes to this mortal world has to die, that all who have taken a birth must die too when their time comes—the end of the cruel demons would have been a natural process and a forgone conclusion. But then we won't have had the 'Story of the Ramayan'!

This answers why Lord Ram played around like an ordinary man. This glorious and divine Story of the Ramayan has been providing spiritual solace and bliss to generations of human beings; it has brought the Supreme Being, who is otherwise invisible, without attributes and too abstract to be understood by an ordinary man, within his reach. The Story of the Ramayan evokes devotion and love for the Lord God; it generates affectionate emotions and sentiments that are conducive to spiritual elevation and bliss; it brings the Lord God so much the nearer to his devotee.

If nothing else then at least this Story provokes debates and discussions, it keeps the interest to know more about Lord Ram alive by its wondrous episodes, it keeps the fire of devotion, faith and belief in the Lord God ignited, it acts as a beckon of hope for those forsaken by the world because it tells them that the merciful, compassionate and kind Lord Ram is there in an invisible form to help them.

To wit, it helps in resurrection of a drowning hope for salvation and emancipation of the creature.]

मुरुछा गइ मारुतसुत जागा । सुग्रीवहि तब खोजन लागा ॥ ४ ॥

सुग्रीवहु कै मुरुछा बीती । निबुकि गयउ तेहि मृतक प्रतीती ॥ ५ ॥

muruchā ga'i mārutasuta jāgā. sugrīvahi taba khōjana lāgā. 4.
sugrīvahu kai muruchā bītī. nibuki gaya'u tēhi mṛtaka pratītī. 5.

When his fainting spell ended and Hanuman regained his consciousness, he immediately began searching for Sugriv. (4)

Meanwhile, Sugriv too regained his consciousness, but he pretended to be dead and lifeless. So Kumbhakaran carelessly dropped him to the ground (thinking it to be too cumbersome to keep him pressed under his arm because he could not use this arm in the battle). (5)

काटेसि दसन नासिका काना । गरजि अकास चलेउ तेहिं जाना ॥ ६ ॥
गहेउ चरन गहि भूमि पछारा । अति लाघवँ उठि पुनि तेहि मारा ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि आयउ प्रभु पहिं बलवाना । जयति जयति जय कृपानिधाना ॥ ८ ॥

kāṭēsi dasana nāsikā kānā. garaji akāsa calē'u tēhim jānā. 6.
gahē'u carana gahi bhūmi pachārā. ati lāghavam' uṭhi puni tēhi mārā. 7.
puni āya'u prabhu pahim balavānā. jayati jayati jaya kṛpānidhānā. 8.

Sugriv got up on the sly and bit Kumbhakaran's nose and ears with his sharp teeth, and then made a loud yell as he jumped off towards the sky. It was then that Kumbhakaran realized that Sugriv was alive. (6)

He (Kumbhakaran) grabbed him (Sugriv) by the leg, and pulling him down, he dashed the latter on the ground. But Sugriv showed great agility by getting up instantly and retaliating by hitting Kumbhakaran back hard. (7)

After stunning Kumbhakaran for a while with his fierce jab, the brave Sugriv came back to Lord Ram, raising a slogan in the Lord's honour, saying: 'Hail Lord Ram who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion and grace; Glory be to you.' (8)

नाक कान काटे जियँ जानी । फिरा क्रोध करि भइ मन ग्लानी ॥ ९ ॥
सहज भीम पुनि बिनु श्रुति नासा । देखत कपि दल उपजी त्रासा ॥ १० ॥

nāka kāna kāṭē jiyam' jānī. phirā krōdha kari bha'i mana glānī. 9.
sahaja bhīma puni binu śruti nāsā. dēkhata kapi dala upajī trāsā. 10.

When Kumbhakaran got his with together he realized that his ears and nose have been bitten off. This infuriated him no end; he was overcome with vehemence and anger, feeling ashamed at himself and was overwhelmed with regret (that his carelessness has made him look ridiculous)¹. (9)

On the one hand he had a colossal body, and added to it was the macabre sight of his fearsome face from which the nose and the ears had been yanked off (creating huge cave-like cavities on his hideous face from which streams of blood gushed out). This

sight was so frightening that it sent chill in the rank and file of the monkey army; they were sore scared and extremely terrified by this horrifying view of Kumbhakaran. (10)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran regretted his error of judgment when he dropped Sugriv, thinking him to be dead. Had he been a little more careful he could have wrung Sugriv tight to squeeze the life out of him like one wrings wet cloth to squeeze water. But it was a lost chance.]

दो०. जय जय जय रघुबंस मनि धाए कपि दै हूह ।
एकहि बार तासु पर छाड़ेन्हि गिरि तरु जूह ॥ ६६ ॥

dōhā.

jaya jaya jaya raghubansa mani dhā'ē kapi dai hūha.
ēkahi bāra tāsu para chārēnhi giri taru jūha. 66.

[When the monkey warriors saw that Hanuman, Sugriv and the rest, whom Kumbhakaran had hit so hard that they had all fainted, have regained their consciousness and are fighting-fit, they let out a shrill cry of joy and turned back to launch a vicious counter-attack on their enemy, the demon Kumbhakaran.]

Roaring enthusiastically, and repeatedly cheering and praising the glory of Lord Ram, the jewel of the race of king Raghu (raghubansa mani), the monkey hordes rushed forward to launch a fresh wave of attack on Kumbhakaran, dumping clusters of huge boulders and large trees of varying sizes and shapes on him all at once (almost burying him under the rubble). (Doha no. 66)

चौ०. कुंभकरन रन रंग बिरुद्धा । सन्मुख चला काल जनु क्रुद्धा ॥ १ ॥
कोटि कोटि कपि धरि धरि खाई । जनु टीड़ी गिरि गुहाँ समाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kumbhakarana rana raṅga birud'dhā. sanmukha calā kāla janu krud'dhā. 1.
kōṭi kōṭi kapi dhari dhari khā'ī. janu ṭīṛī giri guhām̐ samā'ī. 2.

Kumbhakaran was so intensely infused with the heat of war and greatly maddened with the passion to fight to the end that he faced his enemy fearlessly. Brushing aside the heaps of rocks and trees that had gathered around him in huge mounds, he was seething with anger as he marched against the monkeys and bears like a personified form of Kaal, the god of death, himself coming forward to wreak his vengeance upon them. (1)

He grabbed large numbers of monkeys on whom he could lay his hand, and put them in his wide-open cavernous mouth, a sight that reminded one of swarms of locusts entering a huge cave¹. (2)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran had a gigantic body; his mouth was exceptionally large and cave-like in proportion to his huge body. The monkeys he grabbed and dumped inside his mouth did not die; rather they were safe inside it like locusts are inside a cave. After entering the mouth these monkeys bit it from the inside, and hastily escaped from the many holes in it—like the ears and the nose, and even through the open mouth even as Kumbhakaran was busy dumping more monkeys inside it—this will be clear in Chaupai line no. 4 herein below. It was like locusts freely entering and leaving the cave.

What a fantastic imagery! Imagine a tall mountain with a deep cave that has a large main opening on one of its sides, and many other smaller openings in the form of various crevices and fissures on the sides of the mountain that lead to the interior of the cave through a network of tunnels and channels. Locusts and other insects freely enter and exit thorough these openings; while the main mouth of the cave serves as the chief entry-exit route but one would also see thin lines of insects making their way inside the cave and then exiting through it by the many tunnels and channels leading to the cave from the sides of the mountain.

The same thing was observed here with respect to the monkeys—the majority of them escaped directly through his wide open mouth, the rest jumped out through the openings of the ears and nose that led out from the buckle-cavity of the demon's mouth.

Remember one more thing: Kumbhakaran had grabbed and dumped inside his mouth not only the monkeys but also the bears in his mad spree of catching and devouring them as will be evident in Chaupai line no. 4 herein below.]

कोटिन्ह गहि सरीर सन मर्दा । कोटिन्ह मीजि मिलव महि गर्दा ॥ ३ ॥

मुख नासा श्रवनन्हि कीं बाटा । निसरि पराहिं भालु कपि ठाटा ॥ ४ ॥

kōṭinha gahi sarīra sana mardā. kōṭinha mīji milava mahi gardā. 3.
mukha nāsā śravananhi kīṁ bātā. nisari parāhiṁ bhālu kapi ṭhātā. 4.

He (Kumbhakaran) caught hold of multitudes of monkey warriors and crushed them either by rubbing them viciously against his own body or squeezing them hard with his hands (fingers), before letting them fall to the ground and getting covered with dust. (3)

Meanwhile, large groups of monkeys and bears were seen escaping in droves from his cavernous mouth and running away¹. (4)

[Note—¹See note appended to verse no. 2 herein above. It is pertinent to note here that Kumbhakaran was thrusting large numbers of monkeys and bears inside his mouth without tearing them apart with his teeth; he was not chewing or biting them before dumping them inside the cavity of the mouth. This is the reason why none of them died; they swarmed out of the mouth-cavity as soon as they were inside it.

Only those unfortunate ones whom he rubbed against his body or squeezed with his hand actually died.]

रन मद मत निसाचर दर्पा । बिस्व ग्रसिहि जनु एहि बिधि अर्पा ॥ ५ ॥
मुरे सुभट सब फिरहिं न फेरे । सूझ न नयन सुनहिं नहिं टेरे ॥ ६ ॥

rana mada matta nisācara darpā. bisva grasihi janu ēhi bidhi arpā. 5.
murē subhaṭa saba phirahim na phērē. sūjha na nayana sunahim nahim ṭērē.
6.

Kumbhakaran was intoxicated with pride and heated with the passion of war as he relentlessly unleashed his destructive wrath on the battle-field as if the Creator has offered him a chance and a mandate to devour (exterminate) the world in this way. (5)

All the great warriors in the monkey and bear army turned their back to the battle-field; no amount of cajoling and encouraging words would make them change their minds from desisting from battle and countering Kumbhakaran. They could not see anything clearly with their eyes, and they would not respond to any call because they did not hear properly (as a result of the trauma that they had gone through)¹. (6)

[Note—¹The monkeys and bears who managed to escape with their lives were so dazed and traumatized by their horrifying experience that they lost the will and enthusiasm to fight any more. There was so much confusion and consternation amongst their rank and file that for a moment it seemed difficult to control them and turn them around; there was complete chaos and panic in the army of Lord Ram.]

कुंभकरन कपि फौज बिडारी । सुनि धाई रजनीचर धारी ॥ ७ ॥
देखी राम बिकल कटकाई । रिपु अनीक नाना बिधि आई ॥ ८ ॥

kumbhakarana kapi phauja biḍārī. suni dhā'ī rajanīcara dhārī. 7.
dēkhī rāma bikala kaṭakā'ī. ripu anīka nānā bidhi ā'ī. 8.

When the demon army heard that Kumbhakaran had scattered the army of monkeys and bears, it rushed forward¹. (7)

In the mean time, Lord Ram observed that the situation was alarming as his army was in serious trouble, feeling helpless and agitated, and at the same time a large number of enemy warriors, the demons, have entered the battle-field². (8)

[Note—¹We have read earlier in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64 that Kumbhakaran had gone to the battle-field all alone; he had left the demon army behind. The demon warriors were already reeling under the bitter experience of being pounded and pummeled by the ferocity of attack by the monkeys and bears that they themselves feared facing them again, and so were initially reluctant to accompany Kumbhakaran as he stepped out on the battle ground. But when they saw that their leader has managed to scatter the enemy and crush it, they became encouraged to fight once more. So they gathered their courage and dashed forward.

²Lord Ram had been watching the proceedings from his control-and-command camp. He observed that his army was in panic and scattered. Now was the time for him to step in to save the situation. And this he did as we shall read in the next Doha.]

दो०. सुनु सुग्रीव बिभीषन अनुज सँभारेहु सैन ।
मैं देखउँ खल बल दलहि बोले राजिवनैन ॥ ६७ ॥
dōhā.

sunu sugrīva bibhīṣana anuja sambhārēhu saina.
mairṁ dēkha'um̐ khala bala dalahi bōlē rājivanaina. 67.

The lotus-eyed Lord Ram (rājivanaina) summoned his chief commanders and said, 'Listen Sugriv, Vibhishan and Laxman (the Lord's younger brother). You take charge of the army, while I will see if I can tackle this wicked fellow and his wild forces (i.e. Kumbhakaran and the demon army)'. (Doha no. 67)

चौ०. कर सारंग साजि कटि भाथा । अरि दल दलन चले रघुनाथा ॥ १ ॥
प्रथम कीन्हि प्रभु धनुष टँकोरा । रिपु दल बधिर भयउ सुनि सोरा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

kara sārāṅga sāji kaṭi bhāthā. ari dala dalana calē raghunāthā. 1.
prathama kīnhi prabhu dhanuṣa ṭam̐kōrā. ripu dala badhira bhaya'u suni sōrā. 2.

Arming himself with his famous bow known as 'Sarang'¹ that he held in his hand, and a quiver full of arrows that was tied to his waist, Lord Raghunath (i.e. Lord Ram) went forward to tackle the enemy (Kumbhakaran) and his army. (1)

The Lord first twanged his mighty bow so loudly that it produced a thunderous sound which had the effect of deafening the enemy hordes². (2)

[Note—¹The 'Sarang bow' is held by Lord Vishnu. Since Lord Ram was a manifestation of Vishnu, it is said that the bow he held was called 'Sarang'.

It is believed that this 'Sarang bow' was crafted by Vishwakarma, the engineer of the gods, especially for Lord Vishnu, and its original length was 9 feet. According to mythological accounts, during the War of the Gods during Sata-yuga, the first era of the 4-era celestial cycle of creation and destruction according to Hinduism, a huge castor-oil tree was produced. It measured approximately 25 feet. Out of the stem of this tree, Vishwakarma devised the following Bows: one bow of 9 feet length for Lord Vishnu which was called Sarang, one bow of 7 feet length for Lord Shiva which was called Pinak, one bow of 5 feet length for Lord Ram which was called Kodand (or Kodanda), one bow of 3 feet length for Arjun of the Pandava race, and it was called Gandiva, and the remaining part of the tree, measuring 1 foot, was used to make the flute of Lord Krishna which was called Vanshi.

This is why Lord Ram is often addressed as the Lord who holds the Kodand bow—i.e. Kodand Ram. He is also called the Lord with the Sarang bow because he

was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu—and hence known as ‘Sarang Pani’, i.e. the Lord who holds the Sarang bow in his hand.

Now presently we read here that Lord Ram had held the ‘Sarang bow’, instead of his usual ‘Kodand bow’, and its twang had deafened the demons. How and when did this Sarang bow of Lord Vishnu come to Lord Ram?

If we examine Ram Charit Manas it will be abundantly clear that both the terms, i.e. ‘Kodand bow’ and ‘Sarang bow’, were used for the same bow held by Lord Ram. This will be clear by-and-by when we come to read about the Lord’s battle with Ravana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 86.}

Though it is true that the Sarang bow was crafted for the exclusive use of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, by Vishwakarma, the engineer of the gods, during the legendary war between the gods and the demons, and the Kodand bow was specially made by him for Lord Ram, but since Lord Ram was none other than Lord Vishnu himself in a human form, these two terms for the Lord’s bow were used interchangeably.

So though normally Lord Ram’s bow was referred to as the ‘Kodand bow’, but when the time came for the Lord to slay the two great demons, Kumbhakaran and Ravana, the term ‘Sarang bow’ is used for the Lord’s bow. This is to indicate that it was actually Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram who was fulfilling his words given to the gods and mother earth that he would himself eliminate the sinful demons. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 68 with reference to Kumbhakaran; and (ii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86 with reference to Ravana.}

Now, a question arises: When, where and from whom did Lord Ram get this Sarang bow? This is an interesting question, and if we carefully examine the Story of Ram Charit Manas, the answer is found in it, and it is this: The Bow of Lord Vishnu, known as Sarang, was handed over to Lord Ram by sage Parashuram at the venue of the Lord’s marriage ceremony in Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284.

It so happened that sage Parashuram was very angry when Lord Ram had broken the old bow of Lord Shiva, known as Pinak, to fulfill the vow of king Janak, Sita’s father, that he would marry his daughter to anyone who could lift and break the bow. It was because sage Parashuram worshipped Lord Shiva, and he felt that breaking of the bow had insulted his deity. A heated argument followed, and inspite of all his threats and angry outbursts to punish Lord Ram the sage failed to even raise his arms against the Lord. This stunned Parashuram as he had a reputation of being merciless and unforgiving, and once he decided to punish someone, no one could dare to save his victim. So, the sage was mightily astonished at his inability to harm either Lord Ram or his younger brother Laxman. Surely, he thought when he calmed down a bit, that there must be more to Lord Ram than what meets the eye; he had a subtle feeling that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. To test his hunch, the sage gave the Lord the ‘bow of Lord Vishnu’, i.e. the Sarang bow, and to his amazement he observed that this bow went on its own to Lord Ram, who received it easily. This miraculous event confirmed to sage Parashuram that Lord Ram was no one else but Lord Vishnu himself in this form. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

It was therefore with this bow, i.e. the ‘Sarang’, that Lord Ram had killed the mighty demons to fulfill the promise made to the gods and mother earth in his primary form as Lord Vishnu that he would personally intervene to eliminate the

demons to save the world from their cruelty and terror. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.}

And this is why the demons could not stand against Lord Ram, because this Sarang bow was no ordinary bow; it was the bow of the almighty Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world.

At this juncture it ought to be noted that in the Story of the Ramayan, Lord Ram has been addressed as a holder of both the Sarang bow and the Kodanda bow. There is a specific verse which uses this term 'Kodand' to indicate how fierce the Lord would be for those who try to disrupt peace, harmony and order in the Lord's creation—because the term 'Kodand' includes the word 'Danda' which means punishment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 91.}

²When Lord Ram pulled the string of his formidable bow right back up to his ear and then let it go with a snap, there was a deafening twang, so loud and piercing that it ruptured the eardrums of some of the demon warriors present in the vicinity, or numbed the faculty of hearing in others. Some were rendered permanently deaf, while others lost their ability to hear for varying lengths of time.]

सत्यसंध छाँड़े सर लच्छा । कालसर्प जनु चले सपच्छा ॥ ३ ॥

जहँ तहँ चले बिपुल नाराचा । लगे कटन भट बिकट पिसाचा ॥ ४ ॥

satyasandha chāṁṛē sara lacchā. kālasarpa janu calē sapacchā. 3.
jaham̐ taham̐ calē bipula nārācā. lagē kaṭana bhaṭa bikaṭa pisācā. 4.

Lord Ram, who was of a firmness of purpose, had strength of resolution, was vigorous in his actions, and true and firm in his resolve (*satyasandha*) to exterminate the cruel demons, shot a hail of countless arrows, which flew towards the enemy (Kumbhakaran and his army) like so many winged serpents¹. (3)

These were not ordinary arrows, but were called 'Naracha'²; countless such Naracha arrows started their flight towards the enemy hordes, and as soon as they reached their target they began mowing down and slicing the fierce looking ogres (demons) into pieces. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 92.

²The Naracha (*nārācā*) is a special sort of arrow made entirely of hardened iron; it has five fins, instead of four as in ordinary arrows, to stabilize it during flight. These arrows were like modern-day cruise missiles, and they homed on to their targets with great precision. To wit, none of the arrows shot by Lord Ram went to waste; each felled at least one demon warrior, if not more. They were shot in rapid succession, and the sky seemed to be covered by a blanket of arrows that swooped down on the demon warriors, nailing them all down to the earth.

A question arises: how could so many thousands of arrows be shot from a single bow? Well, remember that it was not an ordinary bow; it was the Sarang bow, a mystical bow of Lord Vishnu, the almighty Lord of the world. Besides this, we are

reading about a time long in the past when there were many things of which we cannot have an idea today. So in all likelihood, these arrows were unique weapons which multiplied after being shot like the cluster bombs or multiple missile launchers of today. It will be wrong to think that such things are merely figments of fertile imagination just because we don't have or know of such things today; this doesn't prove that they did not exist in the time of which we are reading about.

For instance, our ancestors living even say a hundred years ago could not have imagined that one day their descendents would have an instrument known as 'telephone' that would help them talk with each other directly over long distances; or a time say fifty-sixty years ago when we had 'wired telephone' instruments, that there would one day be a small hand-held thing called a 'cell phone' which would enable people to communicate with each other while they would be moving, and talk across continents and seas as if they were speaking with each other face to face.]

कटहिं चरन उर सिर भुजदंडा । बहुतक बीर होहिं सत खंडा ॥ ५ ॥
घुर्मि घुर्मि घायल महि परहीं । उठि संभारि सुभट पुनि लरहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kaṭahim carana ura sira bhujadaṇḍā. bahutaka bīra hōhim sata khaṇḍā. 5.
ghurmi ghurmi ghāyala mahi parahīm. uṭhi sambhāri subhaṭa puni larahīm. 6.

Some of the demons got their legs cut; some had their chest pierced; some had their heads cut off; some had their arms torn away; while some were chopped into as many seven small pieces. (5)

The demon warriors swooned and rolled over on the ground, falling down dead or unconscious. Only a few amongst them who were exceptionally brave and energetic could firm up their courage to stand again to fight. (6)

लागत बान जलद जिमि गाजहिं । बहुतक देखि कठिन सर भाजहिं ॥ ७ ॥
रुंड प्रचंड मुंड बिनु धावहिं । धरु धरु मारु मारु धुनि गावहिं ॥ ८ ॥

lāgata bāna jalada jimi gājahim. bahutaka dēkhi kaṭhina sara bhājahim. 7.
ruṇḍa pracaṇḍa muṇḍa binu dhāvahim. dharu dharu māru māru dhuni gāvahim. 8.

As soon as the arrows struck them, the demon warriors roared and yelled like thunder. Others who were timid, they simply ran away in terror to escape being hit. (7)

Extremely fierce looking headless torsos of demon warriors, whose heads had been severed from the trunk, ran amok in angry frenzy, helter-skelter everywhere in the battle-field, letting out chilling war cries, scowling menacingly, and howling wildly in a chorus: 'catch hold of the enemy; kill-kill'. (8)

[Note—Surely, it was a blood-curdling, horrifying and deadly scene that was enacted on the battle-field of Lanka.]

दो०. छन महुँ प्रभु के सायकन्हि काटे बिकट पिसाच ।
पुनि रघुबीर निषंग महुँ प्रबिसे सब नाराच ॥ ६८ ॥

dōhā.

chana mahum̐ prabhu kē sāyakanhi kātē bikaṭa pisāca.
puni raghubīra niṣaṅga mahum̐ prabisē saba nārāca. 68.

Lord Raghubir's (i.e. Lords Ram's) formidable arrows cut through the fearsome ogres (the demon army) in an instant (i.e. very quickly), and after completing their mission these arrows known as Narach returned to Lord's quiver¹. (Doha no. 68)

[Note—¹This answers another question: From where did Lord Ram get access to so many countless arrows to fight the long war with the demons as a quiver has a limited capacity to hold them? The arrows would come back to the Lord who used them again and again, repeatedly; or he returned them to his quiver if there was no further need for them, to be used later on.

This is also not far-fetched, for in our modern world today we have re-usable rockets that are used in space flights, or take the example of an ordinary air-plane that is reused over and over again. Or even a boomerang that comes back to its thrower or the shooter.

Remember: These arrows were not bombs that would explode and disintegrate; they were made of solid iron rods that could be reused, much like modern-day reusable rockets or drones that shoot missiles at their targets and come back to their operator.]

चौ०. कुंभकरन मन दीख बिचारी । हति छन माझ निसाचर धारी ॥ १ ॥
भा अति क्रुद्ध महाबल बीरा । कियो मृगनायक नाद गँभीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kumbhakarana mana dīkha bicārī. hati chana mājha nisācara dhārī. 1.
bhā ati krud'dha mahābala bīrā. kiyō mṛganāyaka nāda gaṁbhīrā. 2.

Kumbhakaran was flabbergasted and dumbfounded at the thought that the whole demon army was decimated while he watched helplessly; it was a shameful thing for him to have happened in his presence. (1)

This infuriated him greatly, and he let out a thunderous and terrifying yell like that of a roaring lion overcome with anger. (2)

कोपि महीधर लेइ उपारी । डारइ जहँ मर्कट भट भारी ॥ ३ ॥
आवत देखि सैल प्रभु भारे । सरन्हि काटि रज सम करि डारे ॥ ४ ॥

kōpi mahīdhara lē'i upārī. ḍāra'i jaham' markāṭa bhaṭa bhārī. 3.
āvata dēkhi saila prabhu bhārē. saranhi kāṭi raja sama kari ḍārē. 4.

He angrily picked up huge mountain-like rocks and forcefully dumped them wherever he could see groups of monkey warriors assembled at a place¹. (3)

When Lord Ram saw what was happening, he shot another volley of arrows that hit these falling rocks and reduced them to dust before they hit the ground and could crush (harm) the monkey army². (4)

[Note—¹So what happened then? Some of the monkeys ran away from the spot to save themselves, while some were buried under the rubble.

²It was like our modern-day anti-missile systems that intercept an incoming hostile missile and neutralizes it before it strikes the target on the ground.

Once the rocks were hit by Lord Ram's arrows, they were reduced to dust and rained down on the ground. But dust doesn't kill; rocks do. This gave great relief to the Lord's army.]

पुनि धनु तानि कोपि रघुनायक । छाँड़े अति कराल बहु सायक ॥ ५ ॥
तनु महुँ प्रबिसि निसरि सर जाहीं । जिमि दामिनि घन माझ समाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

puni dhanu tāni kōpi raghunāyaka. chāmṛē ati karāla bahu sāyaka. 5.
tanu mahum' prabisi nisari sara jāhīm. jimi dāmini ghana mājha samāhīm. 6.

Then Lord Raghunath (i.e. Lord Ram) pulled his (Sarang) bow tight and angrily shot many more powerful and fierce arrows (at Kumbhakaran). (5)

These arrows entered the colossus body of Kumbhakaran and escaped from it (without harming him much) just like stabs of lightening can be seen shooting through thick dark clouds and vanishing from sight¹. (6)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran's huge dark body is likened to a bank of thick dark clouds; and the arrows to the streaking lightening in the cloud. When the arrows struck Kumbhakaran he gave a loud yell just like the thunder that is heard in the cloud in the wake of a stab of lightening passing through it. Then these arrows escaped from the other side of his body to return to Lord Ram's quiver—apropos: Doha no. 68 herein above.

These arrows produced light due to friction as they passed through his body, and by the time they emerged from his body to return to Lord Ram's quiver they had cooled down.]

सोनित स्रवत सोह तन कारे । जनु कज्जल गिरि गेरु पनारे ॥ ७ ॥
बिकल बिलोकि भालु कपि धाए । बिहँसा जबहि निकट कपि आए ॥ ८ ॥

sōnita sravata sōha tana kārē. janu kajjala giri gēru panārē. 7.
bikala bilōki bhālu kapi dhā'ē. bihamśā jabahim nikaṭa kapi ā'ē. 8.

Blood flowing in streams from the dark body of Kumbhakaran resembled red coloured water flowing out of spouts on the sides of a huge dark mountain of solidified soot. (7)

Seeing that he (Kumbhakaran) was confused and in a miserable condition, and therefore unlikely to retaliate and attack them, the emboldened monkey warriors rushed towards him. But to their utter dismay and astonishment, as soon as they came within reach, Kumbhakaran roared with laughter.

[Why did he laugh? The answer is given in the Doha that follows.] (8)

दो०. महानाद करि गर्जा कोटि कोटि गहि कीस ।
महि पटकइ गजराज इव सपथ करइ दससीस ॥ ६९ ॥

dōhā.

mahānāda kari garjā kōṭi kōṭi gahi kīsa.
mahi paṭaka'i gajarāja iva sapatha kara'i dasasīsa. 69.

He (Kumbhakaran) roared thunderously as he grabbed countless monkeys that were nearest to him, dashing them to the ground like a wild elephant catching hold of anything by its trunk and smashing it to the ground, all the while raising a war cry in favour of the ten-headed Ravana. (Doha no. 69)

[Note—¹This is the reason why Kumbhakaran had laughed in verse no. 8 herein above. He felt amused and thought that these monkeys were really stupid fellows when they came near him, thinking that they would vanquish him now that he was wounded and confused by the attack launched by Lord Ram. Little did they know about the kind of stern stuff that Kumbhakaran made of—for as soon as they came with his grasp he grabbed as many of the monkeys as he could and started smashing them to the ground so violently that they would be killed instantly.]

चौ०. भागे भालु बलीमुख जूथा । बृकु बिलोकि जिमि मेष बरूथा ॥ १ ॥
चले भागि कपि भालु भवानी । बिकल पुकारत आरत बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhāgē bhālu balīmukha jūthā. bṛku bilōki jimi mēṣa barūthā. 1.
calē bhāgi kapi bhālu bhavānī. bikala pukārata ārata bānī. 2.

Scarcely had Kumbhakaran started his brutal offensive by grabbing and thrashing the hordes of bears and monkeys, when they panicked, fleeing helter-skelter in terror, just like flocks of sheep disperse, as fast as they can for the fear of dear life, at the sight of a wolf approaching them. (1)

[Lord Shiva paused for a moment to recapitulate the scene of the battle-field as the army of Lord Ram scampered for cover and ran in total disarray under the hammering of Kumbhakaran's brutal offensive. Then he resumed his narrative, addressing his consort who was listening to this magnificent Story being told to her—]

‘Oh Bhavani (“bhavānī”; name of Lord Shiva's consort)! As soon as he (Kumbhakaran) launched his vicious attack, the monkeys and bears began running away from him, to escape his grasp and certain agonizing death, as fast as they could, all the while letting out pitiful cries of distress and woe. (2)

यह निसिचर दुकाल सम अहई । कपिकुल देस परन अब चहई ॥ ३ ॥
कृपा बारिधर राम खरारी । पाहि पाहि प्रनतारति हारी ॥ ४ ॥

yaha nisicara dukāla sama aha'ī. kapikula dēsa parana aba caha'ī. 3.
krpā bāridhara rāma kharārī. pāhi pāhi pranatārati hārī. 4.

They agitatedly cried out: ‘This ferocious demon is akin to a severe famine which wants to descend on the land of the monkey race by being determined to annihilate all its members by way of killing them mercilessly, without a regret¹. (3)

Oh Lord Ram who vouchsafes the bounty of his mercy and grace upon those who are suffering and under great distress just like the shower of cool rain from the rain-bearing cloud provides relief to the parched earth below that is suffering from severe famine due to prolonged drought (krpā bāridhara)².

Oh Lord who is famed as the slayer the demon named Khar (rāma kharārī)! We invoke your gracious nature and stellar virtues that you invariably defend those who are suffering and have sought your protection by taking refuge at your feet (pranatārati hārī).

Prithee oh the merciful and compassionate Lord; we plead with thee repeatedly and most earnestly to protect us, to save us, to shield us from this horrifying prospect which stares right at our face now (pāhi pāhi). [To wit, oh Lord, nothing else can save us now except thine intervention.]’ (4)

[Note—¹Here, Kumbhakaran is likened to the angry deity of death and destruction who mercilessly unleashes his wrath upon humble and weak creatures who are unable to stand against him, for some offence he took due to some unknown reason and decided to destroy the poor creatures by sending famine, drought and pestilence upon them so as to cause intense horror, suffering and misery on the populace, and to annihilate them.

²Just like rain is the only solution to death, misery and ruin caused by severe drought that causes famine and hunger, the only way out of Kumbhakaran's deadly assault on the monkey-and-bear army is when Lord Ram intervenes and directly engages him in a duel, and then getting rid of this ferocious demon by felling him with his arrows.

This is why the terror-stricken monkeys and bears recall how Lord Ram had slayed the demon Khar. The episode of Khar's battle with Lord Ram and his ultimate slaying is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21.

If this happens, i.e. if Lord Ram takes on Kumbhakaran directly in a duel, then the latter's attention would be diverted away from the monkeys and bears as he would now have to focus on Lord Ram to tackle him; it would provide great relief to the poor monkeys and bears who are very panicky now and fear for their dear lives.]

सकरुन बचन सुनत भगवाना । चले सुधारि सरासन बाना ॥ ५ ॥
राम सेन निज पाछें घाली । चले सकोप महा बलसाली ॥ ६ ॥

sakaruna bacana sunata bhagavānā. calē sudhāri sarāsana bānā. 5.
rāma sēna nija pāchēṁ ghālī. calē sakōpa mahā balasālī. 6.

When the almighty Lord (“bhagavānā”, Lord Ram) heard this pitiful cry and pleadings of his army, he immediately decided to step in to protect his warriors. So the Lord wasted no time as he took his bow and arrow and started for the battle-field instantly, even as he was stringing the bow and mounting his formidable arrow on it while he was on his way¹. (5)

The most powerful and mighty Lord Ram (mahā balasālī) ordered his army to remain behind him as he angrily made his way to the battle front. (6)

[Note—¹There was no time to be wasted; each second was crucial. So Lord Ram hastily grabbed his bow and arrow and hastened to the battle-field. He stringed his bow and arranged the arrow on it while he was on his way to the ground to engage Kumbhakaran in a fierce duel.]

खैंचि धनुष सर सत संधाने । छूटे तीर सरीर समाने ॥ ७ ॥
लागत सर धावा रिस भरा । कुधर डगमगत डोलति धरा ॥ ८ ॥

khainci dhanuṣa sara sata sandhānē. chūṭē tīra sarīra samānē. 7.
lāgata sara dhāvā risa bharā. kudhara ḍagamagata ḍōlati dharā. 8.

Lord Ram pulled the string of his bow and shot a volley of a hundred arrows at Kumbhakaran; the arrows pierced through the demon's body and entered it. (7)

No sooner had the arrows pierced through his body than Kumbhakaran's anger knew no bounds; he lurched forward, full of wrath and vengeance. The earth trembled and the mountains shook by the violent thumping of his heavy feet as he dashed towards Lord Ram. (8)

लीन्ह एक तेहिं सैल उपाटी । रघुकुल तिलक भुजा सोइ काटी ॥ ९ ॥
धावा बाम बाहु गिरि धारी । प्रभु सोउ भुजा काटि महि पारी ॥ १० ॥

līṇha ēka tēhirṁ saila upāṭī. raghukula tilaka bhujā sō'i kāṭī. 9.
dhāvā bāma bāhu giri dhārī. prabhu sō'u bhujā kāṭī mahi pārī. 10.

He (Kumbhakaran) lifted a mountain (i.e. a huge rock that resembled a mountain because of its size) in his (right) arm (to attack Lord Ram with it), but the Lord, who was the best in the race of kings of Raghu's line (raghukula tilaka), immediately cut-off that arm. (9)

So he (Kumbhakaran) picked up another mountain with his left arm (bāma bāhu) and rushed at the Lord, whereat the Lord cut-off that arm too and fell it to the ground. (10)

काटें भुजा सोह खल कैसा । पच्छहीन मंदर गिरि जैसा ॥ ११ ॥
उग्र बिलोकनि प्रभुहि बिलोका । ग्रसन चहत मानहुँ त्रैलोका ॥ १२ ॥

kāṭēm bhujā sōha khala kaisā. pacchahīna mandara giri jaisā. 11.
ugra bilōkani prabhuhi bilōkā. grasana cahata mānahuṁ trailōkā. 12.

With both his two arms chopped-off, the wicked demon appeared to resemble the huge Mt. Mandar after its two wings were cut-off¹. (11)

Kumbhakaran became wroth with exceeding wrath; he glared menacingly at Lord Ram with fiery eyes, and his angry visage implied that he would annihilate the entire world and devour it with fierce vengeance. (12)

[Note—¹In ancient times it is said that mountains could fly or glide in the sky like huge birds do because they had wings. Indra, the king of gods, feared that if due to some reason these mountains would fall on some part of the world, everything underneath them would be crushed to pulp. So he chopped-off their wings, so that they lose their ability to cause harm to the world and its creatures, whereat the mountains became permanently grounded on the earth.

Comparing Kumbhakaran with Mt. Mandar is to impress about his gigantic, colossus size and phenomenal weight.]

दो०. करि चिक्कार घोर अति धावा बदन पसारि ।
गगन सिद्ध सुर त्रासित हा हा हेति पुकारि ॥ ७० ॥
dōhā.

kari cikkāra ghōra ati dhāvā badanu pasāri.
gagana sid'dha sura trāsita hā hā hēti pukāri. 70.

He (Kumbhakaran) screamed wildly and lunged forward furiously with wide open mouth (to gobble up anyone who came his way), whereat the gods and mystics, who were watching the proceedings from their stations in the sky, recoiled in horror, exclaiming 'Oh my; alas-alack; oh dear me, it's so horrifying'¹. (Doha no. 69)

[Note—¹It was a hideous and terrifying sight indeed to see Kumbhakaran in this state—with both his arms sliced-off his gigantic body and blood spouting out of the open wounds which themselves resembled large openings on the side of a mountain from which red water gushed out, and his mouth wide open showing not only his sharp teeth and yelping tongue but also reminding one of the opening of a huge cave that leads into to a dark, dank and cavernous interior. Added to this frightening spectacle were his two huge reddened eyes that protruded from his ugly face like two gigantic fireballs ready to spew fire and brimstone on the world to burn and roast it alive, not to mention the hot breath blowing out of his nostrils that gave the impression of hot scorching wind blowing over the earth at the time of doomsday. To wit, Kumbhakaran looked nothing less than a ferocious dragon that has gone mad with anger.]

चौ०. सभय देव करुनानिधि जान्यो । श्रवन प्रजंत सरासनु तान्यो ॥ १ ॥

बिसिख निकर निसिचर मुख भरेऊ । तदपि महाबल भूमि न परेऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sabhaya dēva karunānidhi jān'yō. śravana prajanta sarāsanu tān'yō. 1.
bisikha nikara nisicara mukha bharē'ū. tadapi mahābala bhūmi na parē'ū. 2.

Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy and compassion, observed that the gods had become alarmed and terrified; so (to reassure them that there was nothing to fear from Kumbhakaran) he pulled the string of his bow tight, pulling it right back up to his ears¹. (1)

The volley of arrows shot by the Lord filled the gaping mouth of the demon, but even then the most powerful, most strong and most valorous demon did not yield nor fall to the ground². (2)

[Note—¹The Lord held the bow in one of his out-stretched hands, mounted an arrow on the bow, and then pulled its string back with his other hand till it reached his ears, to make the string extremely taught so that when the grip over it was removed the arrow would be shot forth with a mighty force.

²The arrows shot by Lord Ram stuffed Kumbhakaran's mouth tight, making it impossible for him to yell or scream any longer; yet he kept on moving forward towards the Lord. When the demon stopped his high-decibel shrieking, a sudden calm descended on the battle-field.]

सरन्हि भरा मुख सन्मुख धावा । काल त्रोन सजीव जनु आवा ॥ ३ ॥

तब प्रभु कोपि तीब्र सर लीन्हा । धर ते भिन्न तासु सिर कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

saranhi bharā mukha sanmukha dhāvā. kāla trōna sajīva janu āvā. 3.
taba prabhu kōpi tībra sara līnhā. dhara tē bhinna tāsu sira kīnhā. 4.

With his mouth stuffed with arrows, he (Kumbhakaran) rushed forward, and this fearful sight gave the impression that the deity of death, known as Kaal, has assumed the form of a quiver filled with deadly arrows to wreak his vengeance on the battle-field. (3)

Then the Lord (Sri Ram) angrily took a powerful arrow and shot it at him; this arrow chopped-off Kumbhakaran's head, severing it from his trunk. (4)

सो सिर परेउ दसानन आगें । बिकल भयउ जिमि फनि मनि त्यागें ॥ ५ ॥

धरनि धसइ धर धाव प्रचंडा । तब प्रभु काटि कीन्ह दुइ खंडा ॥ ६ ॥

sō sira parē'u dasānana āgēm. bikala bhaya'u jimi phani mani tyāgēm. 5.
dharani dhasa'i dhara dhāva pracaṇḍā. taba prabhu kāṭi kīnha du'i khaṇḍā. 6.

That severed head was flung off (due to powerful force with which it was severed from the trunk by the arrow), and it ultimately landed (with a heavy thud) in front of the ten-headed Ravana. When he saw it he was overcome with grief and distress in the same way as a serpent loses the luminescent sac present on its hood (phani mani tyāgēm)¹. (5)

Meanwhile, the head-less torso of Kumbhakaran continued with its advance with great speed, and it appeared that the ground below it was subsiding due to its weight. To bring this fearful spectacle to an end, Lord Ram shot another arrow which cut the torso into two pieces. (6)

[Note—¹According to legend, there is a special class of serpents that carry a luminous sac on its hood. It is formed by some kind of secretion from the skin on the serpent's head, and it solidifies to form a globule from which a soft light effuses. It is believed that the serpent can see only in this light when it comes out of its hole during the night to search for food. If this luminescent sac is lost, the poor creature becomes blind; it repeatedly dashes its head on the ground in regret and grief until it dies. The illuminated sac looks like a jewel on the hood of the serpent, and the serpent without this jewel is like a king without his crown.

This example is usually employed to highlight the extent of grief and misery a person suffers from when something or someone extremely close to him or important to him is suddenly lost or snatched away, leaving him utterly dismayed, extremely distraught, and overwhelmed with gloom and hopelessness, leaving him with a feel and sense of helplessness and haplessness.

To wit, when Ravana saw the severed head of his dear brother Kumbhakaran, the rug was pulled from under his feet; he was overcome with extreme distress and grief. He was unable to come to terms with the reality that Kumbhakaran was no more, and for some time he felt everything was lost, for not only did he lose his brother but he also lost a powerful warrior and companion and a close family member at a time when a ferocious war was underway. Kumbhakaran's death sounded like the death knell to Ravana; his hopes for victory were dashed; it was the first sure sign to him that things were going to turn ugly and awry and ruinous for him and the rest of the demon race for the simple reason that it was not a joke to kill Kumbhakaran, and Ravana knew it to so.]

परे भूमि जिमि नभ तें भूधर । हेठ दाबि कपि भालु निसाचर ॥ ७ ॥
तासु तेज प्रभु बदन समाना । सुर मुनि सबहिं अचंभव माना ॥ ८ ॥

parē bhūmi jimi nabha tēm bhūdhara. hēṭha dābi kapi bhālu nisācara. 7.
tāsu tēja prabhu badana samānā. sura muni sabahim acambhava mānā. 8.

The two severed parts of Kumbhakaran's body fell to the ground so heavily as if two mountains were falling to the ground from the sky, crushing many monkeys, bears and demons who came in the way. (7)

His (Kumbhakaran's) soul left his mortal body in the form of a shaft of light and went straight to enter the divine body of Lord Ram¹. It was a miraculous event, and most unexpected, which amazed the gods and sages who were surprised at it². (8)

[Note—¹Here, Kumbhakaran's pure conscious soul, known also as his Atma, his 'true self', emerged from his gross body to merge with the Supreme Atma, known as the Parmatma, represented by Lord Ram, to become one with it. According to principles of metaphysics, this is the best destination for the individual creature's Atma, his 'pure conscious self', whereby it becomes one with the Supreme Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, by merging its self with the latter. This is the final dissolution for the soul of the creature, for then there is no more return to the cycle of birth and death. It is the best form of death when the individual's Atma attains eternity; the Atma attains liberation and deliverance in the true sense; it is attainment of salvation and emancipation for the creature; it grants enduring bliss, beatitude and felicity to the 'self'.

This sort of deliverance of the soul is called 'Moksha'; it is a state from which there is no return to the mortal world. It is the ultimate destination for the soul, the Atma, which is the 'true self' and the pure consciousness of the creature, wherein it merges with its primary form known as the cosmic Consciousness to become one with it, and inseparable from it.

Only one other individual has been so lucky and privileged as to attain such an exalted destiny in the whole story of the Ramayana, and he is Ravana, Kumbhakaran's elder brother, for his Atma too merged with Lord Ram at the time of his death—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

²Why were the gods and the sages astonished when they saw Kumbhakaran's soul entering the divine body of Lord Ram? It is because they thought that Kumbhakaran would go to hell, and such an exalted destiny for his soul was not expected by them.

But this incidence proves that Lord Ram does not care what sort of body a creature has; the Lord is only concerned with the purity of his inner-self and his Atma. The very fact that Kumbhakaran's Atma, his soul that was nothing but pure consciousness, left his demon-body to enter the holy body of the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram proves that no matter what Kumbhakaran said or did in the external world, internally he was pious and holy, and his soul was untainted by the nature of his external form, i.e. his body of a demon, or the deeds done by him with this body which were deemed to be sinful, evil and vile.

Kumbhakaran recognized the spiritual fact that the body and the soul, the latter known also as the Atma, are two distinct entities; he recognized the fact while the physical body is gross and perishable, the Atma on the other hand is pure, sublime and eternal; that the Atma is a creature's 'true self', as opposed to his body which is merely the Atma's habitat in this world; and this Atma is microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma.

A creature who truly understands this universal principle of metaphysics is said to be illustrious, wise, enlightened and self-realised. So, Kumbhakaran was able to keep his Atma separate from his body in the sense that he never allowed the Atma to be affected by anything the body did. This enlightened approach to life helped him to maintain a clear inner-self and a clear conscience even while his body was decried as being that of a demon, a body that is deemed to be evil, sinful, pervert and vice, a body with all the negativities and degrading characters that are automatically attached to the term 'demon'.

It was therefore possible for him to retain the holiness and purity of his inner-self and his Atma which entitled him to attain an exalted destiny for his soul by making it merge with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram who was none else but the Supreme Being himself in this form.

Indeed and without gainsay, what a fortunate soul Kumbhakaran's was that it obtained a destiny that eludes even the soul of the greatest of sages and hermits.

Lord Ram was of an exceptional good nature and stellar grace. He had no internal ill-will against anybody. What he was doing by way of slaying the demons was merely a call of duty and fulfilling of his obligation as the caretaker and well-wisher of this creation—because these demons had caused untold misery and pain to the creatures of the world, and it was obligatory for the Lord to stop this madness.

Lord Ram played his game wisely; he shot two birds with the same arrow. On the one hand he provided relief, solace and succour to the world by eliminating these cruel demons, and simultaneously, on the other hand, he ensured that these poor and unfortunate demons could find liberation and deliverance for their souls by granting them this opportunity in the battle-field. So what the world thought was the 'death' of the demons, was actually a means of their deliverance, emancipation and salvation—this is clearly and explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 114.

Normally those who are evil, sinful, pervert and cruel are condemned to hell; and surely heaven is not a place for them. But Lord Ram was so merciful, gracious, kind, compassionate, forgiving, benevolent and magnanimous by his inherent nature that he decided to welcome and accept Kumbhakaran warmly at his own place by way of opening the door of his heart for him in a symbolic way, and it was done by allowing his soul to enter his own body at the time it exited from the Kumbhakaran's demon-body. It was a rare gesture of grace and kindness shown by Lord Ram in the face of what was happening just a moment ago when both he and the demon were literally baying for each other's blood.

Thus, the merciful Lord Ram not only prevented the demon from going to hell, but he even went to the extent of accepting and welcoming Kumbhakaran warmly by granting the latter's soul a place in his own self in a symbolic way by allowing his soul to enter his body. It was a gesture that clearly meant that Kumbhakaran had not been condemned to hell, but elevated to an exalted stature where he would abide for ever in the company of the Supreme Being in heaven, where the Lord himself abides.

Surely, it was a moment of celebration—for a victory on the battle-field, as well as to salute the greatness of Lord Ram.]

सुर दुंदुभीं बजावहिं हरषहिं । अस्तुति करहिं सुमन बहु बरषहिं ॥ ९ ॥
 करि बिनती सुर सकल सिधाए । तेही समय देवरिषि आए ॥ १० ॥
 गगनोपरि हरि गुन गन गाए । रुचिर बीररस प्रभु मन भाए ॥ ११ ॥
 बेगि हतहु खल कहि मुनि गए । राम समर महि सोभत भए ॥ १२ ॥

sura dundubhīm bajāvahiṁ haraṣahiṁ. astuti karahiṁ sumana bahu
 baraṣahiṁ. 9.

kari binatī sura sakala sidhā'ē. tēhī samaya dēvariṣi ā'ē. 10.

gaganōpari hari guna gana gā'ē. rucira bīrarasa prabhu mana bhā'ē. 11.

bēgi hatahu khala kahi muni ga'ē. rāma samara mahi sōbhata bha'ē. 12.

The gods exulted and celebrated the occasion by playing their musical drums with great élan. They praised Lord Ram and showered bountiful flowers upon the Lord from their stations in the sky. (9)

After the gods had offered their prayers and gone their way (to their respective abode in the heaven), the celestial sage Narad came there (i.e. at the site of the battle between Lord Ram and Kumbhakara)¹. (10)

He stood in the sky and offered his prayers to Lord Ram, praising the Lord in high laudatory terms for his stellar qualities and excellent virtues, such as his valour, courage, steadfastness, fortitude and martial skills (which helped in eliminating one of the greatest and most feared demon of the race) as well as the Lord's graciousness, compassion, benevolence and magnanimity (that he granted deliverance, salvation and emancipation to a demon). This pleased the Lord immensely². (11)

Sage Narad finally requested Lord Ram to get rid of the chief wicked fellow (i.e. Ravana) at the earliest, and then he went his way.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram looked admirable and adorable in the battle-field. (12)

[Note—¹It is obvious here that sage Narad was not there at the time the battle raged on the ground and other gods were watching it from their station in the sky. Why was Narad absent earlier? The answer is this: He was the son of Brahma, the creator, and thus he was privy to many kinds of information that other gods had no access to. He had heard it from his father, Brahma the creator, what would happen when during the course of the war; so he wasn't so eager to watch the battle betwixt Lord Ram and Kumbhakaran live as other gods had been doing out of curiosity. Narad was aware that the death of Kumbhakaran was pre-destined in the day's battle, so what was the need, and the use, to jostle around and find an elbow room for himself to stand in the crowd of eager gods who were milling around over the site of the battle? It was always better to avoid a crowded place when a dangerous duel was underway, for in case the demon lunged towards the gods then there would be stampede, and all hell would break loose.

Come to think of it: Narad was correct in this respect as it is proved during the battle with Ravana, for once it so happened that in the heat of battle he had angrily lunged at the gods standing in the sky, vowing to thrash them black and blue to exact a vehement revenge from them for their having the temerity of praying to Lord Vishnu in his form as Lord Ram for his destruction, whereat there was a stampede amongst the crowd of gods as they ran madly to escape from Ravana's wrath. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 86—where we read that the gods have prayed to Lord Ram to slay Ravana without much waste of time; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 96—where we read that Ravana had attacked the gods who were watching the battle from the sky, roaring fiercely at them, scowling at them and threatening them all, chasing them so menacingly that there was a virtual stampede amongst the gods who ran helter-skelter for their safety.}

Sage Narad was a saintly figure; he did not like to enjoy bloodshed and mayhem like the other gods, so he thought it better to avoid the scene while the battle was underway. He came to offer his obeisance to Lord Ram and praise his good nature and stellar virtues. Narad was so happy that Lord Ram granted deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of Kumbhakaran, while the other gods were happy only because one of their enemies was dead.

²Lord Ram noted that none of the other gods had said a single word in his honour or even praised him for fulfilling a part of the promise made to the gods by Lord Vishnu when he had promised the gods that he would go down to earth personally as Lord Ram to eliminate the demons. The gods were so selfish that they were only concerned that one of their arch enemies was out of the way, but had no time to offer as much as a formal 'thank you' to Lord Ram. On the other hand there was sage Narad who acknowledged the good nature of the Lord in providing liberation and deliverance to the Atma of Kumbhakaran who was decried by others as being a sinful demon who ought to be condemned to hell.

Nay, Lord Ram not only prevented the demon from going to hell, but the merciful Lord even went to the extent of accepting and welcoming Kumbhakaran warmly by granting the latter's soul a place in his own self in a symbolic way by allowing his soul to enter his body. It was a gesture that clearly meant that Kumbhakaran had not been condemned to hell, but elevated to an exalted stature where he would abide for ever in the company of the Supreme Being in heaven where the Lord himself abides.

To wit, Lord Ram noted his difference in attitude between sage Narad and the rest of the gods, and therefore he very appreciated and felt glad at Narad's words.]

छं०. संग्राम भूमि बिराज रघुपति अतुल बल कोसल धनी । १ ।

श्रम बिंदु मुख राजीव लोचन अरुन तन सोनित कनी ॥ २ ॥

भुज जुगल फेरत सर सरासन भालु कपि चहु दिसि बने । ३ ।

कह दास तुलसी कहि न सक छबि सेष जेहि आनन घने ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

saṅgrāma bhūmi birāja raghupati atula bala kōsala dhanī. 1.

śrama bindu mukha rājīva lōcana aruna tana sōnita kanī. 2.

bhuja jugala phērata sara sarāsana bhālu kapi cahu disi banē. 3.
kaha dāsa tulasī kahi na saka chabi sēṣa jēhi ānana ghanē. 4.

Lord Ram—who was endowed with majestic powers and glory, and who was a jewel in the line of Kings of king Raghu’s race and the Lord of Ayodhya (known in ancient times as ‘Kaushal’)—looked adorable as he stood in the battle-field. (Chanda line no. 1)

The Lord looked so bewitchingly charming with drops of sweat glistening on his attractive face, his eyes like red-hued lotus flowers, his body covered with blood splattered all over it --- (Chanda line no. 2),

---And he was calmly toying with his bow and arrow with his two hands, while the monkeys and bears surrounded him on all the sides. (Chanda line no. 3)

[Speaking for himself, the principal author of this classic epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, i.e. Goswami Tulsidas makes this observation—] ‘Tulsidas, the humble servant of Lord Ram, says that when Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent who has a thousand mouths, cannot completely narrate the glory of Lord Ram, then say how is it ever possible for a humble man like him to sing the Lord’s glory, praise him for his grace, and describe his beauteous form in the battle-field even by a fraction of their immensity.’¹ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas expresses his inability to sufficiently describe the glory and virtues of Lord Ram, as well as his captivating charm that enthralls the heart of the beholder, because he finds himself incompetent to do so. He says that when the great Seshnath could not sufficiently do it with a thousand mouths, how can he do it with only a single mouth? So there is no regret in it. Rather, he is happy that he could do service to his dear Lord Ram by singing his glories to the best of his ability, and in whatever little manner he could do.

And what was so special, so unique, so laudatory, and so noble and honourable in Lord Ram’s actions? It is answered below.]

दो०. निसिचर अधम मलाकर ताहि दीन्ह निज धाम ।

गिरिजा ते नर मंदमति जे न भजहिं श्रीराम ॥ ७१ ॥

dōhā.

nisicara adhama malākara tāhi dīnha nija dhāma.

giriajā tē nara mandamati jē na bhajahim śrīrāma. 71.

[Lord Shiva, the principal narrator of the divine Story of the Ramayan, said to his consort, goddess Parvati, the daughter of the King of Mountains, who was listening to the narrative—] ‘Oh Girija! The demon (Kumbhakaran) was vile, evil and a mine of sins. Even he was vouchsafed an exalted destiny by Lord Ram who granted his soul an abode where the Lord himself dwelt.

Say then how unfortunate and dumb-witted is a creature who would, in his stupid folly, not adore and worship and honour such a glorious and munificent Lord as Sri Ram (who graced even a demon and vouchsafed him with a grant of liberation

and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation, inspite of his having a sinful body).’
(Doha no. 71)

[Note—Lord Shiva observes that only a great fool would desist from bowing before the greatness of Lord Ram; only one who is an utter fool and has completely bankrupted his mind of all senses and wisdom would search other Lords for the grant of favour, succour and solace instead of seeking these blessings directly from Lord Ram—because there is no other Lord who is as welcoming, amiable and friendly, as well as great, graceful, kind, compassionate, forgiving, merciful, benevolent, magnanimous and munificent as Lord Ram anywhere in this creation.]

चौ०. दिन के अंत फिरीं द्वौ अनी । समर भई सुभटन्ह श्रम घनी ॥ १ ॥
राम कृपाँ कपि दल बल बाढ़ा । जिमि तृन पाइ लाग अति डाढ़ा ॥ २ ॥
छीजहिं निसिचर दिनु अरु राती । निज मुख कहें सुकृत जेहि भाँती ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

dina kēm anta phirīm dvau anī. samara bhaī subhaṭanha śrama ghanī. 1.
rāma kṛpām̐ kapi dala bala bāṛhā. jimi ṭṛna pā'i lāga ati ḍāṛhā. 2.
chījahim̐ niscara dinu aru rātī. nija mukha kahēm̐ sukr̥ta jēhi bhām̐tī. 3.

At the end of the day, when there was eventide, the armies of both the sides returned to their respective camps¹. (1)

The hordes of monkey and bear warriors were infused with a surge of energy and enthusiasm when Lord Ram graced them after they assembled in the camp in the same way as a dwindling fire is re-ignited into its full ferocity with a little help from some fresh twigs that are added to it². (2)

On the other hand, the opposite prevailed in the demon camp. They were overcome with ever rising regret and gloom, feeling utterly helpless and hapless. [Their confidence in themselves and their king Ravana were shattered.]

The condition of the demon ranks was like the case of one advertising one's own noble and meritorious deeds—because by doing so the rewards that accrue due to such deeds quickly dwindle and eventually disappear³. (3)

[Note—¹This marked the end of the third day of the epic War of Lanka. Kumbhakaran was slayed during this day.

²The monkeys and bears were well-nigh exhausted and weary by the end of the day of fierce battle with Kumbhakaran. But when Lord Ram looked over his army to take stock of the situation, his graceful look had such magical charm that it spread immediate cheer in the rank and file of the warriors.

The Lord's benevolent smile and graceful manners instilled confidence in the monkey and bear warriors. He told them that they need not worry at all about the outcome of the war in general, and the course of the war day-by-day, as they had witnessed today how he, Lord Ram, could easily handle the most ferocious of demons and take care of them.

The warriors were reassured and highly enthused; they were full of energy, confidence and the raring to go, for the death of Kumbhakaran in a single day's battle had not only cheered and invigorated the army of Lord Ram but it also marked a major milestone towards ultimate victory. All the weariness and doubts and consternations of the monkeys and bears were dispelled, and this soared the morale of the Lord's army to new heights.

³There is message here—and it is that one ought to show great modesty, humility and restraint when it comes to telling others about one's good deeds. Boasting and talking about them, to advertise the good deeds in the hope that such information would bring praise and honour to the doer, has just the opposite effect, for such boasting and advertising neutralizes the good effects and diminishes the rewards that accrue to a person due to whatever noble and meritorious deeds he does. It is a case of diminishing returns.

Similarly, the demons were getting low on morale and numbers with the passage of every single day of the war. It was because they had always boasted of their might, strength, invincibility and powers, and now it had boomeranged upon them.]

बहु बिलाप दसकंधर करई । बंधु सीस पुनि पुनि उर धरई ॥ ४ ॥
रोवहिं नारि हृदय हति पानी । तासु तेज बल बिपुल बखानी ॥ ५ ॥

bahu bilāpa dasakandhara karaī. bandhu sīsa puni puni ura dharaī. 4.
rōvahim nāri hr̥daya hati pānī. tāsu tēja bala bipula bakhānī. 5.

The ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) lamented and grieved in many a ways; he clasped the severed head (of his dear brother Kumbhakaran) close to his heart even as he beat his head repeatedly in abject despair, deep agony, and aggravated frustration. (4)

At the same time as Ravana lamented and grieved gravely for Kumbhakaran, the women of the household too beat their hearts even as they soulfully mourned and wept for him, extolling Kumbhakaran's exemplary valour and strength, and praising his virtues and singular abilities in laudatory terms¹. (5)

[Note—¹The ladies of the demon king Ravana's household had lamented and grieved immensely in a similar way when Meghanad, the son of the demon king Ravana, was killed, and also when the demon king himself was killed in the war. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 77—when Meghanad died; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 104—when Ravana died.}

The death of Kumbhakaran was a major milestone in the epic War of Lanka, and it was a body-blow to Ravana as his demise had the effect of a warrior losing one of his limbs while the battle with the adversary was still raging fiercely.

Kumbhakaran was no ordinary demon warrior; he was a member of the ruling family, and a younger brother of the demon king Ravana. With his death Ravana lost a friend and brother who was not only a close family member but also his sincere well-wisher. The unfortunate Ravana had already lost the support of another of his

brothers, i.e. Vibhishan, whom he had humiliated so much by kicking him in full court that he abandoned him. Ravana's arrogance and haughty manners had begun to slowly pull the rug from under his feet, and his slow decline into ruin was aided by the burden of his unabated sins and evil ways that were weighing down heavily upon him, unraveling his great reputation as an invincible warrior who could bring even the mighty gods to kneel down before his might. The great and mighty demon race—which Ravana had so assiduously nourished, fostered and encouraged, against which even the deity of death known as Kaal would have trembled, a race that had become the supreme terror of the world against which no power in creation dared to raise its head in opposition—was surely and certainly heading to its sunset hour, as everything would ultimately head to in this mortal world.

To wit, driven by the fiat of fate, the dictates of destiny and the provisions of providence, Ravana pulled his demons along with him as he gradually tottered towards his own destruction. With his two major supports, his brothers Vibhishan and Kumbhakaran, gone, Ravana was virtually marooned. Though there were other commanders in the demon army, but Ravana could not rely on them as much as he would on his own family members. There was no one except his valiant son Meghanad left now in the family to give him courage and company, and lead the charge against the enemy. And therefore, his last hopes were pinned on Meghanad, whom he will send next to the battle front.]

मेघनाद तेहि अवसर आयउ । कहि बहु कथा पिता समुझायउ ॥ ६ ॥
 देखेहु कालि मोरि मनुसाई । अबहिं बहुत का करौं बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥
 इष्टदेव सैं बल रथ पायउं । सो बल तात न तोहि देखायउं ॥ ८ ॥

mēghanāda tēhi avasara āya'u. kahi bahu kathā pitā samujhāya'u. 6.
 dēkhēhu kāli mōri manusā'ī. abahim bahuta kā karaum̃ baṛā'ī. 7.
 iṣṭadēva saim̃ bala ratha pāya'um̃. sō bala tāta na tōhi dēkhāya'um̃. 8.

At that time (when everyone was mourning and lamenting sorely for Kumbhakaran) Meghanad came in; he comforted his father (Ravana) and consoled him in various ways by citing many stories that are told on such occasions to provide reassurance to those who are grieving for their departed loved ones. (6)

Meghanad encouraged Ravana to show resilience and patience with these reassuring words: 'Tomorrow you shall see my extraordinary valour and heroism about which I do not want to speak in detail now (for at this juncture it would look as if I am bragging). (7)

My dear father (tāta)! The unmatched strength and unparalleled powers, as well as the war chariot that I had been gifted by the deity whom I worship (iṣṭadēva saim̃ bala ratha pāya'um̃)¹, I had never show them to you till now (because there was no occasion for it). [But be comforted in your heart as the time has arrived for me to unveil them to you now.] (8)

[Note—¹In ancient time when Ravana had launched his campaign to conquer the world, Meghanad had done a severe fire sacrifice with sage Shukracharya, who was

the Guru, i.e. the moral preceptor and advisor, of the demon race, as its head priest. Shukracharya made Meghanad perform seven fire sacrifices, viz. Agnishtov, Ashwamedh, Bahusuvānak, Rajsuya, Gomegh, Vaishnav-yagya and Maheshwar-yagya. As a reward of these religious sacrifices, Meghanad was granted certain things that made him invincible and formidable in battle. These were the following: (i) A chariot that had the unique ability to fly in the air, was unbreakable, and it could go unhindered anywhere as was desired by its rider; (ii) Mystical powers that are associated with Maya, which enabled him to create delusions and illusions to confound his enemy, such as making him vanish from sight and creating sudden darkness that would confuse his enemy because he won't be able to see anything; (iii) Powerful weapons such as a quiver that never exhausted its supply of arrows, an invincible bow that could invariably subdue the enemy against whom it was used, and many other mystical weapons that would crush the enemy without fail. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 25, verse nos. 7-10.}

Here Meghanad is referring to these unique and magnificent weapons that he has decided to employ in the next day's battle.]

एहि बिधि जल्पत भयउ बिहाना । चहुँ दुआर लागे कपि नाना ॥ ९ ॥
 इत कपि भालु काल सम बीरा । उत रजनीचर अति रनधीरा ॥ १० ॥
 लरहिं सुभट निज निज जय हेतू । बरनि न जाइ समर खगकेतू ॥ ११ ॥

ēhi bidhi jalpata bhaya'u bihānā. cahum̐ du'āra lāgē kapi nānā. 9.
 ita kapi bhālu kāla sama bīrā. uta rajanīcara ati ranadhīrā. 10.
 larahim̐ subhaṭa nija nija jaya hētū. barani na jā'i samara khagakētū. 11.

The whole night was thus spent in mourning and grieving, as well as reassurances given by Meghanad in a sorrowful voice. At last when the dawn broke on the horizon, a large number of monkeys and bears surrounded all the gates of the fort (of Lanka) to lay seize of the city¹. (9)

On this side were the ferocious monkeys and bears who personified Kaal (death) itself, while on the other side were their opponents, the equally ferocious demons who were war veterans and extremely steadfast in the battle-field. (10)

Each side was fighting valiantly with the object of attaining victory over the other. Oh the prominent one amongst the birds ("khagakētū"; i.e. Garud)²! It was a singularly awe-inspiring and such a blood-chilling war that it defies description; one cannot fully describe its horrors, its intensity, its magnitude in words—because its not feasible and not possible.

[To wit, words have a limited scope, and no matter how good a poet or a narrator is, he would not be able to do proper justice to the actual scene that unfolded in the battle-field no matter how best he tries to capture the sight by employing words to describe it. So therefore, much is left to the imagination of the reader who is at liberty to visualize the fighting on the ground and the horrors of this war according to his own understanding.] (11)

[Note—¹This was the beginning of the 4th day of the war.

²There are three primary narrators of the Story of Ram Charit Manas—one is Lord Shiva who tells it to his consort goddess Uma, also known as Parvati or Girija, the second is the saintly crow Kaagbhusund who narrates this magnificent Story to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu and the king of birds, and the third is sage Yagyawalkya who narrates this Story to sage Bharadwaj. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 30.}

But for all practical purposes we find during our reading of this wonderful Story that Goswami Tulsidas, the author of this grand epic named ‘Ram Charit Manas’, has relied primarily on either Lord Shiva or Kaagbhusund as his source. The reason is that these two are the most ancient narrators of this Story. It was first conceptualized in the heart and mind of Lord Shiva who narrated it to Parvati, but that was done at such a sublime and subtle level of existence of consciousness that it was not heard by the ordinary world in which we live. It is because Lord Shiva is a ‘God’ and Parvati is a Goddess, and both of them do not have a physical body like creatures in this world have. So their dialogue remained in the form of cosmic vibrations that no creature of the world could hear.

But fortunately sage Kaagbhusund heard this Story directly from Lord Shiva, and he in his turn narrated it to Garud, the king of birds, who came to visit him in his hermitage in this mortal world. So therefore, the second narrator was Kaagbhusund; his narration was the first narration in this physical world.

Later on, sage Yagyawalkya received this Story from sage Kaagbhusund. So, Yagyawalkya not only became the third narrator but also the one from whom the Story spread in the human race. In this way, this divine Story descended from heaven in a gradual manner and made available to us in this mortal world.]

दो०. मेघनाद मायामय रथ चढ़ि गयउ अकास ।

गर्जेउ अट्टहास करि भइ कपि कटकहि त्रास ॥ ७२ ॥

dōhā.

mēghanāda māyāmaya ratha caḍhi gaya'u akāsa.

garjē'u aṭṭahāsa kari bha'i kapi kaṭakahi trāsa. 72.

Meghanad mounted his special chariot which had certain magical powers, and rode on it to the sky¹. Once there, he roared so thunderously and in such a fearful manner that it sent a chill down the spine of the monkeys and the bears, causing terror amongst them. (Doha no. 72)

[Note—¹This chariot had some unique qualities that were specific to it, such as its ability to fly like a plane in the sky, to stand at a fixed point in the air, and become invisible when needed. This chariot was very illusive, and to catch it was well-nigh impossible.

Meghanad chose to go up in the air to have a vantage point from which he could survey the whole battle-field. It also gave him an added advantage of quick mobility and safety from direct attack by the monkeys and bears who would find it rather difficult to pursue and engage him in the sky as compared to the ease with which they could have surrounded and thrashed him if he were on the ground.

Meghanad got his name from the fact that he could laugh or speak so loudly, with a high-pitched roar that it sounded like a deafening clap of thunder. So when he roared in anger, the monkeys and bears trembled in fear, and for a moment, were almost deaf.]

चौ०. सक्ति सूल तरवारि कृपाना । अङ्ग सङ्ग कुलिसायुध नाना ॥ १ ॥

डारङ्ग परसु परिघ पाषाणा । लागेउ बृष्टि करै बहु बाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakti sūla taravāri kṛpānā. astra sastra kulisāyudha nānā. 1.

ḍāra'i parasu parigha pāṣānā. lāgē'u bṛṣṭi karai bahu bānā. 2.

Meghanad used a formidable array of weapons to attack the army of monkeys and bears on the ground below from his high position in the sky. He rained down upon them a volley of sharp and powerful lancets, spears, tridents, swords, sickles, scimitars and the like—all of which were extremely effective like the weapon known as Vajra¹ (kulisāyudha). (1)

Besides the above, he also used battle-axes, battle-rams, huge boulders, and a hail of ferocious arrows against his enemy². (2)

[Note—¹The 'Vajra' is the invincible weapon of Indra, the king of gods. Here it means that all the weapons discharged by Meghanad were as strong, powerful and infallible as the Vajra of Indra.

²One can imagine the ferocity of the attack by Meghanad. The weapons he used from high up in the sky must have cut through the rank and file of the monkeys and bears like a farmer using his cutting tools to reap his harvest.]

दस दिसि रहे बान नभ छाई । मानहुँ मघा मेघ झरि लाई ॥ ३ ॥

धरु धरु मारु सुनिअ धुनि काना । जो मारङ्ग तेहि कोउ न जाना ॥ ४ ॥

dasa disi rahē bāna nabha chāī. mānahum' maghā mēgha jhari lāī. 3.

dharu dharu māru suni'a dhuni kānā. jō mārā'i tēhi kō'u na jānā. 4.

All the ten directions¹ were covered by arrows as if a dark cloud of doomsday is pouring its deadly rain of death and destruction upon the ground below. (3)

Everywhere and in all directions, left, right and center, there were chilling yells and angry shouts calling out 'kill, kill', and in the ensuing bedlam and the pandemonium that followed no one knew who was being killed, or who the killer was². (4)

[Note—¹The ten directions are the following: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.

The idea is that the whole sky and land, as far as the eyes could see, were covered by a thick blanket of arrows.

²There was complete chaos and mayhem on the battle ground. First there was the rain of deadly weapons, then there was the fearful darkness in every direction, and added to this was the horror of indiscriminate death accompanied by yells and moaning of those dying; compounding the fearful scene and making the matters worse were the mad clashes of warriors who thrashed anyone they encountered, not discriminating between friend and foe, because the combatants were literally blinded with passion and extremely provoked by anger that is natural during a close combat between two powerful armies vying with each other for victory. The warriors madly shouted in chorus ‘kill-kill; thrash-pound’; there was pandemonium and bedlam in the battle-field, and in the utter confusion that arose from this free-for-all, no one could know who was killing whom.]

गहि गिरि तरु अकास कपि धावहिं । देखहिं तेहि न दुखित फिरि आवहिं ॥ ५ ॥
 अवघट घाट बाट गिरि कंदर । माया बल कीन्हेसि सर पंजर ॥ ६ ॥
 जाहिं कहाँ व्याकुल भए बंदर । सुरपति बंदि परे जनु मंदर ॥ ७ ॥

gahi giri taru akāsa kapi dhāvahiṃ. dēkhahiṃ tēhi na dukhita phiri āvahiṃ. 5.
 avaghaṭa ghāṭa bāṭa giri kandara. māyā bala kīnhēsi sara pañjara. 6.
 jāhiṃ kahāṃ³ byākula bha'ē bandara. surapati bandi parē janu mandara. 7.

The monkeys and bears grabbed huge boulders and rocks and jumped into the sky to intercept Meghanad, but by that time he vanished from sight¹. When the warriors couldn't find him, they felt frustrated, and returned back in disgust. (5)

In the meanwhile, Meghanad employed his skills to create illusions to fabricate false paths, valleys and mountain caves that were all filled with sharp arrows (in an attempt to trap and kill the monkeys and bears who tried to flee and hide somewhere). (6)

Finding all escape routes thus blocked, the monkey and bear warriors became panicky. It was like the case of Mt. Mandrachal being imprisoned by the magical charm of Indra, the king of gods². (7)

[Note—¹It has already been said that Meghanad's chariot had the unique ability to vanish from sight—apropos Doha no. 72 herein above. So, when the monkey and bear warriors reached the spot where they saw Maghanad a few moments ago, he sneaked away undetected, and couldn't be intercepted. Repeated attempts to catch up with him failed, and so the monkeys and bears became frustrated and disgusted.

²Mt. Mandrachal had the ability to fly freely because it is believed that it had wings. But when Indra spun his magical charm around it, the great mountain forgot how to fly. This instance is cited here to mean that though these monkey and bear warriors were very brave and powerful fighters, but they felt themselves helpless against the might of Meghanad's magical powers to create delusions; they felt trapped and confused by the appearance of so many mysterious passages, valleys and caves even though they actually didn't exist. These warriors forgot that this sight was a mere illusion created by Meghanad, and therefore there was nothing to fear about.]

मारुतसुत अंगद नल नीला । कीन्हेसि बिकल सकल बलसीला ॥ ८ ॥
पुनि लछिमन सुग्रीव बिभीषन । सरन्हि मारि कीन्हेसि जर्जर तन ॥ ९ ॥

mārutasuta āṅgada nala nīlā. kīnhēsi bikala sakala balasīlā. 8.
puni lachimana sugrīva bibhīṣana. saranhi māri kīnhēsi jarjara tana. 9.

All the strong and valiant warriors, such as Hanuman, Angad, Nala and Neela etc., were left stunned and agitated. (8)

After that, he (Meghanad) directed his attention on Laxman, Sugriv and Vibhishan; he assailed them all by shooting volleys of arrows that pierced through their bodies and severely wounded them. (9)

पुनि रघुपति सैं जूझै लागा । सर छाँड़इ होइ लागहिं नागा ॥ १० ॥
ब्याल पास बस भए खरारी । स्वबस अनंत एक अबिकारी ॥ ११ ॥
नट इव कपट चरित कर नाना । सदा स्वतंत्र एक भगवाना ॥ १२ ॥
रन सोभा लागि प्रभुहिं बँधायो । नागपास देवन्ह भय पायो ॥ १३ ॥

puni raghupati saiṁ jūjhai lāgā. sara chāṁṛa'i hō'i lāgahiṁ nāgā. 10.
byāla pāsa basa bha'ē kharārī. svabasa ananta ēka abikārī. 11.
naṭa iva kapaṭa carita kara nānā. sadā svatantra ēka bhagavānā. 12.
rana sōbhā lagi prabhuhiṁ bamḍhāyō. nāgapāsa dēvanha bhaya pāyō. 13.

Finally, he (Meghanad) engaged Lord Ram in a fierce duel; he shot powerful arrows that transformed themselves into serpents when they hit the Lord. (10)

These serpents managed to ensnare Lord Ram who is famed as the slayer of demon Khar; it is such an irony that the Lord who is eternally independent and free, who is without a beginning or an end as he is eternal and infinite, who is one and non-dual, and who has no faults in him that are normally associated with this mortal world, should get trapped by a snare of serpents that tightly coiled themselves around him.

[Why did this happen; why did Lord Ram, who is eternally free from all sorts of delusions, allow himself to be caught in this one? This question is answered in the next verse.] (11)

Verily, though Lord Ram is the Supreme Being who is always free and independent, yet he decided to get tied in a snare of serpents just to play out his role as a human being to perfection like an expert actor ought to¹. (12)

The fact of the matter is that the almighty and omnipotent Lord Ram wished to uphold the dignity of a duel and adhere to the norms associated with a battle where there are ups and downs during a combat, and a warrior, no matter how strong and powerful he might be, cannot always have the upper hand over his adversary.

The Lord did this to imply that since he had assumed the form of a human being, he is subject to all the limitations that apply to this race. His form as an

ensnared warrior who remained calm and poised inspite of being tied with a rope of serpents imparted a unique charm and beauty to the battle-field; it was a singularly captivating sight that enthralled the mind of the beholder amidst the general scene of the battle-field that was marked by bloodshed, bedlam and mayhem.

The sight of Lord Ram trapped in a snare of serpents sent waves of fear rolling amongst the gods (who were watching the proceedings from their stations in the sky). [The gods became alarmed and terrified when they saw Lord Ram ensnared in a tight grip of serpents that coiled themselves around him. It was a nightmare for the gods.] (13)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram willingly allowed himself to be caught in the snare of magical serpents thrown by Meghanad because the Lord is an expert actor, and so he wished to play his role of a human being to perfection. Being the almighty and omnipotent Lord God of the world, had the Lord wanted he could have remained free and very easily neutralize this formidable weapon of Meghanad, but that would not be like an ordinary man, for it would obviously have been a display of superhuman powers, an act which the Lord wished to avoid.]

दो०. गिरिजा जासु नाम जपि मुनि काटहिं भव पास ।
सो कि बंध तर आवड़ व्यापक बिस्व निवास ॥ ७३ ॥
dōhā.

girijā jāsu nāma japi muni kāṭahim bhava pāsa.
sō ki bandha tara āva'i byāpaka bisva nivāsa. 73.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this glorious story, says to his consort Parvati, whose other name was Girija as she was the daughter of the King of Mountains—]

‘Oh Girija! The Lord whose name is so divine and holy that when great sages and hermits repeat it during their meditative sessions they are able to cut through the formidable snare that ties the soul of a creature to this gross mortal world of transmigration, and thereby find deliverance for themselves, say how can that supreme Lord be tied in a snare of false snakes?’¹ (Doha no. 73)

[Note—¹To wit, it is not true that Meghanad was actually able to tie Lord Ram in a snare of snakes, because it was simply impossible to do so for reasons cited in this Doha. But the illusion that Meghanad created was so perfect that it gave the impression that the Lord was indeed trapped in his snare, and this illusion was further sustained because the Lord himself wished to maintain this impression.

Why so? The answer is given in Chaupai line nos. 12-13 that precede Doha no. 73 herein above. The Lord had to act his role of a human being to perfection for he wished to honour the words of the creator Brahma that Ravana and his compatriots would be killed only by a human being*, and so it was necessary that the Lord must actually behave like an ordinary man in order to keep Brahma’s words. Had Lord Ram used his supernatural powers to free himself from this magical snare, the very purpose of his assuming the form of a human being would be defeated, for then his true identity as the Supreme Being would be known to one and all, and if that happened and he still went ahead to eliminate the demons led by their king Ravana then it would be in gross violation of Brahma’s solemn words. That would not be

good under any circumstance as it would undermine the Creator's dignity and authority. This is why Lord Ram willingly accepted to be tied up by a snare of snakes created by Meghanad.

*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 177.]

चौ०. चरित राम के सगुन भवानी । तर्कि न जाहिं बुद्धि बल बानी ॥ १ ॥

अस बिचारि जे तग्य बिरागी । रामहि भजहिं तर्क सब त्यागी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

carita rāma kē saguna bhavānī. tarki na jāhiṁ bud'dhi bala bānī. 1.
asa bicāri jē tagya birāgī. rāmahi bhajahiṁ tarka saba tyāgī. 2.

[Lord Shiva told his consort called Bhavani—] ‘Oh Bhavani! What the Supreme Being did in his human manifestation as Lord Ram is so mysterious and beyond comprehension of mortal creatures that it cannot be subjected to worldly logic and interpretation of the mind. Hence, it cannot be described by the power of speech or understood by application of the power of reasoning, and therefore there should not be any debates and arguments regarding the Lord's deeds and actions (for all of them are exceedingly mysterious and beyond comprehension of the mind-intellect complex)¹.
(1)

Taking this into consideration, those who are enlightened about this Truth concerning Lord Ram, are wise and prudent enough to have devotion for the Lord, to worship and adore the Lord in a dispassionate manner, without getting unnecessarily perturbed and perplexed at what the Lord does in his human form, because no matter how hard they try they would only be wasting their time and energy in the futile exercise of attempting to unravel these secrets by applying logic and reasoning to understand them, for they are bound to fail in this exercise. (2)

[Note—¹ Similar idea is expressed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—for instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 341.

The idea is that a wise and enlightened person ought not to allow himself to be dragged into the whirlpool of doubts and confusions by applying unnecessary logic and reasoning to understand every thing about Lord Ram, as it would only vex his spirit and create misunderstanding regarding the Supreme Being because the latter is beyond the reach of the mind and the intellect. Such an exercise, if attempted, would only lead to more and more perplexities and uneasiness of the soul, instead of granting any worthwhile result in the form of peace and stability of the mind; so it's better to avoid it altogether.]

ब्याकुल कटकु कीन्ह घननादा । पुनि भा प्रगट कहइ दुर्बादा ॥ ३ ॥

जामवंत कह खल रहु ठाढ़ा । सुनि करि ताहि क्रोध अति बाढ़ा ॥ ४ ॥

बूढ़ जानि सठ छाँड़ेउँ तोही । लागेसि अधम पचारै मोही ॥ ५ ॥

अस कहि तरल त्रिसूल चलायो । जामवंत कर गहि सोइ धायो ॥ ६ ॥

byākula kaṭaku kīnha ghananādā. puni bhā pragaṭa kaha'i durbādā. 3.
jāmvanta kaha khala rahu ṭhārḥā. suni kari tāhi krōdha ati bārḥā. 4.
būrḥa jāni saṭha chāmṛē'um' tōhī. lāgēsi adhama pacārai mōhī. 5.
asa kahi tarala trisūla calāyō. jāmvanta kara gahi sō'i dhāyō. 6.

Meghanad (“ghananādā”; one who roared like the sound of like thunder) made the whole army of monkeys and bears extremely agitated and perplexed by his skillful maneuverings and employment of magical tricks. After remaining illusive for some time, he reappeared once again, and began using offensive and threatening language. (3)

Jamvant, the chief of the bears, challenged him, saying, ‘Oh you rascal; keep standing (to face me).’

Meghanad became excessively furious when he heard it. (4)

He angrily shot back at Jamvant, saying caustically, ‘I had spared you hitherto fore considering your old age. But how ungrateful you lowly fellow are that, instead of feeling obliged to me, you choose to challenge and remonstrate me. Woes betide you, oh you wretch!’ (5)

Saying these wrathful words, Meghanad shot a shimmering hot trident at Jamvant; the latter grabbed it immediately and lunged aggressively towards his attacker to hit him back with the same trident. (6)

मारिसि मेघनाद कै छाती । परा भूमि घुर्मित सुरघाती ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि रिसान गहि चरन फिरायो । महि पछारि निज बल देखरायो ॥ ८ ॥

mārisi mēghanāda kai chātī. parā bhūmi ghurmita suraghātī. 7.
puni risāna gahi carana phirāyō. mahi pachāri nija bala dēkharāyō. 8.

He (Jamvant) hit Meghanad in his chest with this trident so violently that the tormentor of gods reeled under its impact, swooned, and then fell down on the ground. (7)

Then Jamvant showed his valour by catching hold of Meghanad by his leg in a fury, swung him round and round, and then dashed him against the ground. (8)

[Note—¹Whatever sense that was left in Meghanad after being attacked by the trident was now surely gone, and he remained prostrated on the ground, completely lifeless for some moments. This was the first time in his life that Meghanad had had to face this situation, and he wasn't prepared for it. So it came to him as a shock that totally unnerved him. First was the violent strike by the powerful trident, and then in quick succession came this vicious dashing on the ground; this left little time for him to recover his breath and wits, and for some moment he lay dazed and motionless on the ground like a corpse.

Jamvant was responding to Meghanad's comment that he had desisted from attacking the former out of deference to his old age when a person becomes physically weak—apropos verse no. 5 herein above. Jamvant wished to tell Meghanad that he owes nothing to him, and a warrior does not want to live on charity or mercy of his enemy. He might be old in body but that does not mean that he lacks in strength, power, courage and valour.]

बर प्रसाद सो मरइ न मारा । तब गहि पद लंका पर डारा ॥ ९ ॥
इहाँ देवरिषि गरुड़ पठायो । राम समीप सपदि सो आयो ॥ १० ॥

bara prasāda sō mara'i na mārā. taba gahi pada laṅkā para ḍārā. 9.
ihām̐ dēvariṣi garuṛa paṭhāyō. rāma samīpa sapadi sō āyō. 10.

Due to the boons that Meghanad had, he did not die¹. So Jamvant seized him by his legs and tossed him away in such a way that he landed in Lanka. (9)

Meanwhile, the celestial sage Narad sent Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu who is renowned for his ability to devour serpents) who came immediately to Lord Ram. (10)

[Note—Meghanad was granted a boon by Lord Brahma, the creator, that he would die only at the hands of someone who hasn't slept and hasn't had a proper meal for fourteen years. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 64-65; and Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 175.}

The question arises: 'from whom and when did Laxman learn the skill that enabled him to remain alive without eating and sleeping for such a long time?' Well, the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas itself where it is expressly mentioned that sage Vishwamitra had imparted this singularly unique Vidya (esoteric knowledge) to the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, when he was taking them to his hermitage in order to eliminate the demons who had been defiling his fire sacrifice. This Vidya imparted to the two brothers the skill to survive without eating, drinking and sleeping. This mystical ability and its esoteric knowledge would stand them in good stead when they would eventually go to the forest where proper food, drink and sleep would be virtually impossible.

The grateful sage had also given them some very rare weapons that were exclusive and could only be used by a person who is entitled to use them, for they were sort-of locked by a password in the form of some Mantra, which could have been some sort of a special combination of words, letters or phrases that would unlock the fierce potentials of the concerned weapon upon invocation. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

According to Valmiki's Ramayan, Brahma gave him a boon that he could only be killed if his enemy managed to reach the site where he would be doing some fire sacrifice to gain victory over the enemy, disrupt his sacrifice and attack him simultaneously. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 85, verse nos. 14-15.}

We shall soon read in the verses that follow herein below that in order to honour Brahma's words, Lord Ram would send Laxman along with others to disrupt the fire sacrifice that Meghanad was performing to gain victory in the war, and in the ensuing scuffle he was killed by Laxman. It ought to be noted here that Laxman

hadn't slept or eaten properly for the entire fourteen years he stayed with Lord Ram in the forest—and so he fitted in perfectly to be the one who was eligible to slay Meghanad as ordained by Brahma.]

दो०. खगपति सब धरि खाए माया नाग बरूथ ।

माया बिगत भए सब हरषे बानर जूथ ॥ ७४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

khagapati saba dhari khā'ē māyā nāga barūtha.

māyā bigata bha'ē saba haraṣē bānara jūtha. 74 (a).

The king of birds, i.e. Garud, caught hold of the serpents that were created by Maya (delusions) spread by Meghanad, as a result of which Lord Ram appeared to be tied in their snare because they had wrapped themselves tightly around his body. Garud gobbled up all these serpents, thereby freeing the Lord from their clutches¹.

As soon as this delusion was dispelled and Lord Ram became free once again, there was cheer and exhilaration all around as the monkeys and bears rejoiced at this positive turn of events. (Doha no. 74-a)

[Note—¹Garud was utterly confounded that Lord Ram, who was deemed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Lord of the world, could be so easily tied by ordinary serpents. Garud wondered how could this be possible, and since it had actually happened then surely Lord Ram was not what he is made out to be: Is he an ordinary human prince, or is it true that he is actually a manifestation of Lord Vishnu himself as the gods and the scriptures affirmed him to be? Garud could not reconcile the two opposing pictures, and he was overcome with utter confusion and doubt about Lord Ram's true nature and identity. This confusion had been worrying his mind and heart so much that he sought clarification to settle the matter once and for all; so he later on approached sage Narad who sent him to the creator Brahma, who in turn referred him to Lord Shiva because the latter is considered not only as the wisest and the most enlightened amongst all the gods but also the one who is specially qualified to answer Garud's query regarding Lord Ram's true nature and identity as Lord Shiva worshipped Lord Ram and adored him as his chosen deity, using Lord Ram's holy name as his preferred Mantra for doing mediation and other spiritual pursuits.

Lord Shiva decided that it would be better to send Garud to the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund for the divine discourse that would remove Garud's confusion, because both of them were birds and so it would be easy for them to converse with each other in their own language. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64.}

What followed is the divine discourse given by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund for the benefit of Garud, a discourse that came to be known as the famed “Kaagbhusund Ramayan”. It is narrated in full in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Doha no. 125. Fortunately, this Ramayan has been dealt with thoroughly in English by the humble author of this current Book the reader is reading now, and is also available on the same websites where this current Book is available.]

गहि गिरि पादप उपल नख धाए कीस रिसाइ ।
चले तमीचर बिकलतर गढ़ पर चढ़े पराइ ॥ ७४ (ख) ॥

gahi giri pādapa upala nakha dhā'ē kīsa risā'i.
calē tamīcara bikalatara gaṛha para caṛhē parā'i. 74 (b).

Reinvigorated with energy and renewed enthusiasm, the furious monkey and bear warriors launched a fresh wave of vicious attack by arming themselves with mountainous rocks and boulders, huge trees and anything else they could lay their hands upon.

The ferocity of the retaliatory attack by Lord Ram's army was so intense that the demon warriors fled in panic, rushing back into the fort of Lanka (as fast as they could, to escape being slaughtered). (Doha no. 74-b)

चौ०. मेघनाद कै मुख जागी । पितहि बिलोकि लाज अति लागी ॥ १ ॥
तुरत गयउ गिरिबर कंदरा । करौं अजय मुख अस मन धरा ॥ २ ॥
caupā'i.

mēghanāda kai murachā jāgī. pitahi bilōki lāja ati lāgī. 1.
turata gaya'u giribara kandarā. karauṁ ajaya makha asa mana dharā. 2.

Meanwhile, when Meghanad recovered from his fainting spell, and when he saw his father Ravana he felt very ashamed at himself¹. (1)

He immediately went into a mountain cave, telling himself determinedly that he would perform a fire sacrifice that would make him virtually invincible in the war. (2)

[Note—¹Meghanad had excessively boasted earlier about his stellar martial skills, assuring his father Ravana that he would avenge the killing of his uncle Kumbhakaran—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 72. Now, what face did he have to show his father? Instead of coming home proudly as a victor, he had been dumped unconscious, like a sac, at his father's foot, lying prostrate on the ground like a battered and defeated warrior. So where was his boast and bluster now?]

इहाँ बिभीषन मंत्र बिचारा । सुनहु नाथ बल अतुल उदारा ॥ ३ ॥
मेघनाद मुख करइ अपावन । खल मायावी देव सतावन ॥ ४ ॥
जौं प्रभु सिद्ध होइ सो पाइहि । नाथ बेगि पुनि जीति न जाइहि ॥ ५ ॥

ihām' bibhīṣana mantra bicārā. sunahu nātha bala atula udārā. 3.
mēghanāda makha kara'i apāvana. khala māyāvī dēva satāvana. 4.
jauṁ prabhu sid'dha hō'i sō pā'ihī. nātha bēgi puni jīti na jā'ihī. 5.

Here, in Lord Ram's camp, Vibhishan thought to himself that it would be wise to tell the Lord about this development¹. So he approached the Lord and said, 'Listen my Lord of immense strength and magnanimity. (3)

The evil Meghanad, who employs deceit and vile methods to accomplish his goal, and who is a known tormentor of gods, is performing a fire sacrifice with malefic intentions. (4)

Oh Lord, should he be able to complete it successfully then it would be impossible to defeat him.' (5)

[Note—¹Surely this shows that there were spies in Lanka who had kept Vibhishan abreast of the developments inside the fort. These demons were the ones who were disillusioned with Ravana and had a secret desire to overthrow him. They had sided with Vibhishan in the hope that when the tide of war turns against Ravana and he is trounced, it is certain that Vibhishan would be the next king of Lanka, and if they joined him now, albeit quietly, then they would be rewarded in due course. Truly this behaviour is treason and betrayal, but it is what actually happens everywhere during a war.]

सुनि रघुपति अतिसय सुख माना । बोले अंगदादि कपि नाना ॥ ६ ॥
 लछिमन संग जाहु सब भाई । करहु बिधंस जग्य कर जाई ॥ ७ ॥
 तुम्ह लछिमन मारेहु रन ओही । देखि सभय सुर दुख अति मोही ॥ ८ ॥
 मारेहु तेहि बल बुद्धि उपाई । जेहिं छीजै निसिचर सुनु भाई ॥ ९ ॥
 जामवंत सुग्रीव बिभीषन । सेन समेत रहेहु तीनिउ जन ॥ १० ॥

sunī raghupati atisaya sukha mānā. bōlē aṅgadādi kapi nānā. 6.
 lachimana saṅga jāhu saba bhā'ī. karahu bidhansa jagya kara jā'ī. 7.
 tumha lachimana mārēhu rana ōhī. dēkhi sabhaya sura dukha ati mōhī. 8.
 mārēhu tēhi bala bud'dhi upā'ī. jēhim chījai nīsicara sunu bhā'ī. 9.
 jāmavanta sugrīva bibhīṣana. sēna samēta rahēhu tīni'u jana. 10.

When Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) heard this, he felt very glad¹. He summoned Angad and other monkeys [6] and instructed them, 'Oh brothers (bhā'ī)²! All of you go along with Laxman³ and destroy his (Meghanad's) fire sacrifice [7]. (6-7)

You Laxman, listen to me. You must slay this demon in the battle. I feel hurt when I observe that the gods are terrified of him. (8)

So, employ whatever tactic you deem fit according to the situation on the ground, and use your martial skills, strength and wisdom to somehow get rid of him so that the demons are demoralized and emotionally defeated⁴. (9)

Jamvant, Sugriv and Vibhishan—you three stay back with the rest of the army.⁵ (1)

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram feel glad when Vibhishan told him about Meghanad performing a fire sacrifice? Well, it was a proof that Vibhishan was loyal to him, and it also proved him correct when he had taken a decision to welcome Vibhishan inspite of stiff opposition and strong reservations expressed against it by all the monkey advisors at the time when Vibhishan had come to seek Lord Ram's refuse after being kicked out by Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45.

²By calling the monkey warriors “brothers”, Lord Ram instantly established a close rapport and an emotional connect with them. They all felt that Lord Ram was not someone who was an outsider for whom they were fighting a war that did not concern them directly, but that the Lord was very dear to them all and they were fighting for someone who was like a family member for the monkey race. By this single word “brother”, the wise Lord Ram had endeared the rank and file of the whole army so much that the monkey and bear warriors were ready to die for him.

³Why did Lord Ram select Laxman to lead this campaign? We have read earlier that Meghanad had defeated Laxman during their first encounter when Laxman had been gravely wounded and fell down unconscious—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 54.

Lord Ram wanted to give Laxman a chance to redeem his self-esteem and reputation by slaying Meghanad to avenge his defeat earlier.

⁴With Kumbhakran already dead, Meghanad's death would completely demoralize the demon army as well as their king Ravana, and this would weaken their resolve to continue with the war; and even if they decided not to turn back at this late stage then at least they would be fighting half-heartedly. This would ensure victory for the Lord's army which was now in a great fighting spirit.

⁵So, who went with Laxman to fight with Meghanad? This answer is given in Doha no. 74 herein below. Laxman was accompanied by Angad, Neela, Nala, Mayand, Nala, and the valiant warrior Hanuman. They were close friends and stood together in thick and thin. They led the assault from the front; they were commanders and leading warriors of troops under their supervision. On the other hand, Sugriv, who was the king of the monkeys, Jamvant, who was the chief of the bears, and Vibhishan, who was a royal member of the demon race and a brother of Ravana, and had come to seek refuge with the Lord, were senior advisors of the Lord and top generals of his army.]

जब रघुबीर दीन्हि अनुसासन । कटि निषंग कसि साजि सरासन ॥ ११ ॥

प्रभु प्रताप उर धरि रनधीरा । बोले घन इव गिरा गँभीरा ॥ १२ ॥

जौं तेहि आजु बधें बिनु आवौं । तौ रघुपति सेवक न कहावौं ॥ १३ ॥

जौं सत संकर करहिं सहाई । तदपि हतउँ रघुबीर दोहाई ॥ १४ ॥

jaba raghubīra dīnhi anusāsana. kaṭi niṣaṅga kasi sāji sarāsana. 11.

prabhu pratāpa ura dhari ranadhīrā. bōlē ghana iva girā gaṁbhīrā. 12.

jauṁ tēhi āju badhēm binu āvauṁ. tau raghupati sēvaka na kahāvauṁ. 13.

jaum̐ sata saṅkara karahim̐ sahā'ī. tadapi hata'um̐ raghubīra dōhā'ī. 14.

When Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave warrior in the family of king Raghu) had issued these instructions, Laxman prepared to leave; he tied his quiver properly to his waist and strung his bow as he got ready to depart. (11)

Invoking the glory and the majesty of Lord Ram in his heart, Laxman said with a stern and deep voice that resonated like thunder [12], 'If I come back without slaying him (Meghanad), then I shall forfeit the right to be called a sincere servant of Lord Ram [13]. (12-13)

Verily I make a vow that even if thousands of Shivas (who is deemed to be the god of death and war as he is responsible for bringing life to an end in this creation) come out to help him (Meghanad) and obstruct his demise, I say on oath by invoking the name of my revered Lord Ram (Raghubir) that I would still slay him, no matter what happens.¹ (14)

[Note—¹For Laxman no one in this world mattered more than Lord Ram and his honour; if a situation arose where he had to make a choice between Lord Ram and anyone else, his choice will surely and certainly be in the favour of Lord Ram, even if it meant to turn the world upside down. This decision of Laxman to stand by Lord Ram at all costs is clear earlier also when he had sternly and fearlessly taken sage Parashuram to task for attempting to brow-beat and threaten the Lord when he had broken the bow of Lord Shiva during the marriage ceremony of Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 281.

A similar approach of Laxman is seen when the news arrived that Bharat, their brother, is coming to the forest with a huge army to meet Lord Ram. Though Bharat's intention was absolutely above board as he wished to persuade the Lord to come back to Ayodhya, but the news that a huge army was accompanying Bharat gave the wrong impression that he is coming to fight the Lord and defeat him to ensure that he can ascend the throne of the kingdom and there is no one to claim it later on. At that time too, Laxman had threatened to kill Bharat if he dared raise his head against Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 230.

The use of the term 'thousands of Shivas' is a figure of speech that simply means that even if multitudes of forces of multiple strengths join hands to protect Maghanad, still Laxman would defeat them.]

दो०. रघुपति चरन नाइ सिरु चलेउ तुरंत अनंत ।
अंगद नील मयंद नल संग सुभट हनुमंत ॥ ७५ ॥

dōhā.

raghupati carana nā'i siru calē'u turanta ananta.
aṅgada nīla mayanda nala saṅga subhaṭa hanumanta. 75.

*Anant (another name of Laxman, signifying that he was eternal in his primary form as Lord Seshnath, the thousand hooded celestial serpent who supports the world on

his hoods) bowed his head reverentially before Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram)¹ and set out to accomplish his assigned mission (to eliminate Meghanad).

He was accompanied by Angad, Neela, Mayand, Nala, and Hanuman who had exceptional skills and was a valiant warrior (and they too followed Laxman's example by first bowing their heads before Lord Ram before starting on their mission). (Doha no. 75)

{*This Doha can also be read as follows: “Anant (Laxman), Angad, Neela, Mayand, Nala, along with the skilled and valiant (saṅga subhaṭa) Hanuman, bowed their heads before Lord Ram to pay their respects to him and seek his blessings as they started on their mission (of eliminating Meghanad as instructed by the Lord_.”}

[Note—¹When Laxman had gone to face Meghanad on the first occasion, he hadn't paid his obeisance to Lord Ram by bowing his head before the latter, as a result of which he had to suffer an ignominious defeat at the hands of Meghanad who successfully shot him down, making him faint and fall unconscious in the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 52, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 54.

Even others who accompanied him at that time neglected this etiquette, and so they too suffered a humiliating defeat during the duel with Meghanad.

So, having learnt a bitter lesson, Laxman and his companions did not forget to pay their respects to Lord Ram by bowing before him to seek his blessings at the time they started on their mission to tackle Meghanad. The result was they succeeded in their mission this time; they easily managed to overcome and slay Meghanad.

If we examine the proceedings of the war carefully we will find that on every occasion when the monkey and bear warriors missed paying their due respects to Lord Ram before an assault on the enemy forces, they were forced to retreat and suffer greatly. Let's see such instances now.

During the first day of the war, the monkeys and bears went to the battle-field after bowing before Lord Ram, and thus they became victorious—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 39; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 42; Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 43; Doha no. 44; and Doha no. 47.

On the second day, however, they did not follow this protocol, and hence had to suffer defeat and battering at the hands of Meghanad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

A similar situation prevailed on the third day of the war too—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 65; Doha no. 64; Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 67.

On the fourth day also the monkey troops committed the same error of not paying their respects to Lord Ram before commencement of the day's battle, and thus suffered heavily—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 72; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 74.

That was enough for them, and so they took special caution to bow their heads before Lord Ram on the fifth day of the war when they went out to deal with Meghanad.]

चौ०. जाइ कपिन्ह सो देखा बैसा । आहुति देत रुधिर अरु भैंसा ॥ १ ॥

कीन्ह कपिन्ह सब जग्य बिधंसा । जब न उठइ तब करहिं प्रसंसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jā'i kapinha sō dēkhā baisā. āhuti dēta rudhira aru bhainsā. 1.

kīnha kapinha saba jagya bidhansā. jaba na uṭha'i taba karahim prasansā. 2.

When the Kapis (the monkeys; named in Doha no. 75 herein above) went to the site (where Meghanad was performing his fire sacrifice to make him invincible and conquer his enemy), they found him offering blood and sacrificing live buffalos as offerings to the fire¹. (1)

The Kapis destroyed his evil sacrifice², but when they observed that inspite of this grave provocation he remained unmoved and continued with his rituals, they began to praise him³. (2)

[Note—¹Since only the Kapis went to the actual spot of Meghanad's fire sacrifice, it clearly means that Laxman stood outside the cave where it was being performed, in order to guard the cave's mouth to make sure that Meghanad did escape from there, and also that no demon is allowed to go in to his aid from the outside.

How did the Kapis and Laxman go to know about the exact location of this secret fire sacrifice? Well, it was disclosed by Vibhishan himself (Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 75), because he was Ravana's brother and privy to all the secrets of Lanka.

This site was well protected and known only to a selected few. It is written in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 131, verse nos. 181-184 that this place was near a great Banyan tree and was guarded by a plethora of formidable obstacles, such as poisonous snakes, huge and strong elephants, raging fire, fierce wind, and deep trenches filled with water. Laxman destroyed them by employing the following counter measures: he destroyed the serpents by using the Garud weapon; the elephants by using Parvat weapon, i.e. a weapon that turned into a huge mountain and crushed the enemy upon whom it falls; the Water weapon which doused the raging fire; by Storm was neutralized by asking Hanuman, the son of the wind god, to inhale it; and the Vayabyastra, the explosive fire weapon, the heat of which dried up the water filled trenches.

However, Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 13-14 says that a huge army was guarding Meghanad's fire sacrifice, and so Vibhishan told Laxman to destroy it. This means two things—viz. (i) Vibhishan had accompanied them to help them conquer Meghanad, and (ii) that a huge army of demons had been guarding the fire sacrifice, making it necessary for Laxman to engage them in a battle while the Kapis went inside to destroy the fire sacrifice itself and engage Meghanad in a duel.

A similar idea is expressed in Valmiki's Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 86, verse no. 14.

²A question may be asked, and an objection may be raised: 'Destroying an ongoing fire sacrifice is an offense; it is a sinful act. So why did the Lord's messengers do it; why did they commit an offense by destroying a fire sacrifice of Meghanad?'

Well, the answer is this: The Lord's messengers wanted to teach the demons a lesson by giving them the same treatment that they had been meting out to the sages, seers and hermits whose fire sacrifices they had been destroying for a long time; the

Lord's messengers wished to administer the demons the same medicine that they had been using to subdue and torment others.

Secondly, the fire sacrifice that Meghanad was doing was an evil form of the ritual as he was using blood and live buffaloes as offerings, which in effect meant that the 'Fire God', who is the patron deity of the sacred fire of the fire sacrifice as well as a representative of the holy fire element, was actually being defiled and insulted, instead of being worshipped and honoured, an act which itself was very sinful and unpardonable, and therefore punishable. Hence, there was nothing wrong in stopping this evil and sinful form of fire sacrifice.

³And why did the Kapis praise Meghanad? They appreciated his determination and resilience; they appreciated that inspite of the ruckus created by them Meghanad continued to remain calm; he continued to meditate and remain focused on his objective, something which is rare and difficult to practice under the situation prevailing at that time.]

तदपि न उठइ धरेन्हि कच जाई । लातन्हि हति हति चले पराई ॥ ३ ॥
लै त्रिसूल धावा कपि भागे । आए जहँ रामानुज आगे ॥ ४ ॥

tadapi na uṭha'i dharēnhi kaca jā'ī. lātanhi hati hati calē parā'ī. 3.
lai trisūla dhāvā kapi bhāgē. ā'ē jaham' rāmānuja āgē. 4.

When Meghanad did not rise up from his seat inspite of this grave provocation, the Kapis went to him, caught hold of his hairs and pulled them hard, after which they kicked him viciously and ran away. [Obviously, this was too much an insult for Meghanad to bear, so at last he lost is cool.] (3)

He (Meghanad) grabbed his fierce Trident and rushed wrathfully at the Kapis, who ran as fast as they could to come out of the cave, where Laxman was waiting for them¹. (4)

[Note—¹Had the great Kapis, such as Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela and Mayand wanted, they could have trashed Meghanad to death inside the cave itself; they wouldn't have allowed him to grab his Trident. But that would have undermined Laxman's glory and honour; it would be tantamount to subordination Lord Ram's brother and dent his reputation, because history will recall that Laxman could never defeat Meghanad in a direct battle, for during the first encounter he had fell down unconscious when attacked by Meghanad, and on the second occasion he had preferred to stand outside the cave and send the Kapis to slay his adversary inside it, perhaps because he was scared to face Meghanad directly.

So therefore, the Kapis chose not to kill Meghanad themselves, but force him to pursue them and come to the place where Laxman was waiting for them, outside the mouth of the cave. This would give Laxman an opportunity to avenge his earlier defeat at the hands of Meghanad by killing him now.]

आवा परम क्रोध कर मारा । गर्ज घोर रव बारहिं बारा ॥ ५ ॥

कोपि मरुतसुत अंगद धाए । हति त्रिसूल उर धरनि गिराए ॥ ६ ॥

āvā parama krōdha kara mārā. garja ghōra rava bārahim bārā. 5.
kōpi marutasuta aṅgada dhā'ē. hati trisūla ura dharani girā'ē. 6.

He (Meghanad) was overwhelmed with excess of anger, and rushed forward roaring repeatedly and terrifyingly like the sound of thunder with which the doomsday clouds roar in the sky. (5)

When Hanuman (the son of the wind god—“marutasuta”) and Angad saw him pursuing them, they turned back and rushed to intercept him. But Meghanad struck the two warriors so ferociously with his formidable Trident that they fell down on the ground, unable to cope with the force of the strike. (6)

प्रभु कहँ छाँड़ैसि सूल प्रचंडा । सर हति कृत अनंत जुग खंडा ॥ ७ ॥
उठि बहोरि मारुति जुबराजा । हतहिं कोपि तेहि घाउ न बाजा ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu kham' chāmṛēsi sūla pracandā. sara hati kṛta ananta juga khaṇḍā. 7.
uṭhi bahōri māruti jubarājā. hatahim kōpi tēhi ghā'u na bājā. 8.

Then he (Meghanad) threw his formidable Trident with great force at the Lord (Laxman), but Lord Anant (i.e. Laxman, because he is a manifestation of ‘Anant’, the celestial Serpent known as Seshnath who is believed to be eternal) shot his arrow and broke that Trident into two midway¹. (7)

Meanwhile, Maruti (Hanuman) and Jubraj (the prince of the monkeys, i.e. Angad) recovered from their shock, and furiously began their retaliatory attack on Meghanad, but mysteriously he was not injured, at least not gravely and in a visible manner². (8)

[Note—¹Imagine the speed with which Laxman reacted. Everything was over in a span of a few milliseconds as Meghanad’s Trident fell down like a broken tree branch.

²Meghanad was made of an exceptionally stern stuff; he was a war-veteran, had a colossal, robust and muscular body, and he was the fiercest of all the demon warriors, inheriting the genes of his great warrior father Ravana.

Remember: Meghanad had held the Trident in his hand as he struck Hanuman and Angad violently in quick succession, after which he threw it with all his might at Laxman. The blow was so hard that it had made Hanuman and Angad fall down on the ground, which in itself was no mean achievement as they were equally valiant and strong as Meghanad. Nevertheless, the two victims of Meghanad’s wrath had suffered immensely by the fierceness of the blow of the Trident, which had sapped their energy and made them swoon and lose their balance. So, though they recovered from the blow to some extent and stood up to challenge their enemy, yet this recovery was only partial as they could not fully muster the strength to strike back at their enemy sufficiently hard and with the same ferocity with which they had hit him during the disruption of his fire sacrifice, for it was not practical that they could collect the extent

of the energy and dynamism which they initially possessed at the beginning of the duel, at such short notice, after being pummeled by Meghanad.

The result was that their strike had no visible effect on Meghanad; the thick-skinned, strong and powerful demon prince simply felt like an elephant who has been hit by a stick; he simply neglected it.]

फिरे बीर रिपु मरइ न मारा । तब धावा करि घोर चिकारा ॥ ९ ॥
 आवत देखि क्रुद्ध जनु काला । लछिमन छाड़े बिसिख कराला ॥ १० ॥
 देखेसि आवत पबि सम बाना । तुरत भयउ खल अंतरधाना ॥ ११ ॥
 बिबिध बेष धरि करइ लराई । कबहुँक प्रगट कबहुँ दुरि जाई ॥ १२ ॥

phirē bīra ripu mara'i na mārā. taba dhāvā kari ghōra cikārā. 9.
 āvata dēkhi krud'dha janu kālā. lachimana chārē bisikha karālā. 10.
 dēkhēsi āvata pabi sama bānā. turata bhaya'u khala antaradhānā. 11.
 bibidha bēṣa dhari kara'i larā'ī. kabahum̐ka pragaṭa kabahum̐ duri jā'ī. 12.

When the two warriors (Hanuman and Angad) realized that their enemy could not be subdued by any means they employed, they (wisely) decided to turn back (and join Laxman). But as soon as Meghanad saw them returning, he thought that they were retreating out of fear; so he lunged forward vehemently, with renewed vigour, and yelling ferociously. (9)

At that time, Meghanad appeared to be like a personified form of an angry 'Kaal', the god of death and destruction, who seemed bent on wreaking vengeance upon his enemy.

When Laxman observed that Meghanad was coming towards him with such an excessive ferocity, he himself became exceedingly angry (as he remembered the earlier episode when he was gravely wounded by Meghanad during their first encounter). Hence, Laxman wasted no time in shooting powerful arrows at Meghanad. (10)

That wicked fellow (i.e. Meghanad) vanished from sight as soon as he saw the fierce arrows, which were glowing like a raging fire, coming to strike him down. (11)

He started playing his usual tricks that caused delusions, by assuming various illusionary forms and striking at the enemy in different ways, appearing near for one moment and then disappearing and reappearing at a distance at the next moment, creating utter confusion and consternation amongst the monkeys and bears, and trying his best to frustrate Laxman. (12)

देखि अजय रिपु डरपे कीसा । परम क्रुद्ध तब भयउ अहीसा ॥ १३ ॥
 लछिमन मन अस मंत्र दृढ़ावा । एहि पापिहि मैं बहुत खेलावा ॥ १४ ॥
 सुमिरि कोसलाधीस प्रतापा । सर संधान कीन्ह करि दापा ॥ १५ ॥
 छाड़ा बान माझ उर लागा । मरती बार कपटु सब त्यागा ॥ १६ ॥

dēkhi ajaya ripu ḍarapē kīsā. parama krud'dha taba bhaya'u ahīsā. 13.
 lachimana mana asa mantra ḍṛṛhāvā. ēhi pāpihi maiṁ bahuta khēlāvā. 14.
 sumiri kōsalādhīsa pratāpā. sara sandhāna kīnha kari dāpā. 15.
 chārā bāna mājha ura lāgā. maratī bāra kapaṭu saba tyāgā. 16.

Observing that the enemy (Meghanad) appeared to be invincible, Laxman, a manifestation of the celestial Serpent (ahīsā), became wrathful and ferocious like his primary form¹. (13)

Laxman decided in his mind that he has had enough of this sinful creature, and so it was high time to bring this drama to an end. (14)

[So, what did Laxman do in the final act?] Laxman remembered the glory and majesty of Lord Ram (i.e. he invoked the divinity of the Lord and sought his blessings and permission for what he was about to do), and then, full of vengeance, he mounted his arrow on his bow, and took a careful aim at the enemy. (15)

Finally, Laxman shot that formidable arrow straight at Meghanad, and it slammed into the latter's chest, piercing it in the middle. At the time of his death, he (Meghanad) abandoned all deceits, falsehoods and pretensions².

[To wit, the whole array of illusionary but fearful forms, as well as the many magical tricks that Meghanad had been employing while alive, immediately vanished as soon as he died.] (16)

[Note—¹It means that Laxman began hissing with clenched teeth and breathing fire through his nostrils like an angry mythological dragon that spews fire and brimstone upon the world to destroy it when it gets annoyed.

Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent who has a thousand hoods, and holds the world aloft on them like it were merely a speck of sand—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 126; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 83 which explicitly endorse these two points.

²Meghanad knew very well, like his own father Ravana and his uncle Kumbhakaran did, that both Lord Ram and Laxman were no ordinary human princes but manifestations of Lord Vishnu and Lord Seshnath respectively. So why then did he fight them as if they were his mortal enemies? It was because he was merely obeying his father Ravana's orders, and he was doing it as an obedient son and a faithful member of the demon race was expected to do, for it was his moral duty to remain loyal and faithful and committed to his own family and race.

Lord Ram is an impartial and compassionate Lord of the world; he has no enemy or friend; he simply wishes to uphold the law of Dharma, the law that espouses the cause of auspiciousness, righteousness, propriety, probity, good and right conduct, and ethics and morality. The demons had violated this law; they were tormenting and wreaking havoc upon the creatures of the Lord's own creation, which was an unjustified and unpardonable act which needed to be stopped, and the perpetrator brought to justice. That is why Lord Vishnu was compelled to come down as Lord Ram and get rid of these demons; he had no personal grudge against them.

So, though it looked that these demons were killed in the war and must have surely gone to hell because of the horrendous sins they had been committing, but the fact is that all of them found deliverance for their souls—this is explicitly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 114; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45; and (iii) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20-a.

How do we know that Meghanad had attained deliverance at the time of his death? The answer is found in the Doha that follows herein below.]

दो०. रामानुज कहँ रामु कहँ अस कहि छाँड़ेसि प्रान ।
धन्य धन्य तव जननी कह अंगद हनुमान ॥ ७६ ॥

dōhā.

rāmānuja kaham' rāmu kaham' asa kahi chāmṛēsi prāna.
dhan'ya dhan'ya tava janani kaha aṅgada hanumāna. 76.

At the time of death, Meghanad had the names of the Laxman (rāmānuja) and Lord Ram on his lips as he asked, ‘Where is the younger brother of Ram? Where is Lord Ram himself?’

When Angad and Hanuman heard these utterances, they felt glad in their hearts and praised Meghanad, saying, ‘Indeed, your mother is very fortunate and blessed (to have a son like you)!’ (Doha no. 76)

[Note—¹Why did Angad and Hanuman praise Meghanad’s mother (Mandodari)? They were astonished that Meghanad would remember Lord Ram and utter his holy and divine name twice, once by remembering Laxman as the younger brother of ‘Ram’ (rāmā + nuja), and then by remembering ‘Lord Ram’ himself directly (rāmu). This ensured that Meghanad would surely find deliverance for his soul, and attain emancipation and salvation for himself.

Everyone believed him to be a sinful and evil demon, but if that truly had been the case then Meghanad wouldn’t have uttered the Lord’s name “Ram” which is holy and divine, and is a provider of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, as well as eternal bliss and beatitude to the soul of a creature. Any creature who remembers the Lord and invokes his holy name at the time of death is rest assured to attain deliverance and eternal peace for his soul.

So this is why Angad and Hanuman praised Meghanad’s mother for having given birth to a son who attained an exalted destiny for his soul at the time of his death, who died such a glorious death by fighting like a valiant warrior on the one hand, and on the other hand attaining an exalted destiny for his soul by invoking the holy name of Lord Ram. This was a rare honour for Meghanad that he was so much praised by Lord Ram’s two trusted aides who were also great devotees of the Lord.

We will note in this context that Marich had died in a similar way—he first uttered the name of Laxman and then Lord Ram, and as a result attained instant deliverance—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-17 that precede Doha no. 27.

There is another interesting point here: Angad and Hanuman had praised the ‘mother’ of Meghanad, instead of his father. It is because his mother, Mandodari, was

a pious lady who had herself tried to persuade her husband, Ravana, repeatedly to abandon his hostility with Lord Ram, telling him that the Lord was not an ordinary human being but the Supreme Being himself in his form—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15; (iii) Doha no. 35-b—to Doha no. 37.]

चौ०. बिनु प्रयास हनुमान उठायो । लंका द्वार राखि पुनि आयो ॥ १ ॥
तासु मरन सुनि सुर गंधर्वा । चढ़ि बिमान आए नभ सर्बा ॥ २ ॥
बरषि सुमन दुंदुभीं बजावहिं । श्रीरघुनाथ बिमल जसु गावहिं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

binu prayāsa hanumāna uṭhāyō. laṅkā dvāra rākhi puni āyō. 1.
tāsu marana suni sura gandharbā. caḍhi bimāna ā'ē nabha sarbā. 2.
baraṣi sumana dundubhīm bajāvahim. śrīraghunātha bimala jasu gāvahim. 3.

Hanuman lifted Meghanad's body effortlessly, went to the main gate of the fort of Lanka and placed it there¹, and then returned (to where Laxman waited). (1)

When the Gods and the Gandharvas (junior gods; said to be musicians and skilled decorators in heaven) heard of Meghanad's demise, all of them mounted their aerial vehicles and assembled in the sky². (2)

They celebrated the occasion by showering flowers from the sky, sounding their kettle-drums, and singing the stellar glories of Lord Ram. (3)

[Note—¹We will not fail to observe that amongst all the monkeys and bears in the army of Lord Ram, it was Hanuman who had a singularly powerful body that was exceptionally strong, muscular and well-built. It was Hanuman who had lifted Laxman when he was wounded by Meghanad during their first encounter and lay unconscious on the ground, and brought him to Lord Ram*, and it was also Hanuman who had lifted the entire mountain when he could not find the correct herb needed to revive Laxman, and carried it aloft in his hands as he cruised through the sky at tremendous speed from the northern Himalayas right up to Lanka#.

{* Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55.

#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 58.}

Lifting Meghanad is the third instance of the proof of his exceptional bodily strength. Remember: There were other warriors present there—viz. Angad, Nala, Neela and Mayand for example, but no one could lift this mighty weight and carry it all the way to the gates of Lanka. Remember also that it was not simply the matter of carrying a heavy weight from one point to another, for it was a battle-field and a ferocious war was underway; the enemy, the demons, had become excessively aggressive and vehement and smitten by this setback, and so therefore taking Meghanad's dead body from the ground where the battle raged to the gates of Lanka through the thick wall of ferocious and blood-thirst demon warriors was like walking

through a mine field. This fact would also highlight Hanuman's valiance, courage, self-confidence, and daring.

Hanuman had some personal grudge against Meghanad and a score to settle with him and his father Ravana. We have read earlier that it was Meghanad who had captured Hanuman and brought him tied as a prisoner to the court of Ravana during the episode where Hanuman had gone to Lanka in search of Sita, and after meeting her he had been eating fruits and ruining the garden there, at which Ravana had sent his son Akshaya Kumar to tackle this unexpected marauder, but Hanuman killed him, after which Meghanad was dispatched by Ravana to bring Hanuman to the court. Meghanad had shot Hanuman down by a powerful weapon, tied him up, paraded him through the streets of Lanka like a trophy of war, and finally brought him as a conquered warrior to Ravana's court. This was a grave insult for Hanuman who had never ever been subjected to such humiliation in his life. So he was waiting for an opportunity to square up the account; now he got it, and decided to dump his insulter's dead body at the gate of Lanka to tell Ravana "take this gift from me!"

²Where were these gods and gandharvas earlier? They had hidden somewhere when the battle between Laxman and Meghanad was raging, for they had a mortal fear of Meghanad because the latter had the ability to change forms and fight even from the sky—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-2 that precede Doha no. 76; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 51; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52; Doha no. 72.

Long ago when Indra had captured Ravana, it was Meghanad who went to attack heaven where he defeated the gods after which he not only got his father freed but had also brought Indra as a captive to Lanka; at that time Brahma, the creator, had intervened and somehow managed to get Indra released from captivity. So the gods feared Meghanad more than anyone else. {Refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 77-81; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 50-54.}

Hence, when the gods saw Meghanad's furious form while battling Laxman, they became scared out of their wits, and ran away.]

जय अनंत जय जगदाधारा । तुम्ह प्रभु सब देवन्हि निस्तारा ॥ ४ ॥

अस्तुति करि सुर सिद्ध सिधाए । लछिमन कृपासिंधु पहिं आए ॥ ५ ॥

jaya ananta jaya jagadādhārā. tumha prabhu saba dēvanhi nistārā. 4.
astuti kari sura sid'dha sidhā'ē. lachimana kṛpāsindhu pahim ā'ē. 5.

The Gods and the Gandharvas praised Laxman and applauded his victory over Meghanad by saying in unison: 'Glory to Lord Anant; Glory to the Lord who is a support of the universe¹. Oh Lord, you have provided succour and relief to all the gods, and have settled the cause of great fear (of Meghanad) that had been tormenting them for so long.' (4)

After paying their homage to Laxman, the assembled Gods and the Siddhas (mystics; holy spirits)² went their way, and then he, Laxman, came to Lord Ram who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpāsindhu)³. (5)

[Note—¹An exactly similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 54, and Baal Kand, Doha no. 197 regarding Laxman. He was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial thousand-hooded Serpent who holds the world on his hoods.

²In verse no. 2 herein above we have read that “gods and gandharvas” had come, and now in addition to them we have the “siddhas”.

³It seems incongruous to call Lord Ram ‘merciful, compassionate and kind’ especially when he was engaged in a war where countless demons were being killed every day. But the truth is that every one of these demons had been granted deliverance of their souls; they were all provided liberation, emancipation and salvation by Lord Ram. There are ample proofs in Ram Charit Manas about this assertion—viz. Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114; and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45.]

सुत बध सुना दसानन जबहीं । मुरुछित भयउ परेउ महि तबहीं ॥ ६ ॥
मंदोदरी रुदन कर भारी । उर ताड़न बहु भाँति पुकारी ॥ ७ ॥
नगर लोग सब व्याकुल सोचा । सकल कहहिं दसकंधर पोचा ॥ ८ ॥

suta badha sunā dasānana jabahīm. muruchita bhaya'u parē'u mahi tabahīm.
6.

mandōdarī rudana kara bhārī. ura tāṛana bahu bhāmṭi pukārī. 7.
nagara lōga saba byākula sōcā. sakala kahahīm dasakandhara pōcā. 8.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard of his son's death, he fell down unconscious on the ground at that instant. (6)

Mandodar (Meghanad's mother) cried uncontrollably, feeling excess of grief, and loudly lamented for her dear son by beating her chest. (7)

The citizens of Lanka mourned for Meghanad; they were all agitated and worried, and put the blame squarely on Ravana, unanimously saying that he was very mean, dumb-witted, evil and wicked (pōcā)¹. (8)

[Note—¹What did the citizens of Lanka mean, and why were they so angry with Ravana? They accused Ravana of cowardice and meanness and lack of wisdom, for he had first sent his brother Kumbhakaran and then his son Meghanad to face the wrath of the enemy and die instead of leading his army himself from the front like a true warrior king is expected to do; then he had not listened to his wife Mandodari and his brother Vibhishan as well as the aged demon named Malyawan and his trusted spy named Suka when they had all tried to persuade him to abandon hostility with Lord Ram and make peace with him by returning Sita. He had seen the death of his other son Akshay Kumar when he was killed by Hanuman earlier, but still he was so haughty and mad with arrogance and ego that he did not read the writing on the wall. The demon citizens of Lanka felt that certainly Ravana would lead to the complete destruction of the demon race.]

दो०. तब दसकंठ बिबिधि बिधि समुझाई सब नारि ।
नस्वर रूप जगत सब देखहु हृदयँ बिचारि ॥ ७७ ॥

dōhā.

taba dasakaṇṭha bibidhi bidhi samujhā'īṁ saba nāri.
nasvara rūpa jagata saba dēkhahu hr̥dayam̐ bicāri. 77.

When he recovered his senses, the ten-necked Ravana assumed the role of a philosopher and consoled the grieving ladies of the household, saying to them, 'Have courage and peace in your heart and mind with the thought that this world is mortal, and all who are born here must die one day. [To wit, though it is a sorrowful day for all of us as we have lost our dear son Meghanad, but remember everyone must die one day, so have heart and take courage. It is a part of life and the law of Nature; death is inevitable for every living being. So therefore, do not grieve.]^{1*} (Doha no. 77)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 150 where we read that Sumantra, king Dasrath's chief minister, has tried to pacify an agitated Dasrath who was gravely lamenting for Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita after they had left Ayodhya for the forest. Ravana's words and philosophical teaching is exactly the same as Sumantra's.

*This marked the end of the 5th day of the Great War.]

चौ०. तिन्हहि ग्यान उपदेसा रावन । आपुन मंद कथा सुभ पावन ॥ १ ॥
पर उपदेस कुसल बहुतेरे । जे आचरहिं ते नर न घनेरे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tinhami gyāna upadēsā rāvana. āpuna manda kathā subha pāvana. 1.
para upadēsa kusala bahutērē. jē ācarahim̐ tē nara na ghanērē. 2.

Ironically, Ravana was teaching spiritual philosophy and citing pious thoughts to preach others but remained deaf to them himself. (1)

Indeed there are many in this world who would preach great and holy things to others, but they themselves practice none of what they espouse! (2)

[Note—Meghanad had fought for two consecutive days. On the first day of his battle, which was the 4th day from the commencement of the actual war, he fought a pitched battle with Lord Ram and managed to tie the Lord in a magical snare consisting of serpents, but he fell down unconscious when Jamvant, the old bear chief, retaliated viciously and knocked him down. When Meghanad regained his senses however after some time, he performed a fire sacrifice during the night which would have granted him victory in the war if completed successfully, but unfortunately for him it was disrupted due to the intervention of Laxman. In the ferocious battle of the following day, which was the 5th day of the war, he was killed while battling Laxman.

A thick pall of gloom and hopelessness descended on Lanka. Ravana felt completely heartbroken and utterly despondent; the ladies of his royal household wailed and grieved inconsolably. The demon citizens cursed their king Ravana vehemently and angrily accused him for the calamity and the ruin that had suddenly befallen on the otherwise prosperous kingdom of Lanka just because of Ravana's senseless actions, his recklessness, his stubborn, egoist and arrogant nature.

But by this time little choice was left for anyone—with his son Meghanad and Akshay Kumar as well as his brother Kumbhakaran dead, Ravana had become very desperate and excessively revengeful; he had lost all restraint by now and was determined to take this war to its final conclusion; victory and defeat mattered not to him any longer, for now he was burning with a raging urge to take revenge.

Hence, by this time it had become clear to all the demons that they can't escape from being sucked into, voluntarily or involuntarily, and devoured by this whirlpool of self-destruction. Any reluctance to join Ravana in the war meant certain death at his hands, and participating in the war also meant certain death: so there was no choice before anyone. So the demon warriors made a community decision to die a noble death like a brave warrior fighting the enemy in the battle-field instead of hiding and inviting a lifelong ignominy of committing treachery, treason and disloyalty to their king, of being a traitor, a coward and a turn-coat. Such a life would be a dark blot on their present family, as well as on the generations that would come in the future. So therefore it is better to die a noble death as a brave and valiant warrior, rather than live a life of ignominy and shame.]

निसा सिरानि भयउ भिनुसारा । लगे भालु कपि चारिहुँ द्वारा ॥ ३ ॥
 सुभट बोलाइ दसानन बोला । रन सन्मुख जा कर मन डोला ॥ ४ ॥
 सो अबहीं बरु जाउ पराई । संजुग बिमुख भाँ न भलाई ॥ ५ ॥
 निज भुज बल मैं बयरु बढावा । देहउँ उतरु जो रिपु चढ़ि आवा ॥ ६ ॥

nisā sirāni bhaya'u bhinusārā. lagē bhālu kapi cārihum' dvārā. 3.
 subhaṭa bōlā'i dasānana bōlā. rana sanmukha jā kara mana ḍōlā. 4.
 sō abahīm baru jā'u parāī. sanjuga bimukha bha'ēm'na bhalāī. 5.
 nija bhuja bala mairm bayaru barhāvā. dēha'um' utaru jō ripu caḍhi āvā. 6.

When the night ended and the day broke¹, the monkeys and bears surrounded all the four gates of the fort of Lanka. (3)

When the alarm bells were sounded inside the city, the ten-headed Ravana summoned all his great warriors and addressed the assembly, sternly warning them as follows: 'Listen all of you. He who is afraid of the battle-field and may turn his face away from the enemy during the battle (4), well, I warn him that it would be better for him to run away right now, for it would not be good for him if he turns his back during the course of the battle (because then I will slay him, and don't blame me then that I didn't warn you) (5).

Verily, I have relied on the strength and powers of my own arms when I decided to create hostility and challenge the enemy for battle. So therefore, I will face him alone should the need arise, and I do not want any charity or beg for help from anyone. [Did

you all hear it loud and clear? I don't wish to be obliged to anyone to fight this war; I alone am capable to tackle the enemy. Be warned in advance; you are not going to turn your back during the battle, and you are not going to betray me, for if you dare to do it then be prepared to die.]² (6)

[Note—¹This was the 6th day of the war.

²Why was Ravana so apprehensive that there were fair chances of his demons suddenly turning their backs and running away from the battle-field during the heat of battle? He had witnessed this actually happening during the early stages of the war when the whole demon army left the battle-field and escaped from it in total disarray when they were fiercely beaten back by the Lord's army. At that time Ravana was forced to threaten them with death if they showed their back to the enemy. He had scolded them and sternly warned that since they had been eating and fattening themselves on food provided by their king and his treasury, and when the time came for serving the same king and his kingdom they preferred to run away, so surely then they deserved no better fate than death for their betrayal, cowardice and ungratefulness. {Ref: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 42.}

अस कहि मरुत बेग रथ साजा । बाजे सकल जुझाऊ बाजा ॥ ७ ॥
चले बीर सब अतुलित बली । जनु कज्जल कै आँधी चली ॥ ८ ॥
असगुन अमित होहिं तेहि काला । गनइ न भुज बल गर्ब बिसाला ॥ ९ ॥

asa kahi maruta bēga ratha sājā. bājē sakala jujhā'ū bājā. 7.
calē bīra saba atulita balī. janu kajjala kai ām̐dhī calī. 8.
asaguna amita hōhim̐ tēhi kālā. gana'i na bhuja bala garba bisālā. 9.

Saying this, he (Ravana) ordered that a war chariot, that had the quality to move as swiftly as the wind, must be immediately readied for him. Meanwhile, a clarion call for battle was given by the beating of kettle-drums; it was meant to urgently summon the entire demon army and get its rank and file ready for battle in great haste. (7)

All the demon warriors were unmatched in their strength, power, gallantry and valour; multitudes of such dare-devils started off for the battle-field enthusiastically in such huge numbers and with such great rapidity of movement that they appeared to be like a storm of very dark clouds rolling in over the battle-field from the direction of the city of Lanka. (8)

At that time many bad omens or signs made their appearances, but these demons paid no heed to them because they were very proud of themselves and their ability to defeat the enemy by the strength of their arms. (9)

छं०. अति गर्ब गनइ न सगुन असगुन स्रवहिं आयुध हाथ ते । १ ।
भट गिरत रथ ते बाजि गज चिक्करत भाजहिं साथ ते ॥ २ ॥

गोमाय गीध कराल खर रव स्वान बोलहिं अति घने । ३ ।

जनु कालदूत उलूक बोलहिं बचन परम भयावने ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ati garba gana'i na saguna asaguna sravahim āyudha hātha tē. 1.
bhaṭa girata ratha tē bāji gaja cikkarata bhājahim sātha tē. 2.
gōmāya gīdha karāla khara rava svāna bōlahim ati ghanē. 3.
janu kāladūta ulūka bōlahim bacana parama bhayāvanē. 4.

So haughty and arrogant and proud he (Ravana) was that he did not pay any attention to any sign that pointed to his fate; whether such signs were auspicious or inauspicious mattered not to him.

[What were these signs or omens? They were the following:-]

The weapons fell down or slipped on their own (without any warning) from the hands of the demon warriors. (Chanda line no. 1.)

Warriors fell down from their chariots. Horses and elephants shrieked and broke away from their ranks, running amok and scattering hither-thither without any provocation. (Chanda line no. 2.)

Horrifying sound of wailing and howling jackals, rasping and grunting of vultures, crowing crows and braying donkeys were heard everywhere, and so were the howls and terrifying barking of so many dogs. (Chanda line no. 3.)

The owls hooted in such a fearsome way that they appeared to be messengers of the death-god himself. (Chanda line no. 4.)

दो०. ताहि कि संपति सगुन सुभ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम ।

भूत द्रोह रत मोहबस राम बिमुख रति काम ॥ ७८ ॥

dōhā.

tāhi ki sampati saguna subha sapanēhum' mana biśrāma.
bhūta drōha rata mōhabasa rāma bimukha rati kāma. 78.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, can there be any prosperity, auspiciousness as well as peace and happiness for someone even in his dreams if he is foolish enough, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, to harbour ill-will and animosity with all living beings, be opposed to Lord Ram (i.e. to the Lord God), and be indulgent in worldly passions and desires?¹ (Doha no. 78)

[Note—¹To wit, if any person has these negative traits in him, there is no way he can have welfare and happiness in this world. Since Ravana had these negative traits in him, there was no hope for him.]

चौ०. चलेउ निसाचर कटकु अपारा । चतुरंगिनी अनी बहु धारा ॥ १ ॥

बिबिधि भँति बाहन रथ जाना । बिपुल बरन पताक ध्वज नाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

calē'u nisācara kaṭaku apārā. caturaṅginī anī bahu dhārā. 1.
bibidhi bhāmṭi bāhana ratha jānā. bipula barana patāka dhvaja nānā. 2.

The demon army, which was so huge that no one could measure the length and width of its countless columns of demon warriors, marched to the battle-field. This formidable army was divided into four divisions, called “caturaṅginī”¹, and its ranks and files formed countless columns that flowed into the battle ground (like so many streams overflowing and surging forward during the rainy season). (1)

There was a wide variety of war chariots and other vehicles to carry the demon warriors and their commanders to the battle-field. Similarly, there were all sorts of colours used for banners, flags and war standards that marked out the different battalions and divisions of the huge mass of demon troops². (2)

[Note—¹The “caturaṅginī” or the four divisions of an army were the following: horses, elephants, chariots and foot soldiers.

²How great was the demon army? Well, we get an idea of its immensity in Valmiki's Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 94, verse no. 6; Canto 96, verse nos. 27-28. It says that there were 10 lakh chariots, 30 lakh elephants, 60 crore horses, and countless donkeys, camels and foot soldiers. {1 lakh = 100,000; 1 crore = 100 lakhs.}]

चले मत्त गज जूथ घनेरे । प्राबिट जलद मरुत जनु प्रेरे ॥ ३ ॥

बरन बरन बिरदैत निकाया । समर सूर जानहिं बहु माया ॥ ४ ॥

calē matta gaja jūtha ghanērē. prābiṭa jalada maruta janu prērē. 3.
barana barana biradaīta nikāyā. samara sūra jānahim bahu māyā. 4.

Rows after endless rows of war-intoxicated elephants moved forward as if thick banks of rain-bearing clouds were rolling ahead in the sky when they were propelled forward by wind during the rainy season. (3)

Columns after thick columns of bold and valiant demon warriors, all renowned for their gallantry and bravery as well as for cunning and having knowledge of many tricks, marched ahead wearing colourful dresses and headgears (as if they were going in a ceremonial procession to celebrate some great event). (4)

अति बिचित्र बाहिनी बिराजी । बीर बसंत सेन जनु साजी ॥ ५ ॥

चलत कटक दिगसिंधुर डगहीं । छुभित पयोधि कुधर डगमगहीं ॥ ६ ॥

ati bicitra bāhinī birājī. bīra basanta sēna janu sājī. 5.
calata kaṭaka digasindhura ḍagahīm. chubhita payōdhi kudhara

ḍagamagahīm. 6.

The strange army of demon warriors looked exceedingly magnificent and marvelous to behold with its variety and colour, as if the Spring season has himself assembled a wonderful and colourful army of his followers¹. (5)

As this huge army marched ahead it caused a mighty tumult on the earth in all its directions; the legendary Diggajs (elephants who are believed to hold the earth upon their backs in its eight corners¹) shook and shifted in their places; the ocean heaved and splashed; the mountains too trembled and shook as if an earthquake had caused the ground beneath them to vibrate and shake³. (6)

[Note—¹The ‘spring season’ is known for a wide variety of colourful flowers and leaves that cover the earth. This metaphor is used to give an idea of the wide variety in the rank and file of the demon army—its many breeds and colours of horses, its many types of war elephants, the different types of chariots and other vehicles, as well as the multitudes of colourful dresses and headgears that its soldiers wore.

²These eight Diggajs hold the earth from below in the following eight corners: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west and north-west.

³The idea is that the vibrations caused by the marching of such a huge army of demons had caused the earth to shake and tremble as if an earthquake had occurred with its epicenter in Lanka.]

उठी रेनु रबि गयउ छपाई । मरुत थकित बसुधा अकुलाई ॥ ७ ॥

पनव निसान घोर रव बाजहिं । प्रलय समय के घन जनु गाजहिं ॥ ८ ॥

uṭhī rēnu rabi gaya'u chapā'ī. maruta thakita basudhā akulā'ī. 7.
panava nisāna ghōra rava bājahīm. pralaya samaya kē ghana janu gājahīm.
8.

Such a huge amount of dust was kicked up in the sky that it formed a thick blanket of cloud that obscured the sun, the air became still (i.e. there was a stifling feeling that one gets before a gigantic dust storm strikes; the proverbial ‘lull before the storm’), and the earth became agitated (i.e. there were tremors that shook the bowls of the earth). (7)

War trumpets and kettle-drums were sounded with such a deafening din that it looked as if the clouds of doomsday were rumbling and thundering threateningly. (8)

भेरि नफीरि बाज सहनाई । मारू राग सुभट सुखदाई ॥ ९ ॥

केहरि नाद बीर सब करहीं । निज निज बल पौरुष उच्चरहीं ॥ १० ॥

bhēri naphīri bāja sahanā'ī. mārū rāga subhaṭa sukhadā'ī. 9.
kēhari nāda bīra saba karahīm. nija nija bala pauruṣa uccarahīm. 10.

Tabors, clarionets and trumpets were being played with martial tunes that pleased and infused zeal and enthusiasm amongst the warriors, inspiring them with the spirit of dare devilry, and to confidently face the enemy with the will to 'either kill them or die themselves'. (9)

All the demon warriors are extolling their own martial qualities with a loud voice even as they raise huge war cries as if hordes of lions were roaring angrily. (10)

कहइ दसानन सुनहु सुभट्टा । मर्दहु भालु कपिन्ह के ठट्टा ॥ ११ ॥
हौं मारिहउँ भूप द्वौ भाई । अस कहि सन्मुख फौज रेंगाई ॥ १२ ॥
यह सुधि सकल कपिन्ह जब पाई । धाए करि रघुबीर दोहाई ॥ १३ ॥

kaha'i dasānana sunahu subhaṭṭā. mardahu bhālu kapinha kē ṭhaṭṭā. 11.
hauṁ māriha'um' bhūpa dvau bhā'ī. asa kahi sanmukha phauja rēṅgā'ī. 12.
yaha sudhi sakala kapinha jaba pā'ī. dhā'ē kari raghubīra dōhā'ī. 13.

[Ravana must have surely felt glad and encouraged when he saw the enthusiasm in his army. So therefore—] The ten-headed Ravana addressed his soldiers as follows: 'Listen all of you brave and valiant warriors. While you destroy the monkey hordes [11], I will endeavour to kill the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman).'

Giving his army this instruction, he ordered them to move ahead with the attack and launch the offensive [12]. (11-12)

As soon as the monkeys heard of this (that the demon army has launched its attack), they invoked the glory of Lord Ram and rushed forward to engage the enemy and retaliate viciously (with a determination to hit back and decimate the demon army). (13)

छं०. धाए बिसाल कराल मर्कट भालु काल समान ते । १ ।
मानहुँ सपच्छ उड़ाहिं भूधर बृंद नाना बान ते ॥ २ ॥
नख दसन सैल महाद्रुमायुध सबल संक न मानहीं । ३ ।
जय राम रावन मत्त गज मृगराज सुजसु बखानहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

dhā'ē bisāla karāla markṭa bhālu kāla samāna tē. 1.
mānahum' sapaccha urāhīm bhūdhara bṛnda nānā bāna tē. 2.
nakha dasana saila mahādrumāyudha sabala saṅka na mānahīm. 3.
jaya rāma rāvana matta gaja mṛgarāja sujasu bakhānahīm. 4.

Those huge-bodied and ferocious monkey and bear warriors (*markaṭa bhālu*), who personified the god of death himself, dashed forward as if huge winged mountains of various sizes and shapes were flying to their destination¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

Their large and pointed nails and teeth were their natural arms; besides this, they carried huge rocks that were as large as small mountains, as well as trees as additional weapons of attack. All of them were fearless and gallant warriors who feared none, no matter how mighty and powerful their opponent might be. (Chanda line no. 3)

They were extolling the glories of Lord Ram who was like a lion vis-à-vis a the wild elephant symbolized by Ravana². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹To wit, the monkey and bear warriors were moving swiftly; they had such colossus bodies that they looked like mountains on the move. And when they would clash with the oncoming demon warriors, who themselves were of equal size and ferocity, it would be like a duel between two giants or two huge mountains dashing against each other.

²To wit, just like a fearless lion can easily overcome a wild elephant, the monkey and bear warriors were praising the glories of Lord Ram who would easily vanquish Ravana who is compared here to a wild and rogue elephant.]

दो०. दुहु दिसि जय जयकार करि निज निज जोरी जानि ।
भिरे बीर इत रामहि उत रावनहि बखानि ॥ ७९ ॥

dōhā.

duhu disi jaya jayakāra kari nija nija jōrī jāni.
bhirē bīra ita rāmahi uta rāvanahi bakhāni. 79.

The final moment of the clash arrived when the two sides raised loud war cries glorifying their respective Lords; on this side the monkeys and bears were extolling the virtues of Lord Ram, and on the other side the demons were doing the same for Ravana, even as they met each other head-on and engaged themselves in a fierce close combat with their opponents, with each warrior clashing with his opposing partner very ferociously. (Doha no. 79)

चौ०. रावनु रथी बिरथ रघुबीरा । देखि बिभीषन भयउ अधीरा ॥ १ ॥
अधिक प्रीति मन भा संदेहा । बंदि चरन कह सहित सनेहा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāvanu rathī biratha raghubīrā. dēkhi bibhīṣana bhaya'u adhīrā. 1.
adhika prīti mana bhā sandēhā. bandi carana kaha sahita sanēhā. 2.

When Vibhishan observed that Ravana was on a mighty war chariot while Lord Ram had no such privilege, for the Lord was on foot, he became very worried and alarmed¹. (1)

Vibhishan had great affection for the Lord, and the alarming prospect of the Lord having to fight a ferocious do-or-die battle while walking on foot, whilst his enemy had the privilege of mounting a war chariot that was not only fully armed but also gave him the added advantage of rapid maneuverability and protection, made Vibhishan feel very disconcerted; he developed doubts in his mind and became worried in his heart (about the chances of Lord Ram being successful against his enemy in the face of such great odds)².

So therefore, he bowed before the holy feet of the Lord and paid his obeisance to him, and then observed as follows—(2)

[Note—¹Vibhishan was very worried and felt disconcerted when he observed that Lord Ram was on foot while the great demon king Ravana was riding a strong and well-provisioned war chariot. It was an unequal combat which caused Vibhishan a lot of consternation and doubts about the Lord's success. He expressed his fears to the Lord, and the answer that Lord Ram gave him concerning the chariot that is needed to win a battle is very different than one thinks it to be. Here the Lord is alluding to the 'battle that a creature has to fight every single day of his life on earth', and the 'chariot' he describes are the stellar qualities and excellent virtues that a person ought to inculcate in himself in order to win the symbolic battle of life and ace all the life's hurdles, to become stronger and emerge victorious at the end of the day.

²It ought to be noted here that only Vibhishan got worried because Lord Ram had no war chariot at his disposal; none of the monkeys and bears were concerned at all. Why so? It is because the monkeys and bears had never seen Lord Ram or his brother Laxman mounting a chariot till; nearly half of the war was won, and it was done while both the brothers were on foot.

They had witnessed the ferocious battle between Lord Ram and Kumbharkaran while the Lord was on foot; similarly they had witnessed the no-holds barred battle between Laxman and Meghanad while the former was on foot. They had seen Lord Ram and Laxman arriving in Kishkindha on foot, and then leading the attack on the demon army from the front as their commander-in-chief while being on foot.

The monkeys and bears themselves fought and won the many great battles without the privilege of a chariot, arms and armaments, or any other paraphernalia of warfare such as horses, elephants etc. that an army is supposed to have, and which the demons did have. They were accustomed to fighting and winning wars using natural means at their disposal, such as teeth, nails, rocks, boulders, trees, and the might and punch of their own muscular bodies.

These monkeys and bears had witnessed how Lord Ram had shot one single arrow that dismantled the crown and the royal umbrella over the head of Ravana, along with breaking to pieces the ear-rings of Mandodar, his queen. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14.}

They had also seen how the Lord had remained calm and poised on the battle-field while tackling Meghanad and overcoming his tricks with a pleasant smile; the Lord had shot one arrow that pierced through the veil of illusions that Meghanad had created, dispelling all fears of his army. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52.}

Kumbhakaran was Ravana's brother; he had the same sort of physical features like Ravana. He was colossal in size, was most vicious and ruthless, and had dark muscular body like that of a giant. When Kumbhakaran stood before Lord Ram he towered above him like a giant colossus, dwarfing the Lord like an ant standing before an elephant. But the giant and fearsome form of the enemy did not scare the Lord any wee whit, for he bravely faced Kumbhakran and ultimately slayed him; Kumbhakaran's size and ferocity did not deter Lord Ram.

To wit, the monkeys and bears were not at all concerned that Lord Ram was on foot while Ravana was riding a formidable war chariot. They were confident that if the need arose then they would dump a heavy mountain on the chariot and crush it to a pulp, pulverizing Ravana along with it.

But Vibhishan was used to seeing wars being fought using the usual means and paraphernalia of war; so he was worried. Even when his brother Ravana had launched his many campaigns against the gods of heaven, the fighting was on equal terms because the gods too used arms, chariots etc. to battle Ravana and his troops.

Hence, from the viewpoint of Vibhishan, this was a very unconventional way that a war was being fought, with one king (Lord Ram) on foot and the other king (Ravana) mounting a chariot!]

नाथ न रथ नहिं तन पद त्राना । केहि बिधि जितब बीर बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥

सुनुहु सखा कह कृपानिधाना । जेहिं जय होइ सो स्यंदन आना ॥ ४ ॥

nātha na ratha nahim tana pada trānā. kēhi bidhi jitaba bīra balavānā. 3.
sunahu sakhā kaha kṛpānidhānā. jēhim jaya hō'i sō syandana ānā. 4.

[Vibhishan said despondently to Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord. You have neither a chariot, nor a protective shield or armour for your body, or anything to put on your feet. Say then oh Lord, how would you attain victory over this formidable enemy under this situation, with the limitations that you face?’ (3)

Lord Ram, who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion and grace, comforted Vibhishan with this reply: ‘Listen my friend (*sunahu sakhā*). The chariot that grants victory is a different one. [To wit, the chariot that leads a man to victory is different from the physical chariot you are talking about.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹What follows is Lord Ram's great Gospel given to Vibhishan on the battle-field of Lanka, highlighting the divine qualities and excellent characters that would entitle a person to gain victory over the obstacles that he may face in his daily day-to-day life in this world, and thereby attain good fame for himself. It points out the stellar qualities one ought to inculcate in himself in order to attain success in all his endeavours and fields of activity in life. These are noble virtues that make a man great and worthy; they hand-hold him and take him successfully across the rough sea of life; they help him attain stability of mind and confidence in himself while facing the many inconsistencies and contingencies of life.

This wonderful discourse can be called “The Chariot Of God—the Dharma Ratha” as it has a divine spiritual message for the whole world, a message that can transform the life of the people and the world as a whole, bringing heaven right at our doorsteps if taken seriously by everyone.

Vibhishan was talking about a war chariot, but Lord Ram used this opportunity to teach him about the principles of obtaining success in all spheres of life and come out victorious from the battle symbolized by the constant miseries and torments that a man faces in this world in his life. The Lord explained to him the grand principles of morality, ethics, righteousness, propriety and probity—in essence, the laws of Dharma that protects a person like body-armour, can be used by him to vanquish all his negative and sinful tendencies as well as the thick layer of faults and blemishes that have accumulated around his Atma due to these sins and demeanours, because they act like a formidable enemy for a man. A physical enemy can at the most harm a person's body which is nevertheless mortal and perishable, but the lack of good virtues are like an internal enemy that kills the prospects of his Atma from finding peace, bliss, tranquility, happiness and liberty.

It is interesting to note that Lord Ram is honoured as being 'one who is an abode of mercy, kindness and grace' ('Kripaanidhaan'—'Kripaa' means mercy and kindness; 'Nidhaan' means an abode). This is to indicate that the Lord is gracious and kind enough to use this opportunity of removing the doubts of Vibhishan to preach to the world at large something of great value which would be of great help for the rest of the creatures to overcome formidable obstacles that all of them face in their lives in this world to a greater or lesser degree. The principles outlined by the Lord will act as a guide and moral reference manual for all of them to show them the path of victory in life and how to surmount all obstacles and hurdles easily so that victory is obtained by them against all odds.

Another point to note is that Lord Ram addresses Vibhishan as a 'friend'—implying that he is about to reveal some secrets of success in life to him because Vibhishan is his friend, and therefore a saintly person. Spiritual secrets should be told to a competent person only, for otherwise it is wasteful to tell unworthy people. And being the Lord's friend, Vibhishan must be assured that the Lord will undoubtedly win the war, and that he need not harbour unnecessary worries as these will have a negative impact on morale.

This discourse resonates with the one that Lord Krishna gave to Arjun on the battle-field of Kurushetra that came to be known as the famed 'Gita of Krishna'.

Meanwhile, we shall read by-and-by that the gods did send a divine chariot to Lord Ram during the final phases of the battle with Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 89.]

सौरज धीरज तेहि रथ चाका । सत्य सील दृढ़ ध्वजा पताका ॥ ५ ॥

sauraja dhīraja tēhi ratha cākā. satya sīla dṛṛha dhvajā patākā. 5.

[Lord Ram now describes the various parts that constitute the glorious 'Chariot of Dharma'.

These parts are metaphoric representations of the golden rules of conduct and grand qualities that a person must possess in order to be successful in life and overcome all obstacles that he faces during the course of his life in this tumultuous world. Riding a symbolic chariot that is made up of these auspicious virtues, any person is sure to obtain victory in the long battle against all odds in this life to emerge victorious and glorious.]

The two noble virtues of ‘Sauraj’ (valour; bravery) and ‘Dhiraj’ (courage; patience; resilience; fortitude; forbearance) are the two metaphoric or symbolic wheels of this Chariot (which takes a person to his moral victory and gives him glory and conquest against all odds in life).

The two flags or standards flying on this Chariot are the two virtues of ‘Satya’ (truthfulness and honesty) and ‘Sheel’ (good character and conduct; politeness, civility and courteousness; humility, good manners and etiquette). (5)

[Note—As we have by now read, Lord Ram is describing a symbolic ‘Chariot of Dharma’. Just like a warrior is able to obtain victory against a formidable enemy if he is provided with a strong war-chariot, any person who rides a Chariot of Dharma is able to conquer the world as well as vanquish all his enemies represented by all the various hurdles that he faces in life to emerge victorious and glorious.

Just like any ordinary chariot, the fabulous Chariot of Dharma also consists of various parts, and all of them are necessary to make the complete Chariot. In other words, a person must inculcate all of them in his life, give all of them equal importance and attention, for even if one fails to reach the required standard the Chariot of Dharma will be weakened to that extent. And then chances of total and comprehensive success in life will be reduced to the extent that any of these virtues are lacking in strength.

Even as any ordinary chariot needs two robust wheels to move, the Chariot of Dharma needs the two primary virtues of ‘Sauraj’ and ‘Dhiraj’ to enable the person to ride to his victory. Obviously it is true—for without courage and fortitude, without patience and resilience no one can expect any big and sustainable success in life.

In ancient times, chariots had only two wheels instead of four, whether they were war chariots or civilian chariots. This is endorsed in the first of the four Vedas, i.e. the most ancient one known as the Rik Veda, which describe such chariots—the war chariot is described in its Mandal 6, Sukta (hymn) no. 75, and the civilian chariot in its Mandal 10, Sukta no. 85.

The two virtues of ‘Satya’ and ‘Sheel’ make him honourable and respected in society; a person who has these two virtues is shown the highest adoration in this world. Any success that is obtained by pretensions and deceit is dishonorable and contemptible. Then, success should not make a man pride, haughty and arrogant—i.e. he should have ‘Sheel’ in him inspite of the glories he acquires. This goes on to fortify his conquest—for if he is truthful and trustworthy as well as polite and kind, he is lauded and remembered for generations to come after he is dead and gone. Otherwise he is loathed and despised by all, even by them who praise him out of fear of reprisals.

The flag mounted on the chariot of a king stands for his authority, glory and fame. It is seen from far away even though the chariot is yet not visible. Hence, if a man has Satya and Sheel in his character, then his name and glory spreads to even the world’s remotest corner inspite of his never setting foot there in his life. This is tantamount to the conquest of the world—a conquest in which not a single drop of blood is shed. For instance, Lord Buddha’s glory and name has spread over the world even though he did not move anywhere, and preached non-violence in deed and words.

During a war, if the standard or flag of the king falls it symbolizes his defeat; the army surrenders or flees as soon as the flag is felled. Similarly, if a man compromises with these two noble virtues of Satya and Sheel, than he is deemed to be as good as being defeated.]

बल बिबेक दम परहित घोरे । छमा कृपा समता रजु जोरे ॥ ६ ॥

bala bibēka dama parahita ghōrē. chamā kṛpā samatā raju jōrē. 6.

This Chariot of Dharma has four magnificent horses—they are the four noble virtues of ‘Bal’ (strength; power; authority; force; energy; dynamism), ‘Vivek’ (wisdom; discriminatory powers and abilities; intelligence; rationality; discretion), ‘Dam’ (self-restraint; self-control), and ‘Parhita’ (to do good to other; be diligent towards other’s welfare, happiness and well-being; benevolence, graciousness and magnanimity).

The reins or fasteners that tie them together and keep them in order are the three grand virtues of ‘Kshamaa’ (forgiveness), ‘Kripaa’ (mercy; grace; compassion), and ‘Samtaa’ (equanimity; equality; evenness of mind) (6)

[Note—Next important part of a chariot is the horse. The Chariot of Dharma is pulled by these four symbolic horses representing the four glorious virtues as listed above. In other words, one must carry on with his life and its duties energetically and without losing courage and patience (‘Bal’), taking all decisions wisely, intelligently and rationally (‘Vivek’), all the while exercising great self-control over the mind and the sense organs of the body and keeping them under tight leash to prevent them from falling prey to temptations and other traps laid out by the deluding world (‘Dam’), and be mindful about the welfare and well-being of the creature around him so that any of his actions or deeds or words may not harm them in true spirit of non-violence as well as the eclectic philosophy of non-duality whereby one is expected to see the same Supreme Being in each individual living being known as the Jiva (‘Parhita’).

If a man has these four virtues in him, his chariot of life is driven smoothly like a physical chariot in which the horses are well trained and tamed.

Then again, the reins that are used to control the horses are symbolized by the three virtues of forgiveness and tolerance (‘Kshamaa’), compassion, mercy and grace (‘Kripaa’), and equanimity and evenness of mind (‘Samtaa’). A charioteer knows the wisdom of maintaining his cool and poise when riding a chariot—he has to control the horses, keep an eye on the road, skirt dangers such as holes and obstacles on the path, and avoid hurting passers-by. Even if some of the horses act wildly, even if the people met in the way act rudely or make disparaging remarks, the charioteer should not lose his cool and mind, for if he gets angry and loses his composure at provocations he will not be properly able to focus on riding the chariot which would start rocking and ultimately lead to some sort of accident, minor or major.

Therefore, to ensure that the Chariot of Dharma reaches its destination comfortably, the wise person must inculcate these virtues along with other virtues also because any chariot can reach its destination only when it is pulled by horses, and these horses need to be tamed, and properly harnessed and bridled.

The first virtue listed in this line is ‘Bal’ which literally means strength, force, powers and authority that a person possesses. There are said to be seven kinds of Bals—viz. (i) ‘Vairagya Bal’—the stupendous moral and spiritual strength that comes with true renunciation, detachment, dispassion and non-involvement in any thing related to this mundane, deluding and mortal world of sense objects and their allurements; (ii) ‘Shaairak Bal’—or the strength, stamina, vigour, energy, dynamism, potent, valour and abilities of the physical body, such as the strength of one’s arm and that which comes with a muscular body; (iii) ‘Buddhi Bal’—or the strength of one’s

intellect and wisdom; (iv) 'Tapa Bal'—or the astounding mystical powers that one accesses by doing Tapa, which means austerity, penance and sufferance of hardship for some noble cause which hardens a man from the inside; (v) 'Yoga Bal'—or the fabulous mystical powers that come to a person by the virtue of his doing Yoga, which means doing meditation in a comprehensive manner as this bestows stupendous powers to its practitioner; (vi) 'Sainya Bal'—or the power that comes with a strong army of a kingdom; and (vii) 'Atma Bal'—or the inherent strength that the Atma possesses, which can be translated as self-confidence and grit.

The second virtue is 'Vivek' which literally means wisdom, intelligence, an analytical mind, and the ability to discriminate between the right and the wrong. It also incorporates the ability to have insight and foresight. If a man possesses these virtues then naturally he is able to smoothly overcome all problems in life because he analyses each development and selects the best course of action that will suit his objectives in life. Such a man is never acts in haste and impulse; his actions are well-thought of and planned.

The third virtue is 'Dam' meaning self-restraint and self-control. This is a very important instrument in the hands of a person to by-pass many problems in life that are easily overcome or avoided by merely exercising restraint over one's emotions and body. This virtue helps one to overcome temptations and entanglements with the world of material objects and their multifarious delusions and false charms. 'Dam' helps prevent greed and yearning; it helps get rid of such negativity as jealousy, envy and malice; it fosters peace and contentment of the mind; it prevents the mind to be wayward and instead helps it to be focused on the job at hand.

The fourth virtue is 'Parhita'—or keeping in mind the good and well-being of others. This naturally fosters goodwill and brotherhood; a man who thinks good of others is invariably liked by everyone, and even his opponents fear annoying him as they know that the society will take his side. There is no better principle of Dharma as thinking and doing good of others, and to make others suffer is the worst sin one can commit—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41 wherein Lord Ram has himself endorsed this virtue of 'Parhita' in a person as being the best one.

The next three virtues of 'Kshamaa' (forgiveness), 'Kripaa' (benevolence, grace, mercy and compassion) and 'Samtaa' (equanimity and forbearance; treating everyone and everything alike) go hand in hand. If a person has them, he is elevated to an exalted position in the world that would be no less than that of Lord Ram himself, because the Lord is famous as being an ocean of these three grand and eclectic moral and spiritual virtues.

Usually it is observed that when one becomes powerful and strong, when one acquires authority and fame by observance of the other virtues, then these three virtues become the first casualty. To possess them in addition to the other great virtues mentioned in this line ensures that a man is eligible for getting acclaim and honour that come with being truly successful in life.

An interesting point emerges by reading this verse. It mentions four horses but only three fasteners. The question arises how are the four horses controlled by mere three fasteners? Well, in war-chariots, two horses are bridled in the front row, and just behind them is the pair of the other two horses. The horses in the front row are tied together by two fasteners on either side, while those behind them in the second row need only one fastener as they follow their companions in the front. Another interpretation is that the horses are bridled on the right and the left by two strong fasteners, and a third is used to guide them in the straight direction. A charioteer has

three reins in his hands with which he is able to manoeuvre the chariot in any direction he wishes—to the right, to the left and straight ahead. The implication is clear—the Chariot of Dharma must be controlled by observing the three cardinal principles of Kshamaa, Kripaa and Samtaa. Otherwise it will be rocked and go out of control.

Another interesting observation is the placement of the four horses. The first pair of horses is represented by the first two virtues of ‘Bal’ and ‘Vivek’; they are fastened by the first two fasteners of ‘Kshamaa’ and ‘Kripaa’. Behind them are the two horses represented by the other two pair of virtues, viz. ‘Dam’ and ‘Parhita’, and they are fastened by ‘Samtaa’. This sequence is deduced from the way these virtues are mentioned in the verse itself.]

ईस भजनु सारथी सुजाना । बिरति चर्म संतोष कृपाना ॥ ७ ॥

īsa bhajanu sārathī sujānā. birati carma santōṣa kṛpānā. 7.

[Now, after describing the chariot, Lord Ram describes who the charioteer is.]

Worshipping the Lord God and having devotion, affection and adoration for him is the symbolic the clever and expert charioteer of this divine Chariot.

The virtue of ‘Virati’ (Vairagya or renunciation, detachment and dispassion) is the strong shield, and the virtue of ‘Santosh’ (satisfaction; contentment) is like the sword. (7)

[Note—The charioteer is the person who is responsible for guiding the chariot and taking the warrior to his victory in the battle. So, if a person has devotion for Lord God, if he worships the Lord with faith and sincerity, then it is sure that the Lord God would protect him and guide his destiny to victory against all odds and tumult of life. One must offer his security and future in the trustworthy, strong, expert and caring hands of the Lord even as a warrior reposes his in the hands of an expert and wise charioteer.

The fact that when one leaves his destiny and welfare in the hands of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, the latter takes full responsibility for the former is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, 1/39/5 which essentially says that “none of the obstacles of life create any problem for a man on whom Lord Ram looks benevolently”. And the Lord looks mercifully and benevolently and graciously, with special care and attention, on those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord and have deep love, devotion, trust and faith in him, who worship the Lord as their only solace and succour—refer: Ram Charit Manas (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede Doha no. 36 when Lord Ram has preached Sabari; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 43 when Lord Ram preached Narad; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it, Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it, and then Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki has listed the places where Lord Ram should live.

Obviously, when the almighty Lord of creation favours a person and vows to take care of him, no other force will be able to disturb his peace of mind or harm his interests.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained and tamed horses, a strong rein, and an expert charioteer. What is now needed by the warrior is his personal armour and weapon. These are described next—the shield is represented by the virtue of

‘Virati’, and the sword by ‘Santosh’ as narrated in this verse. The shield is used to protect oneself against harm, and the sword is used to cut through the ranks of the attacking enemy.

If one has inculcated the eclectic virtue of detachment and dispassion, then he is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world, as well as the constantly annoying desire of the sense organs of his body seeking self gratification. The virtue of ‘Virati’ helps him to ward off all sorts of delusions and temptations, and the sword of ‘Santosh’ aids him in this endeavour to cut off any remaining residual effects of delusions that may be lurking and manage to sneak in unnoticed to corrupt his mind and sub-conscious.

It happens usually that one is able to turn away from temptations in the first instance, but later on his sub-conscious mind keeps nagging at him to yield ground. We can understand this phenomenon by a simple example. Suppose a man is advised by his doctor to avoid sweets. When a delicious sweetmeat is brought to him in platter full, he may resist the temptation of indulging in it right then and turns his head away, but his sub-conscious will not forget the dish so easily and would keep on nagging at him till the time he surreptitiously binges on the box of the sweet stored in the fridge in the kitchen. Otherwise he wouldn’t be able to sleep peacefully. This is what is meant in this verse. Even if a wise man is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world at the first sight by employing his grand virtue of ‘Virati’, he still needs the sword of ‘Santosh’ to overcome their long-term lingering effects.

A sword cuts on both sides; it is swung right, left and vertical. In other words, with practicing the virtue of Santosh, the spiritual aspirant is able to conquer the three main enemies of his, viz. ‘Kaam’ (passions and lust; desires and yearnings; greed and rapacity), ‘Krodha’ (anger that comes when Kaam is not fulfilled or requited), and ‘Moha’ (attractions, attachments and infatuations that Kaam generates). This observation is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas as follows—(i) Greed dries up contentment; hence to use the latter to cut off the former before it attacks is important: refer—Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 16; (ii) Without Santosh it is not possible to eliminate Kaam: refer—Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90; (iii) One’s anger, the desire to use strong language against one’s opponent and wreak vengeance upon him continues to increase if one is not satisfied fully and happy that his opponent has been sufficiently humiliated or defeated: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 274.]

दान परसु बुधि सक्ति प्रचंडा । बर बिग्यान कठिन कोदंडा ॥ ८ ॥

dāna parasu budhi sakti pracandā. bara bigyāna kaṭhina kōdaṇḍā. 8.

The virtue of being charitable, making donations and giving alms liberally, known as ‘Daan’, is the strong battle-axe.

The ‘Buddhi’ (sharp intellect and discriminatory powers; the analytical and rational mind) is like the most powerful and potent Shakti (energized arrow; a sharp spear).

And a highly developed ‘Vigyan’ (deep knowledge of anything; the ability to have insight into anything in order to understand that aspect of it which is subtle and hidden from view) is akin to a strong and robust bow. (8)

[Note—Here we have three powerful weapons—the battle-axe, the arrow or spear, and the bow. The bow is held in the hand; the arrow and the spear are thrown at the enemy; and the battle-axe is used both ways.

‘Daan’ is one of the four main forms of Dharma as described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 Kha which says—“Dharma has four limbs (‘Satya’ or truthfulness, ‘Dayaa’ or mercy, ‘Tapa’ or austerity, and ‘Daan’ or giving of alms and making charity), but in Kali-Yug (i.e. in the present era of the 4-era one cycle of creation and destruction) Daan is the main limb of Dharma. One should therefore make charities and give alms to the best of his ability.”

In this verse, ‘Daan’ is described as being equivalent to the battle-axe because it makes even one’s enemy as one’s friend. Charity and magnanimity makes a man endeared to all, even his opponent is subdued by his attitude. A charitable man is welcomed everywhere, and everyone comes forward to help him should he himself fall on bad times. This noble virtue in any man acts to protect him against all misfortunes that may befall him in life—hence it is likened to an axe. Again, since donations are made and charities are given by the man using his own hand, the simile is apt.

‘Buddhi’ is used by a wise man to deal with the current situation as well as plan for the future. It is used by a wise man to overcome sticky situations and avoid such eventualities from occurring in the future. Even the greatest of difficulties are overcome with intelligent handling of any situation, while foolishness lands a man in grave trouble unnecessarily. This is metaphorically depicted in the form of an arrow and a spear. The ‘arrow’ is thrown at the enemy, while the ‘spear’ is used either by throwing or holding in hand. The reach of the arrow is far longer as compared to the spear. So, ‘Buddhi’ helps a wise man to overcome difficulties of life in the short as well as the long run.

But Buddhi cannot work alone; it works together with ‘Vigyan’. This is the metaphoric ‘bow’. Even as one needs a bow to use the arrow, one needs Vigyan to use the Buddhi properly.

In other words, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, deep insight, analytical and discriminatory abilities, the ability to decide what is the correct and right path and what is not, to have insight and foresight, to be conscientious and sensitive, and such other grand virtues of the mind and sub-conscious—all must work in coordination to help a person to reach his goal in life.]

अमल अचल मन त्रोन समाना । सम जम नियम सिलीमुख नाना ॥ ९ ॥

amala acala mana trōna samānā. sama jama niyama silimukha nānā. 9.

The Mana (mind and heart) that is clean, pure, steady and stable is like the quiver.

The grand virtues of ‘Sham’ (control of the mind), ‘Yam’ (self-control and abstinence that leads to quietitude and peace of the mind), and ‘Niyam’ (observance of various religious duties, vows and sacraments) are like the many arrows (in the quiver that the warrior carries and uses). (9)

[Note—A clear and stable mind can think properly. If it is fickle and unsteady, it will make the man fidgety and restless. Steadiness of mind and purity of heart are the essential requirements to be successful in any enterprise, because this makes the entire endeavour righteous and auspicious. In the field of Yoga it is unequivocally stated

that the purity of mind and heart are essential for success in it because they help the aspirant to fully concentrate his attention on the subject that he deals with, without wavering and jumping from one subject to another and landing nowhere.

A warrior carries many types of arrows. Thus, a reference is made here to the various limbs of Yoga which work together to help the practitioner achieve his objective for which he had started doing Yoga in the first place—to find peace, to find spiritual enlightenment and freedom, and to establish oneness between his own ‘self’ known as the Atma and the cosmic ‘Self’ known as the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is equivalent to realisation of the Supreme Consciousness.

The Upanishads dealing with the concept of Yoga as well as Patanjali’s Yogsutra explain these different limbs of Yoga cited in the present verse. Now let us examine the virtues of Sham, Yam, Niyam etc. in brief.

There are said to be eight steps or branches or limbs or paths of Yoga as follows—Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranyam, Prayahar, Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi.

(1) Yam—broadly meaning self restraint and it covers such virtues as non-violence (Ahinsa), honesty and truthfulness (Stya), abhorring theft (Asteya), abstinence, celibacy and detachment from passions (Brahmacharya), and non-accumulation and non-possession (Aparigraha).

(ii) Niyam—or observance of principles or codes of conduct in a religious pursuit. Such as having good habits and contentment, observing austerities and doing penances, self-study of scriptures, following a righteous, virtuous and noble way of life, and etc.

According to Skanda Puran, the ‘Yam and Niyam’ mentioned above are ten, and they have been described in Skanda Puran in these words:-

The ten ‘Yams’ are—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyan (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanors and sweet towards all).

The ten ‘Niyams’ are—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21).

The 10 Yams and 10 Niyams—These have been described in (i) the Varaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos 11-14; and (ii) the Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, sections 1-2.

The Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 1 lists the ten Yams and section 2 lists the ten Niyams as follows—

“Canto 1, section 1 = The eight branches of Yoga are the following—Yam (self-control), Niyam (observation of spiritual laws or rules), Aasan (sitting postures), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (restraint of the mind), Dharna (belief), Dhyan (concentration of mind; remembrance) and Samadhi (trance-like state of permanence in Yoga).

Yam and Niyam are of ten types each, Aasans are of eight types, Pranayam has three phases, both Pratyahar and Dharna have five types each, Dhyan is of two types, while Samadhi is of only one type with no variations.

The ten types or aspects of Yam are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (abstinence, continence, celibacy), Daya (mercy), Saralta (simplicity, humility), Kshama (forgiveness),

Dhairya (patience), Alpa-ahar (moderation in eating), and Pavitra (purity and cleanliness).

[Now, each of these terms are being defined—] ‘Ahinsa’ means not harming or causing pain to any creature, at any time, and by any means—not by one’s thoughts or involvement of the mind in any way, not by speech or words, not by the body and its actions. [That is, non-violence should be holistic and comprehensive in nature—it is not limited to only avoiding physical cruelty or aggression but also includes mental and verbal aspects.]

‘Satya’ means to tell, honestly, truthfully and with the greatest sincerity one can have, whatever is for the good and true welfare of the other person, whether he likes it or not. This would involve the mind and its thoughts, the speech and the words used to tell the truth, and the body that implements this truth in the shape of deeds done by it and actions taken by it. [That is, Satya involves not telling things simply because they might appear pleasing to the hearer, or said out of some vested interest at stake, but to say things which are genuinely in the interest and long-term good of the other person. Such things might be unpleasant to hear in the beginning and might even cause rebuke or ill-will for the speaker of the truth, but they give the speaker or the advisor great mental and spiritual satisfaction for having spoken the truth without deceit or fear, besides helping to create positive vibrations around him, and ushering in an atmosphere of trust and brotherhood.]

‘Asteya’ broadly means non-stealing, and it includes the idea of keeping one’s self aloof from the wealth of others, of not being attracted towards such assets that do not rightly belong to one’s own self, of eyeing the wealth of others with envy and jealousy, of having a greed for them, yearning for them, and waiting for an opportunity to either harm them or deprive the other person of his possessions, or usurping and grabbing the assets rightfully belonging to others by any crooked or deceitful means one can think of. This neutrality and non-lusting must be genuine and sincere, and should involve one’s mind and its thoughts, one’s speech, as well as one’s body and the deeds done by it or actions taken by it. One should be sincere in not being tempted by the wealth of others, and of course this would involve the mind and the sub-conscious which must be duly trained and cultured. [That is, one must never be envious of other people’s prosperity and acquisitions; one must never allow the mind to ever contemplate of harming these assets or plan to grab them by force or conceit. Similarly, one must never allow the speech to ever utter a word of jealousy and say anything that might harm these assets simply because they belong to others, or create prejudice against the rightful possessor of such assets. One must not allow the body to do anything that would in anyway, directly or indirectly, cause harm to the assets that belong to others. Since the general meaning of the word ‘Asteya’ is ‘non-stealing’ it follows that even mental greed or yearning for something that belongs to others, and imagining how good it would have been if it belonged to me, is as good as the actual stealing of it. When the Upanishads talk about implementation of any principle, they imply a wholesome attitude and a holistic approach towards it, and not only physical aspect of it such as its literal implementation which is devoid of the spirit of the doctrine. Not physically able to steal anything but be mentally obsessive about it is as good as actually stealing it. In other words, the purity of mind, sub-conscious and intellect are as important as the physical act of abstaining from stealing.]

‘Brahmacharya’ is to abstain from all sexual activities or any kind of indulgences and unrestrained behaviour involving the mind, the speech as well as the physical body and its sense organs under all circumstances. [That is, mere observance

of physical celibacy is not enough. One must observe total control over the mind and its faculties so that they are not allowed even to think of any lustful subject or indulge in any inauspicious, unrighteous, unethical, immoral and improper thoughts related to sense gratification or attractions of the material sense objects of the world. One must never think or talk about sensual subjects that arouse passions and disturb the tranquility of the mind. One must never allow the gross organs of the body to be attracted towards objects of self gratification, or of sensual pleasures and comforts. In short, all sensual attractions, all forms of indulgences, all instances of temptations, all examples of self-gratification, and all sorts of unrestrained behaviour of the mind, the speech and the body are covered by the term Brahmacharya. It means total and comprehensive self-restraint or self-control in all spheres of life, and not just of the organs of sensual pleasures.]

‘Daya’ refers to having compassion and mercy towards all the creatures, to be graceful and kind towards all, from the lowly and the humblest to the highest and the exalted.

‘Aarjav’ or ‘Dhairya’ means to have exemplary tolerance, fortitude, courage, forbearance, resilience and patience of mind, to be immensely steady in one’s thoughts and behaviour, to restrict one’s speech and desist from speaking any wrong word against anyone or to anyone, and to keep the body under strict control and not react under any kind of provocation or situation, whether favourable or unfavourable. It implies that a person remains completely neutral and equanimous when faced by favourable and expected circumstances, or by unfavourable and untoward ones.

‘Kshama’ implies to be truly forgiving and un-affected by any offense caused by the other person, to bear with stoic calmness, equanimity, forbearance and a sense of neutrality all sorts of behaviour one has to face from others, whether done inadvertently or purposely, whether such behaviour is favourable or unfavourable, whether it is likable or not. One must be exemplarily calm, unruffled and be forgiving towards others, whether one is praised and honoured by them, or criticized and humiliated by them. One must be sincerely forgiving for any kind of mischief, any kind of misdeed, kind of transgression, any kind of provocative behaviour, any sort of insults, aspersions, asides or insinuations inflicted or cast upon him by other person, directly or indirectly, or by situations created by his adversary that lead to him being subjected to humiliation and insult. Kshama involves remaining unruffled and completely calm, both emotionally as well as sentimentally, under all prevailing situations and under all instigations. One must not harbour any animosity, ill-will, a sense of grievance, a feeling of hatred or a desire for revenge against anyone, or for any deed done by the latter, which has in any way harmed one’s own interest or even has been a cause of annoyance for him. [Therefore we see that Kshama, Daya and Dhairya go hand in hand; one must accompany the other to give meaning to what is being said in this great Upanishad. It has already been emphasized that a wholesome approach is needed when one reads the Upanishad and hopes to benefit from this eclectic and grand philosophy promoted by it.]

‘Dhriti’ is having equanimity, neutrality, fortitude, firmness and steadiness of mind under all circumstances, even when one is subjected to immense emotional turmoil, both of the positive kind such as having happiness and joys, as well as of the negative kind such as being subjected to immense anguish and pain. [That is, one must remain unruffled and maintain one’s poise and calm under opposing situations—such as the one when he suffers from some great financial loss or loses his dear and near ones on the one hand, or when he begets some great fortune or meets his beloved ones unexpectedly on the other hand.]

‘Alpa-ahar’ is to eat with moderation or restraint. It implies eating only so much as to keep one-fourth of the stomach empty. It also implies eating such things that are soothing for the system and non-irritating by nature, things that are invigorating and energizing for the body. Such eatables are foods that are soothing for the digestive system, as well as sweet, pleasant and comforting for the body in general. Some of such eatables are clarified butter (Ghee) of the best quality, unadulterated milk, and other such things.

‘Shauch’ means to be clean and purified both externally as well as internally. While external cleanliness can be done by rubbing the body with clay and washing off the dirt with water, internal cleanliness and purity is achieved by keeping the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect free from all sorts of taints, corruptions and negativities, and instead concentrating their efforts towards auspicious and righteous endeavours such as on spiritualism and attainment of the Truth. [Both sorts of cleaning are necessary. One should keep the physical body clean because it is the residence of the Atma, the pure ‘self’, and if the residence is dirty and filthy it would create a negative environment for the Atma, causing the latter restlessness and having a negative impact on its nature. Further, the body is regarded as the temple of the Lord because this Atma is a miniature form of the cosmic Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being. Just like a man keeps his place of worship, the ‘shrine’, physically clean so as to maintain its sanctity, it is equally important to keep one’s body clean as it is the abode of the ‘personal deity’ known as the Atma. But this body is driven by the mind and its various faculties, and therefore to ensure that the personal shrine of the Atma in the form of the physical body is able to maintain its sanctity and credibility it is imperative to keep the internal apparatus clean and uncorrupt. If the mind and its components are not clean then no matter how clean the external body may be it is of no good to the spiritual aspirant, for sooner rather than latter the body would fall prey to the many temptations of the corrupt world and their attending delusions. Therefore, all efforts of the mind should be diverted away from the falsehoods of the material world of the sense objects and focused on the Atma and the universal truth of the conscious ‘self’.] (1).

“Canto 1, section 2 = 1. The term ‘Niyam’ (literally meaning certain rules and regulations that one is strictly expected to follow in order to be successful in one’s endeavour) applies to the following observances—Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance for some noble and auspicious cause), Santosh (contentedness), Astik (to be a believer), Daan (to give charity and make alms), Ishwar-poojan (worship of God), Siddhanta-srawan (listening to the tenets and doctrines of the scriptures being explained), Hri (shame, prudence, modesty and self-respect), Mati (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindfulness of one’s duties and ethical behaviour), Japa (repetition of Mantras), and Vrat (religious fasting, observing austerity, keeping righteous vows and strict self-control or self-restraint).

[Now, each of these terms would be explained in a holistic way.] The term ‘Tapa’ in the context of Yoga (meditation) is to observe various religious sacraments such as the ‘Krischa Chandrayan¹’ which helps the body to become thin, energized, fit, reactivated and detoxified, as well as shed its unnecessary flab and burden of ailments.

‘Santosh’ means to be satisfied and contented with whatever is available by providence, and never to greed or yearn or wish for more.

‘Aastik’ (believing) implies that one should sincerely believe in what the Vedas have said about religion and other spiritual matters.

‘Daan’ is to give alms to the poor, make donations and charities to the deserving, with due respect to the dignity and self respect of the recipient or the beneficiary, without expecting anything in return. These charities and donations must be made out of the wealth that has been obtained by rightful means, and which rightly belongs to the person who gives such alms, or makes donations or charities. [In other words, if charities are made to humiliate others, to demean their spirits and social standing, to show them that they are underprivileged, unfortunate and inferior to the donor, to create a situation when the other members of the society become lazy, indolent and unproductive in the expectation of getting largesse without making efforts to meet their requirements by doing deeds, or to show off one’s wealth and majesty, or to reap some sort of worldly fame and name as a philanthropic person etc., or if such charities or alms are made out of assets acquired by unlawful and unethical means—then such alms, charities and donations are deemed to be null and void.]

‘Ishwar-poojan’ is to honour, to offer respectful worship and to pay sincere obeisance to the Supreme Being in his various manifestations, such as Lord Vishnu (the second of the Trinity Gods, the sustainer and protector of creation, and the Lord who had manifested as various incarnations on earth) and Lord Shiva (the third of the Trinity Gods, the concluder of creation and the patron God of ascetics) amongst others. Such worship and honour should be done cheerfully, with great devotion and faith, and by following the proper sanctified method for this purpose as narrated in the scriptures.

‘Siddhanta-srawan’ is to attentively hear the tenets and doctrines of the Vedas and the Upanishads being explained by those who are well-versed in them, those who are highly erudite and extremely learned in the finer nuances and intricacies of these great scriptures.

‘Hri’ (shame, modesty, self-respect and dignity) is to feel ashamed at one’s own self for doing something that goes against the eclectic doctrines of Dharma (ethics, morality, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and correct thought and action). Therefore, it also entails that one avoids doing anything that is regarded as unholy, lowly, demeaning, degrading and despicable by the Vedas as well as by traditional wisdom and universally accepted convention.

‘Mati’ (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindfulness of one’s duties and ethical behaviour) is to sincerely wish and have an inborn inclination to follow the tenets of the Vedas. It would include proper training of the mind-intellect apparatus to think and contemplate rightly, correctly and with a positive attitude about the right things and in a right perspective. One should therefore turn away from those things that are demeaning and degrading for the soul, and which undermine the exalted stature of one’s divine ‘self’.

‘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 Japa, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent Japa. 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 silently is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently without even opening the lips

is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering the words, and it is multiple times more beneficial.

‘Vrat’ (observance of religious vows) is to diligently, steadfastly, honestly, consistently and regularly follow the different eclectic principles, the doctrines and the tenets of the Vedas and the Upanishads—to avoid things that are proscribed by them, and do things that are prescribed by them (1).

{¹The word ‘Chandrayan’ means ‘following the phase of the moon’, while ‘Krischa’ means to become thin and lean. Hence, the term Krischa Chandrayan means to make the body thin by strictly restricting the diet according to the established system of doing the Chandrayan Vrat. Hence it involves restricting one’s food intake by strictly following the phase of the moon—reducing it gradually during the waning phase of the moon, and increasing it in a step-by-step reverse order in which it was reduced during the waxing phase of the moon.

The Hindu scriptures have prescribed a number of methods of atonement for one’s misdeeds and expiations for sins. The Chandrayan is the universal penance for expiation of almost any kind of sin—especially where no specific remedy is prescribed.

It is so-called as during this exercise one follows the phase of the moon in his eating habits. Starting with fifteen morsels of food on the full-moon day it is gradually reduced by one morsel per day till the new-moon day when not a single morsel is eaten by the aspirant. Then from this day onwards, one morsel per day is increased till the full-moon day when once again he eats fifteen morsels. This is one cycle of the penance. It can be repeated as many times as desired according to the intensity of the sin to be atoned for. This penance is also called ‘Pipillikaamadhyā’ or ‘middle of an ant’ exercise because it starts and ends with full fifteen morsels of food with nil food in the middle.

There is a variation of the Chandrayan described above. In the modified version, the penance is started with one morsel on the full-moon day, gradually increased to fifteen morsels on the new-moon day and then progressively reduced by one morsel each day till the full-moon day when once again only one morsel is eaten. This is called ‘Yavamādhyā’ or ‘middle of the wheat grain’—as this grain is thickest at the center and tapers off at the two ends.

In the third variation, eight morsel of food is eaten each day for a month’s time. This is called ‘Yati-Chandrayan’—or the Chandrayan that is prescribed for wandering ascetics who beg for food for sustenance.

The size of the morsel of food is approximately that of a big myrobalan fruit. A person who undertakes the penance called Chandrayan should tonsure the head, do initial fasting as a preparatory step, offer libations of clarified butter (Ghee) and water to the Gods, consecrate the food before eating it, and worship the Moon God.”}]

कवच अभेद बिप्र गुर पूजा । एहि सम बिजय उपाय न दूजा ॥ १० ॥

kavaca abhēda bipra gura pūjā. ēhi sama bijaya upāya na dūjā. 10.

The impenetrable body-armour (the ‘Kavach’) is represented by worshipping and having devotion and faith in Vipras (Brahmins; elderly and learned men) and Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide).

Verily, there is no better way to obtain victory in this world; there is no efficacious way than this to attain the glory of conquest. (10)

[Note—The ‘Kavach’ is the closest and the safest thing to protect the warrior. It is usually made of iron either as a plain sheet or as a mesh made of plaited iron chains. It is very sturdy and regarded as the safest protection because it directly protects the body from up close.

Since worshipping Brahmins and paying obeisance to their holy feet is regarded as one of the major auspicious deeds of Dharma (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45), it is likened to a strong Kavach here because the worshipper gets their blessings and grace which protects him against any evil effects of sins and misdeeds.

Lord Ram has himself told the demon Kabandha—“Look, anyone who worships and serves Brahmins, who are like living gods on earth, by his mind, deed, as well as words and speech, without any deceit and pretensions, verily I say that all the Gods, along with the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, as well as myself, become subservient to such a person”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 33.

Once again this virtue is reiterated by Lord Ram to the citizens of Ayodhya when the Lord told them—“Gods and saints are gracious and benevolent upon a person who serves Brahmins without any deceit and pretensions”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 45.

We note here that two types of Kavachs are mentioned here—one is worshipping of the Brahmin, and the other is the Guru. It implies that both of them should be given equal importance in one’s life. Whereas Brahmins act as teachers and moral preceptors for the whole world in a general way, keeping themselves engaged in studying the scriptures so as to give advice to the world whenever needed, and carrying out religious duties and doing such deeds as needed for the general welfare of the society at large, the Guru is a personal guide and teacher who cares for the individual’s spiritual and temporal welfare. So while the Brahmin is a representative of the Supreme Being at the macro level of existence, the Guru represents the same Supreme Being at the micro level of the individual.

Another interpretation is that a wise warrior takes extra precaution by wearing a double-breasted suit of armour—so that even if the outer layer is damaged he still gets protection from the inner layer. In the present context this would mean that even if the Brahmins fail to protect him due to some reason, his Guru will always stand by him. The blessing of Brahmins forms the outer ring of protection, and that of the Guru as the inner ring.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained horses, an expert charioteer, powerful and potent weapons, and personal body armour. Surely then, all the paraphernalia for victory are there, and therefore there is no other better way to win a war and obtain conquest. What one now needs is one’s own personal resolve and training, one’s own strength, confidence and commitment. In other words, even if every imaginable instrument and mean for personal enlightenment and spiritual elevation are available to a person, even if he has read all the scriptures and is wise enough to understand them correctly and properly, yet if he does not commit himself whole-heartedly towards his spiritual path of obtaining liberation and deliverance, none of them will provide emancipation and salvation to him automatically. A wise man is he who uses all the available resources most judiciously and properly to reach his desired goal in life.]

सखा धर्ममय अस रथ जाकें । जीतन कहँ न कतहुँ रिपु ताकें ॥ ११ ॥

sakhā dharmamaya asa ratha jākēm. jītana kham' na katahum' ripu tākēm.
11.

My friend, anyone who has the kind of Chariot of Dharma which I've described to you above, becomes invincible in this world; no enemy can ever defeat and conquer him. (11)

[Note—The 'chariot' described by Lord Ram is not a physical one, but a metaphoric and symbolic one that stands for the glorious and auspicious virtues a person must inculcate in himself, grand virtues that he must seek and acquire for himself in order to be successful in life even against the most formidable of odds that might seem daunting on their face like a strong and powerful enemy, but they buckle when faced by a man who possesses these magnificent qualities like the enemy crumbling when it faces a stronger warrior.

Lord Ram has described a 'Chariot of Dharma'—that is, a vehicle that can help a spiritual aspirant attain his goals inspite of all the daunting and thorny problems of the world in which he lives. By following the principles of Dharma outlined above, he is rest assured of liberation and deliverance from all fetters and bondages that tie his Atma, his 'pure self', to this mundane world and makes it go round and round in an endless cycle of birth and death along with their accompanying horrors and miseries. Not only this, the journey through life becomes easy and smooth because the aspirant has the security and safety of the Chariot, and the protection of the umbrella of Dharma.

Lord Ram has listed the following twenty-one auspicious virtues that a man must possess if he wishes that the Lord extends him his protection, and if he wishes to become invincible against all the evil effects of this world. The sequential order of the virtues is as follows—Sauraj, Dhiraj, Satya, Sheel (line no. 5), Bal, Vivek, Dam, Parhit, Kshamaa, Kripaa, Samtaa (line no. 6), Bhajan (devotion for Lord God), Virati, Santosh (line no. 7), Daan, Buddhi, Vigyan (line no. 8), Amal (purity) and Achal (steady) Mana (mind), Sama, Yam, Niyam (line no. 9), and worship of Brahmins and Guru (line no. 10).

Now, it will be very pertinent and interesting to examine the presence of all these magnificent and divine virtues in Lord Ram himself as depicted at different places in different contexts spread through the text of epic Ram Charit Manas, which made the Lord invincible.

Virtue no. 1= 'Sauraj' (bravery and valour)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25 where Marich tells Ravana that it is very unwise to make Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman enemies because they are very brave, powerful and strong, and any opposition to them would be futile.

Virtue no. 2, 3 and 18 = 'Dhiraj' (patience, fortitude, courage and resilience), Satya and mind that is steady, firm and resolute respectively—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 where king Dasrath tells his minister to go behind Lord Ram, after he has been sent to forest exile, and try to purusade the Lord to come back. During this instruction, Dasrath says—"If the two brothers, Ram and Laxman, who are of a firm resolve and an unwavering mind, courageously refuse to come back because Lord Ram is extremely

firm in his resolve and is true to his word (that he will go to the forest if it the father's will)---".

Virtue no. 3= 'Satya' (truthfulness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 264 in which the assembly felt glad upon hearing Lord Ram make a firm resolve to honour Bharat's wish—because the Lord is exemplarily truthful to his words, and once he says that he will honour the wish of Bharat he will do it no matter what comes. The context is Bharat's plea to the Lord to return to the city of Ayodhya to ascend its throne, and the Lord agreeing to do what Bharat says because he knew that Bharat cannot tell him to do anything that goes against the tenets of Dharma.

Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 292, the Lord has been ascribed with the virtues of Satya, Dharma, and Sheel.

In Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 23 that precedes Doha no. 7 Lord Ram has himself proclaimed to Sugriv that "listen friend, my words do no go in vain; I do not lie".

Virtue no. 4 = 'Sheel' (politeness, courteousness, civility, humility, good manners and etiquette)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 243 where Lord Ram has eagerly gone forward to welcome his guru sage Vasistha when the party of Bharat arrived at the Lord's hermitage in Chitrakoot to persuade the Lord to come back to Ayodhya. Here Lord Ram has been described as being an ocean of Sheel. (ii) Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 29 Ka, it is said that "Tulsidas declares and asserts that there is no other Lord compared to Lord Ram in as far as the virtue of Sheel is concerned because Lord Ram is an abode, or a treasure-trove, of this grand virtue". (iii) In Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 6 it is asserted that Lord Ram is an abode of Sheel and other auspicious Gunas (virtues).

Virtue no. 5= 'Bal' (strength)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 2 wherein Jayant, the stupid son of Indra (the king of gods), has accepted that Lord Ram possesses unmatched strength, power, authority and potent about which he had not known earlier, for then he would not have had the temerity to hurt Sita. He regretted sincerely, and the merciful Lord forgave him and spared his life.

Virtue no. 6= 'Vivek' (wisdom)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 97 in which Sita says that Lord Ram is most merciful and full of wisdom. (ii) In Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254, sage Vashistha declares to the assembly "no one knows the essential principles and the tenets as well as the practical implementation of the grand virtues of Niti (laws of conduct and thought; laws of jurisprudence), Priti (love, affection, cordiality), Parmaarath (spiritual welfare; general good in the long run) and Swaarath (personal safety and interests) more than Lord Ram. (iii) Then again, in Lanka Kand, the 2nd half of Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 111, the creator has said while praying to Lord Ram that the Lord is free from anger and is always an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment.

Virtue no. 7 = 'Dam' (self restraint over one's organs and urges)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 179 in which it is asserted that "Lord Ram is pure in mind and heart, that he is pious, and that he is disinterested in and dry (non-emotional) towards the sense objects of the world and their allurements or temptations". (ii) Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32, king Dasrath declares to Kaikeyi (his wife) that "everyone says that Lord Ram is like a Sadhu (saintly and pious)".

Virtue no. 8 = 'Parhita' (welfare of others)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 192 that says that Lord Vishnu took birth as a human being (in the form of Lord Ram) for the interest, welfare, well-being and good of Brahmins, mother Earth, Gods and Saints. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 says "Lord Ram has taken birth for the general good, well-being and welfare of the world at large".

Virtue no. 9 = 'Kshamaa' (forgiveness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285 wherein sage Parashuram has declared that Lord Ram and his brother Laxman are like a temple (abode) of the virtue of forgiveness. (2) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218 in which the creator Brahma has advised the Gods not to create mischief and put an obstacle in the path of Bharat's attempt to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya because though "Lord Ram does not get angry at any harm or offence caused to him personally or directly", but will not accept any mischief being created to annoy his devotees.

Virtue no. 10 = 'Kripaa' (compassion, grace, benevolence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259 that says Lord Ram is an 'abode of Kripaa'; (ii) Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 208 Kha which says that Lord Ram is an 'ocean of Kripaa'; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 101 that also endorses this virtue of Lord Ram as being an 'ocean of Kripaa'; (iv) Aranya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 2 that says 'there is no one comparable to Lord in having in him the virtue of Kripaa'; (v) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33 that says "Lord Ram has a very sweet temperament, is most merciful, compassionate and gracious, and shows his benevolence dispassionately, without any sort of interests involved"; (vi) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that say—"When Lord Ram was told that the heap of bones lying on the ground was of the sages and seers who have been devoured by the demons, his eyes were filled with tears. He raised his arms and took a firm vow that he will eliminate all the demons from the surface of the earth. After that, the Lord went to the hermitages of all the sages and seers independently to comfort them and give them happiness and pleasure."

Virtue no. 11 = 'Samtaa' (equanimity, fortitude, evenness of mind, to treat all alike without distinction and discrimination)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Kishkindha Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 7 in which Baali, the king of the monkey race and elder brother of Sugriv tells his wife Tara that "Lord Ram treats everyone alike and harbours no personal ill-will against anyone". (ii) Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 227 in which Laxman has said "Oh Lord, you have equal love and compassion for all, and treat everyone like you would treat your own self". (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219 which asserts Lord Ram has equanimity and evenness of mind as he treats everyone alike without any distinction and discrimination, and therefore has no ill-will against anyone nor is infatuated with someone else". (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 34 that precedes Doha no. 86 in which Lord Ram has himself declared that "all the creatures are dear to me equally as all of them are my off-springs, all have been created by me—i.e. I do not distinguish between them on any pretext".

Virtue no. 12 = 'Devotion for Lord God and worshipping him' (Ish Bhajan)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) In Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2, till Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3 it is narrated that Lord Ram had installed an image of Lord Shiva, known as a lingam, and then duly worshipped it. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237 that says

Lord Ram did his sacraments in the sanctioned way. (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 237 says that the Lord brought flowers so that sage Vishwamitra can offer his ritualistic worship of Gods. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103 says that Lord Ram worshipped an image of Lord Shiva on the banks of the holy river Ganges on his way to the forest after taking a purification bath in the river.

Virtue no. 13 = 'Virati' (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, non-involvement with anything related to the world and its gross objects of the senses)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31 which says "Lord Ram had no greed for the kingdom of Ayodhya; he never yearned for it"; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 51 that says "Lord Ram's mind is like a free elephant, and the responsibilities of the kingdom is like the iron shackle that is put around this elephant's leg to tie it down; so as soon as the Lord learnt that he has been ordered to go to the forest he felt as this shackle has been broken and so he felt exceedingly glad and happy"; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 that says "Lord Ram discarded the royal ornaments and clothes as soon as he received the father's orders to proceed to the forest, and most cheerfully and willingly took up and wore clothes made of bark of the birch tree and leaves with complete dispassion, without having any sort of emotions either of happiness or of dismay in his heart".

The same idea is emphasized in Kavitawali of Tulsidas, in its Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 2, line no. 4 which says "The lotus-eyed Lord Ram went to the forest after abandoning the kingdom of his father like a mendicant who has no attachment with anything at all, and who does not look back at the place which he leaves"

Virtue no. 14 = 'Santosh' (contentment; satisfaction at whatever is available)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 342 says "Lord Ram, who is always fulfilled and contented, became satisfied by the words of King Janak". (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 133 that says that Lord Ram's mind and heart felt fully contented when he saw the natural beauty of Chitrakoot.

Virtue no. 15 = 'Daan' (making charity)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 148 in which Lord Vishnu has told Manu and Satrupaa that they are free to ask for anything they want as the Lord is a great giver who gives liberally. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196 says that king Dasrath gave charity with an open hand at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers. Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 Kha says "the wealth that Lord Shiva had granted to the 10-headed Ravana when the latter offered his heads to him as sacrifice, the same wealth was granted hesitatingly by Lord Ram to Vibhishan (even without the latter making any sacrifice like Ravana)". The fact that Lord Ram was 'hesitant' in giving Vibhishan all this is that the Lord felt that it was not enough, and that he should have given Vibhishan much more than that. In other words, Lord Ram is a most magnanimous and benevolent giver; he always thinks that he has not done enough for his devotees and should have done more. (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12 says that when Lord Ram was crowned the king of Ayodhya after his return to the city, liberal donations were made to Brahmins. (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24 says that after becoming the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram used to make liberal charities to Brahmins in many ways.

Virtue no. 16 = 'Buddhi' (intelligence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56 that says "Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial serpent with a thousand hoods) is unable to recount the

splendorous glories, the matchless strength and immensity of intelligence and wisdom (Buddhi) of Lord Ram even though he has a thousand mouths (hoods)”.

Virtue no. 17 = ‘Vigyan’ (analytical abilities; deep insight and foresight; higher levels of intelligence; transcendental intelligence and wisdom)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72 that says “Lord Ram is such an expert that he knows how to act in different circumstances like an expert artist who can assume so many different postures according to the role he is assigned on the stage of the theatre”. No one can say that the person playing out a particular part on the stage is not the same person in practical life, so expertly does the artist plays out his role. This is because he knows the secrets of the trade, has a first-hand knowledge of the character that he plays on stage, and is so well-versed with the actual situation in the real life that his depiction of the character becomes extremely natural and convincing as if it is the real thing. Similarly, Lord Ram is so wise and expert that he knows the subtle secrets and even those aspects of a thing that are not apparent and known to all.

Virtue no. 18 = ‘Mana (mind, sub-conscious and heart) that is un-corrupt, holy, pious and steady’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 231 that say—“It is natural for the members of the Raghu dynasty (in which Lord Ram took birth, and therefore had this wonderful character in him) that they do not step on a path that is unrighteous, inauspicious, improper, immoral and unethical. I have a firm belief and faith in my (Lord Ram’s) Mana that it has never thought of coveting any woman to whom one is not related.” (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92 that says “Lord Ram is as steady and unmoving as the mountain covered by snow (i.e. the Himalayas), and is as grave, dense and deep as the vast ocean”.

Virtue nos. 19 and 20 = ‘Sham’ and ‘Yam’ (self-restraint of the sense organs and their natural urges for gratification), ‘Niyam’ (following rules strictly, and obeying religious sacraments and observances)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, the 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 says “Lord Ram was true to the vows he had taken, and was steady on his chosen path”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29 says “Lord Ram lived like a true hermit, having completely renounced all his attachments for everything and being fully disinterested in any material thing of the world and its charms”—that is, the Lord practiced a high degree of self control; he shunned all desires for pleasure and comfort inspite of the fact that he was born a prince and would one day ascend the throne of Ayodhya which was regarded as the most prosperous kingdom of the time. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 says that “Lord Ram wore clothes made of the bark of the birch tree and leaves (like a renunciate hermit inspite of his being entitled to royal ornaments and attire befitting a king)”. (iv) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 211 says that—“Lord Ram wore the minimum of clothes, ate naturally grown wild fruits, and slept on the ground on a bed made of leaves and twigs. He lived under the shade of trees, and suffered from the vagaries of Nature by tolerating with equanimity and stoic neutrality the effects of snow, heat, rain and storm (during the phase of his life in the forest as a hermit, without complaining or having any grudge against anyone.”

And finally Virtue no. 21 = ‘Respect of Guru and Brahmins’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 9 which say that “when Lord Ram heard about the arrival of his Guru (sage Vashistha) at his palace, he came forward to receive him at the door, and bowed his head to the Guru. Then the Lord welcomed him (Guru) by worshipping him comprehensively in a ritualistic manner that consists of sixteen steps. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 79 says

that “Lord Ram payed his respects to and worshipped the feet of Brahmins and his Guru (sage Vashishtha), and then went on his way to the forest”. (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90 where it is said that “Lord Ram (mentally) bowed his head before the lotus-like feet of Brahmins as he strode ahead on the chariot (that was sent by the Gods, to face the enemy in the battle-field of Lanka)”.]

दो०. महा अजय संसार रिपु जीति सकइ सो बीर।

जाकें अस रथ होइ दृढ़ सुनहु सखा मतिधीर॥ ८० (क)॥

dōhā.

mahā ajaya sansāra ripu jīti saka'i sō bīra.

jākēm asa ratha hō'i dr̥ṛha sunahu sakhā matidhīra. 80 (a).

Listen oh friend (Vibhishan) who has a steady and resolute mind! A warrior (living being) who has a sturdy Chariot (magnificent virtues) as described above becomes invincible for any enemy in this world; he cannot be defeated even if the whole world becomes his enemy; his detractors cannot cause his downfall even if they join hands against him.’ (Doha no. 80-a.)

[Note—In the beginning of this discourse by Lord Ram, Vibhishan was uneasy and full of doubts—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 6/80/1. He was wary of the prospects of fighting a strong enemy like Ravana without a war chariot and other paraphernalia of battle. It becomes virtually impossible to acquire maneuverability and swiftness of movement, so essential for victory on the battle-field, while fighting on foot. But when Lord Ram taught him the principles of Dharma, when he was enlightened about the subtle inner strength of the Atma that comes to a man by the possession of the divine virtues listed by Lord Ram herein above, Vibhishan became assured of the Lord’s victory. This is because he knew that Ravana lacked all of them, and therefore stood no chance against Lord Ram who had all these glorious virtues in him that made the Lord spiritually and morally strong and invincible.

The Lord has said here that a person who possesses this Chariot cannot be defeated by the ‘whole world’, implying that Ravana, being an individual person, holds no chance when the whole world united against a person who possesses such a fabulous and glorious Chariot of Dharma cannot defeat him.

This teaching of Lord Ram herein above describes the glorious virtues that make a man victorious in all his struggles in this mundane world. These virtues are likened to a chariot on which a warrior rides to his victory in the battle-field. The analogy is obvious—the struggles of life in this mundane world are like the battle-field as they consist of innumerable pains and miseries as well as improbables over which one has no control. And just like a strong chariot helps the expert warrior to move swiftly from one corner of the battle-ground to another, issuing instructions to his army and out-manoeuvre the enemy, the grand virtues listed by Lord Ram helps a person overcome all obstacles in life and emerge victorious.

The context is the battle-field of Lanka. Ravana, the demon king, is astride a strong chariot, while Lord Ram is on foot. It becomes physically difficult to manoeuvre and move swiftly on foot and fight against a powerful enemy who is given the advantage of mobility and protection of a vehicle built especially for the battle,

such as the war chariot. He can store his arms and ammunition in this chariot besides enjoying the advantage of the ability to have a commanding position from which to control the army spread across the battle-field by the virtue of his fast manoeuvrability and movement.

So, this deficiency made Vibhishan very worried and upset. Though he had immense affection and faith in the Lord, but for once he began to have doubts as how will the Lord conquer a strong enemy while fighting him standing himself on foot. It was then that Lord Ram preached these grand and glorious virtues to Vibhishan just like Lord Krishna had taught his friend Arjun in the battle-field of Kurushetra that became famous as Lord Krishna's "Geeta".]

सुनि प्रभु बचन बिभीषन हरषि गहे पद कंज ।
एहि मिस मोहि उपदेसेहु राम कृपा सुख पुंज ॥ ८० (ख) ॥

sunī prabhu bacana bibhīṣana haraṣi gahē pada kañja.
ēhi misa mōhi upadēsēhu rāma kṛpā sukha puñja. 80 (b).

When Vibhishan heard these wise words of Lord Ram, he felt exhilarated and contented. He fell down to clasp the holy feet of the Lord and exclaimed in gratitude: 'Oh Lord, you are a fountain of mercy and grace. How fortunate am I that you have given this great wisdom to me on the pretext of answering my concerns regarding the necessity of a chariot during this war.' (Doha no. 80-b)

उत पचार दसकंधर इत अंगद हनुमान ।
लरत निसाचर भालु कपि करि निज निज प्रभु आन ॥ ८० (ग) ॥

uta pacāra dasakandhara ita aṅgada hanumāna.
larata nisācara bhālu kapi kari nija nija prabhu āna. 80 (c).

[After describing this glorious Chariot, we resume our narrative of the Great War.]

On the other side it was Ravana who was challenging and thrashing the enemy warriors (i.e. the monkeys and bears) with all his might, and on this side it were Angad and Hanuman who retaliated with equal ferocity, challenging Ravana and his might, every step of the way.

Both the demons of the other side (i.e. of Ravana's side), and the bears and monkeys of this side (i.e. of Lord Ram's side) viciously clashed with each other using brutal force, all the while applauding their respective Lords and raising loud cries extolling their glories, and swearing in their names. (Doha no. 80-c)

चौ०. सुर ब्रह्मादि सिद्ध मुनि नाना । देखत रन नभ चढ़े बिमाना ॥ १ ॥

हमहू उमा रहे तेहि संगी । देखत राम चरित रन रंगा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sura brahmādi sid'dha muni nānā. dēkhata rana nabha caṛhē bimānā. 1.
hamahū umā rahē tēhim saṅgā. dēkhata rāma carita rana raṅgā. 2.

[Continuing with the narration of this fascinating Story of a War the like of which was never witnessed heretofore anywhere in the annals of history, and would neither be hereafter, Lord Shiva quoth to goddess Uma, his divine consort who was listening to it very attentively—]

‘All the Gods, including the creator Brahma, as well as many mystics and great sages (who had the mystical ability to assume an ethereal or a disembodied form when they so wished), were watching the proceedings on the battle-field and the progress of the Epic War from their aerial vehicles stationed in the sky. (1)

Oh Uma; I (Lord Shiva) was also accompanying them as we watched with awe the wondrous and strange deeds of Lord Ram done by him on the battle-field¹. (2)

[Note—¹What was so strange, mysterious and awe-inspiring about Lord Ram’s actions in the battle-field of Lanka that so dazed the gods? Well, the gods were aware of Lord Ram’s true identity, that he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of the world, and the most powerful and almighty second god of the Trinity, the other two being the creator Brahma, and Lord Shiva who is the concluder of this creation. This being the case, it was so astonishing that Lord Ram should behave like any other ordinary human warrior, who is gallant, valiant, courageous and brave, would during a war, instead of employing any of his cosmic supernatural powers to easily win the enemy in a battle of this magnitude—for the almighty Lord Ram had allowed himself to be tied in a snare of serpents created by Meghanad^a, and had even permitted Laxman to be mortally wounded and almost on the verge of losing his life when Meghanad attacked him and made him unconscious, and further adding to the confusion of gods the Lord had gravely lamented and mournfully wailed for Laxman like an ordinary man would for his dear brother^b.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, ^aChaupai line nos. 11-13 that precede Doha no. 73; and ^bChaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 54; Doha no. 61.}]

सुभट समर रस दुहु दिसि माते । कपि जयसील राम बल ताते ॥ ३ ॥
एक एक सन भिरहिं पचारहिं । एकन्ह एक मर्दि महि पारहिं ॥ ४ ॥

subhaṭa samara rasa duhu disi mātē. kapi jayasīla rāma bala tātē. 3.
ēka ēka sana bhirahim pacārahim. ēkanha ēka mardi mahi pārahim. 4.

The veterans of both the sides were maddened with a burning passion for war and victory. Howbeit, the monkeys (and bears) had a clear upper hand in the battle-field, leading the fight and holding a sway over their enemies, by the grace and blessings of Lord Ram. (3)

There was a fierce hand-to-hand duel; the valiant warriors engaged their opponents in a ruthless face to face combat, thrashing the other mercilessly, and dashing their

adversaries to the ground with such violent force that they were pulverized and reduced to a pulp¹. (4)

[Note—¹A similar battle of excess of gallantry and ferocity, where zealot warriors engaged in a fierce face-to-face duel with their opponents, was fought during the first battle with Meghanad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 53.

Besides this, it was also witnessed during the opening phases of the war when the demon and monkey armies clashed with each other—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede Doha no. 46.]

मारहिं काटहिं धरहिं पछारहिं । सीस तोरि सीसन्ह सन मारहिं ॥ ५ ॥

उदर बिदारहिं भुजा उपारहिं । गहि पद अवनि पटकि भट डारहिं ॥ ६ ॥

mārahim kāṭahim dharahim pachārahim. sīsa tōri sīsanha sana mārahim. 5.
udara bidārahim bhuajā upārahim. gahi pada avani paṭaki bhaṭa ḍārahim. 6.

The enemy was beaten mercilessly, slashed and cut violently, caught hold of and thrashed to the ground, and their heads were yanked off their bodies and then used as missiles to hit others with them. (5)

Abdomens were ripped open; arms were torn away from the torso; and gallant warriors were grabbed by their legs, swung around, and then dashed on the ground. (6)

निसिचर भट महि गाड़हिं भालू । ऊपर ढारि देहिं बहु बालू ॥ ७ ॥

बीर बलीमुख जुद्ध बिरुद्धे । देखिअत बिपुल काल जनु क्रुद्धे ॥ ८ ॥

nisicara bhaṭa mahi gāṛahim bhālū. ūpara ḍhāri dēhim bahu bālū. 7.
bīra balīmukha jud'dha birud'dhē. dēkhi'ata bipula kāla janu krud'dhē. 8.

Demon warriors were grabbed by mighty bears and buried in the earth over which a mound of sand was dumped¹. (7)

The valiant warriors who were filled with zeal and a firm determination to overcome their adversaries in the battle-field appeared to be like personified forms of Kaal, the god of death himself². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, two scenarios are possible here. One is that the monkeys first dashed the demon warriors to the ground, and when they died they were buried by the bears who dug a grave for them and covered it with sand.

In the other possibility, the bears grabbed demons and buried them alive in the ground, heaping sand over them so that they die of suffocation.

And of course obtaining 'sand' was no problem as there was an ocean all around Lanka, and sand is found in abundance near the ocean.

²Though it is not specifically mentioned here to whom this reference of 'being personified form of Kaal' is being made, whether it refers to the monkeys and bears or to the demon warriors, but taking into consideration the ground situation on the battle-field where the monkeys and bears had an upper hand over the demons, it is clear that the allusion is to the Lord's warriors, the monkeys and the bears, instead of the demons who were bearing the brunt of their attack, and were on the defensive.

This deduction is supported by the following verses.]

छं०. क्रुद्धे कृतांत समान कपि तन स्रवत सोनित राजहीं । १ ।
मर्दहिं निसाचर कटक भट बलवंत घन जिमि गाजहीं ॥ २ ॥
मारहिं चपेटन्हि डाटि दातन्ह काटि लातन्ह मीजहीं । ३ ।
चिक्करहिं मर्कट भालु छल बल करहिं जेहिं खल छीजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

krud'dhē kṛtānta samāna kapi tana sravata sōnita rājahīm. 1.
mardahīm nisācara kaṭaka bhaṭa balavanta ghana jimi gājahīm. 2.
mārahīm capēṭanhi ḍāṭi dātanha kāṭi lātanha mījahīm. 3.
cikkarahīm markaṭa bhālu chala bala karahīm jēhīm khala chījahīm. 4.

The gallant and powerful monkeys, who were furious with anger as if Kaal himself has taken their forms, appeared glorious with blood oozing out of the wounds on their bodies. (Chanda line no. 1)

Those valiant warriors (i.e. the monkeys and bears) fought vigorously with powerful demon warriors and trounced them, all the while roaring like the thunder of the cloud. (Chanda line no. 2)

They (the monkeys and bears) slapped and severely reprimanded their opponents (the demon warriors), bit them viciously with their sharp teeth, and then trampled them underfoot, pulverizing and reducing them to a pulp. (Chanda line no. 3)

The monkeys and bears were letting out shrill war cries and adopting all possible strategies to make their enemy feel exasperated, to make him depressed and dejected, and ultimately decimated. (Chanda line no. 4)

धरि गाल फारहिं उर बिदारहिं गल अँतावरि मेलहीं । ५ ।
प्रह्लादपति जनु बिबिध तनु धरि समर अंगन खेलहीं ॥ ६ ॥
धरु मारु काटु पछारु घोर गिरा गगन महि भरि रही । ७ ।
जय राम जो तून ते कुलिस कर कुलिस ते कर तून सही ॥ ८ ॥

dhari gāla phārahīm ura bidārahīm gala amṭāvari mēlahīm. 5.
prahlādapati janu bibidha tanu dhari samara aṅgana khēlahīm. 6.
dharu māru kātu pachāru ghōra girā gagana mahi bhari rahī. 7.

jaya rāma jō tṛṇa tē kulisa kara kulisa tē kara tṛṇa sahī. 8.

The vehemently angry (monkey and bear) warriors caught hold of their enemies (the demon warriors) with excess of wrath, tearing their cheeks, slicing their chests, and hanging their intestines around their own necks after ripping up their abdomens. (Chanda line no. 5)

They give the impression that the Lord of Prahalad, i.e. Lord Narsingh¹, has assumed countless forms to enact the 'dance of death' by mercilessly unleashing his devastating anger on the evil demon hordes, and slaying them in great numbers. (Chanda line no. 6)

The sky and the earth reverberated in all the directions with horrifying and shrill cries of 'Grab, Kill, Cut them off, Thrash and Trample Under the Foot' that ranted everywhere. (Chanda line no. 7)

Simultaneously, there was a resounding applause for Lord Ram as the (enthusiastic and victorious) warriors invoked the glories of the Lord with great zeal, enthusiastically cheering 'Glory to the great Lord Ram, who indeed and without any gainsay has the mystical powers that can truly turn a humble twig into the mighty Vajra (the strongest, the sturdiest, the heaviest and an invincible weapon in the world, something that cannot be conquered or subdued), or make a Vajra become like a poor twig (that is easily crushed and trampled upon)². (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹The allusion here is to Lord Vishnu who had assumed a terrifying form of 'half-lion and half-man', known as 'Narsingh', to tear apart the body of the demon Hiranyakashipu, the father of Prahalad, because he was not allowing his son to worship the Lord, and after having failed in persuading Prahalad to desist from offering his obeisance to Lord Vishnu, the demon father finally decided to kill him. He drew his sword to cut off Prahalad's head, but when the poor little helpless boy prayed to Lord Vishnu to save him, the Lord assumed a ferocious form of 'Narsingh' and revealed himself immediately. The Lord was seething with excess of anger, and he grabbed Hiranyakashipu, laid him across his lap, and tore his abdomen viciously into two; then the angry Lord Narsingh yanked out the entrails of the cruel demon and hung them around his neck like blood-soaked garlands.

In a similar fashion, the ferocious monkey and bear warriors tore apart the bodies of the demons and pulled out their intestines which they hung around their necks like so many victory garlands; in this form and action they assumed the role of Lord Narsingh.

²To wit, Lord Ram, being the almighty, all-able and omnipotent Supreme Lord of the world, can do the impossible and the unimaginable if he so wishes. For instance, he can convert an ordinary-looking, weak and powerless creature into a formidable giant with supernatural powers, one who can conquer the whole world and defeat the most formidable and strongest of enemy with the greatest of ease, and should it please the Lord he can do the reverse with equal comfort, i.e. he can turn a mighty and most powerful man into an incompetent, inept, imbecile and impotent person.

The idea here is that though monkeys and bears were no match for the might and the ferocity so characteristic of the powerful demon race, yet now the same humble creatures were ruthlessly thrashing and vanquishing the same demon warriors

who had been so powerful only some time ago that the mere mention of their name would send chill down the spine of the almighty gods of heaven. The mystery of the whole thing was that the demons were being beaten black and blue, and they were unable to retaliate and take revenge against the monkeys and bears.

Why and how this strange thing was made possible? The answer is this: It was made possible by the grace and the wish of Lord Ram alone, and for no other reason.]

दो०. निज दल बिचलत देखेसि बीस भुजाँ दस चाप ।
रथ चढ़ि चलेउ दसानन फिरहु फिरहु करि दाप ॥ ८१ ॥

dōhā.

nija dala bicalata dēkhēsi bīsa bhujām̐ dasa cāpa.
ratha caḍhi calē'u dasānana phirahu phirahu kari dāpa. 81.

When the ten-headed Ravana observed that his forces were in a dire strait, he strode upon his war chariot, held ten powerful bows in his twenty arms¹, and rode to the frontline of the battle, urging his troops to make a strategic retreat; he called out to his warriors: 'Retreat, retreat immediately'. (Doha no. 81)

[Note—¹To wit, Ravana held ten bows in his ten arms, one in each, and naturally the other ten arms held arrows, shields, and other weapons. Till now he was standing behind to watch the developments on the ground, but when he discovered that his soldiers were being beaten back mercilessly and rapidly decimated, he could not hold back and rode ahead to the line of physical combat, ordering his warriors to fall behind and regroup.]

चौ०. धायउ परम क्रुद्ध दसकंधर । सन्मुख चले हूह दै बंदर ॥ १ ॥
गहि कर पादप उपल पहारा । डारेन्हि ता पर एकहिं बारा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

dhāya'u parama krud'dha dasakandhara. sanmukha calē hūha dai bandara. 1.
gahi kara pādapa upala pahārā. ḍārēnhi tā para ēkahim bārā. 2.

The ten-shouldered (dasakandhara) Ravana was seething with excess of anger as he dashed forward with a vengeance. The monkeys meanwhile were very excited (because of their recent victory), and they hurried forward, chuckling gleefully, to confront the advancing Ravana midway. (1)

They dumped trees, boulders and rocks, small and large, on Ravana all at once. (2)

लागहिं सैल बज्र तन तासू । खंड खंड होइ फूटहिं आसू ॥ ३ ॥
चला न अचल रहा रथ रोपी । रन दुर्मद रावन अति कोपी ॥ ४ ॥

lāgahim saila bajra tana tāsū. khaṇḍa khaṇḍa hō'i phūṭahim āsū. 3.
calā na acala rahā ratha rōpī. rana durmada rāvana ati kōpī. 4.

The mountain-like huge rocks and boulders struck Ravana's body, which was as strong and robust as Vajra (the hardest substance in existence), only to break up into small pieces and fall down to the ground. (3)

Ravana, who was a mighty and valiant warrior renowned for his exceptional gallantry, bravery, valour, steadfastness and resilience during a combat, stood his ground firmly, with great ease and dogged determination, not moving from his position and yielding ground a wee whit. (4)

इत उत झपटि दपटि कपि जोधा । मदै लाग भयउ अति क्रोधा ॥ ५ ॥
चले पराड़ भालु कपि नाना । त्राहि त्राहि अंगद हनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥

ita uta jhapaṭi dapaṭi kapi jōdhā. mardai lāga bhaya'u ati krōdhā. 5.
calē parā'i bhālu kapi nānā. trāhi trāhi aṅgada hanumānā. 6.

Here and there and everywhere, to his left, right and front, Ravana challenged the monkey warriors vehemently, sternly remonstrating them, and dashing at them wrathfully in order to grab them (with the intention of ruthlessly doing them to death). (5)

It was now the turn of the monkeys and bears to flee the ground under the ferocious retaliatory attack by Ravana. They became panicky, shrieking for help and crying aloud: 'Oh Angad, oh Hanuman! Save us; come to our aid; help us immediately'¹. (6)

[Note—¹A similar situation was observed earlier during the first phase of the war when the demons, who had suffered defeat and rout initially, hit back viciously at the advancing army of monkeys and bears after Ravana became angry at them for their cowardice, and motivated them to fight with the enemy with courage and resilience. The counter attack of the demons made the monkeys and bears flee in terror, shouting for help from Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela and Dwivid. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 42—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43.}]

पाहि पाहि रघुबीर गोसाई । यह खल खाड़ काल की नाई ॥ ७ ॥
तेहि देखे कपि सकल पराने । दसहुँ चाप सायक संधाने ॥ ८ ॥

pāhi pāhi raghubīra gōsā'īm. yaha khala khā'i kāla kī nā'īm. 7.
tēhim dēkhē kapi sakala parānē. dasahum' cāpa sāyaka sandhānē. 8.

[They also sought the intervention of Lord Ram, pleading to the Lord to show mercy upon them by invoking his holy name and seeking his graceful help to free them from their plight.]

They invoked Lord Ram and pleaded for help, praying: ‘Oh Lord Raghubir; oh gracious and kind Lord (raghubīra gōsāīm). We fall at your feet and plead with you to have mercy on us and relieve us from this plight (pāhi pāhi). This wicked fellow (Ravana) is killing us all, as if Kaal, the god of death, has himself assumed his ferocious form to annihilate us.’ (7)

When he (Ravana) observed that all the monkeys (and bears) have started fleeing from him, he strung all his ten bows and mounted arrows on them (to shoot down the terror-stricken, fleeing troops of his enemy). (8)

छं०. संधानि धनु सर निकर छाड़ेसि उरग जिमि उड़ि लागहीं । १ ।
 रहे पूरि सर धरनी गगन दिसि बिदिसि कहँ कपि भागहीं ॥ २ ॥
 भयो अति कोलाहल बिकल कपि दल भालु बोलहिं आतुरे । २ ।
 रघुबीर करुना सिंधु आरत बंधु जन रच्छक हरे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sandhāni dhanu sara nikara chārēsi uraga jimi uḍi lāgahīm. 1.
 rahē pūri sara dharanī gagana disi bidisi kham kapi bhāgahīm. 2.
 bhayō ati kōlāhala bikala kapi dala bhālu bōlahīm āturē. 3.
 raghubīra karunā sindhu ārata bandhu jana racchaka harē. 4.

He (Ravana) took aim and shot a rapid volley of sharp arrows that flew like countless serpents flying towards their prey with great speed. (Chanda line no. 1)

The arrows filled the sky and the earth in all the directions. Where would the monkeys (and bears) run away now to escape them?

[To wit, there was no place available where the fleeing monkeys and bears could go to hide themselves, and escape being hit by the arrows.] (Chanda line no. 2)

There was great alarm and a fearful tumult amongst the ranks of the monkey and bear warriors who were out of their wits and utterly terrified. They were all overcome with fear as they made an earnest plea to Lord Ram asking for his intervention to relieve them of this unexpected and sudden calamity that had befallen upon them all. (Chanda line no. 3)

They prayed in unison: ‘Oh Lord Raghubir (raghubīra); oh Lord who is an ocean of mercy and compassion (karunā sindhu); oh Lord who is a dear friend of those who are in distress and need (ārata bandhu); oh Lord who ensures protection as well as welfare and well-being of his devotees (jana racchaka); oh Lord who dispels and removes the sorrows and miseries of all (harē)! (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. निज दल बिकल देखि कटि कसि निषंग धनु हाथ ।
 लछिमन चले क्रुद्ध होइ नाइ राम पद माथ ॥ ८२ ॥

dōhā.

nija dala bikala dēkhi kaṭi kasi niṣaṅga dhanu hātha.
lachimana calē krud'dha hō'i nā'i rāma pada mātha. 82.

Seeing that his troops were in disarray and facing a dire situation, Laxman picked up his bow in his hand, strung it, bowed his head at the feet of Lord Ram, and then angrily marched to the battle-field¹. (Doha no. 82)

[Note—¹Two things are to be noted here: One, that Laxman has not been asked by Lord Ram to go the aid of the fleeing monkeys and bears, and two, that Laxman has departed angrily for the battle-field after bowing his head before Lord Ram.

The first point is answered by saying that since he was next in command in the army after Lord Ram himself, and a fierce war was raging in the battle-field, it was not deemed necessary by Laxman to seek permission from the Lord every time a quick action was to be taken, for it was assumed that such permission was automatically deemed to be granted.

The second point is however more significant. At the time of going out to fight Meghanad for the first time, Laxman had also left for the battle-field in an angry mood; the result was that he got wounded in the battle and fell down unconscious. He repeats this mistake once again now. And what happened? We shall soon read herein below that he was shot by Ravana and fell down unconscious once again.

This incident has a subtle message for all of us: that we must always remain calm and poised during adversities, leaving everything confidently on the Lord God with a firm conviction that he will definitely take care of us. We learn this fact from Laxman's incident—because when he went out to fight Meghanad for the second time he had not shown any anger at all, but remained calm. What was the result? He succeeded in slaying Meghanad.

Here too we shall read that after regaining his senses, Laxman went back to confront Ravana, but now he had not lost his cool, and hence succeeded in making Ravana faint—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 84 herein below.]

चौ०. रे खल का मारसि कपि भालू । मोहि बिलोकु तोर मैं कालू ॥ १ ॥

खोजत रहेउँ तोहि सुतघाती । आजु निपाति जुड़ावउँ छाती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rē khala kā mārasi kapi bhālū. mōhi bilōku tōra mairi kālū. 1.
khōjata rahē'um' tōhi sutaghātī. āju nipāti juṛāva'um' chātī. 2.

[When Laxman reached the spot where Ravana was, he challenged the demon king with these stern words:-]

Laxman said to Ravana, 'Oh you wicked fellow (rē khala). Why do you target these humble monkeys and bears? Look at me; I am your Kaal (death personified)¹.'

[When Ravana saw Laxman, his anger burst out like a suppressed volcano. He immediately recalled that it was Laxman who had killed his dear son Meghanad. For Ravana, now it was the time to take revenge. So he said bitterly, with utter contempt in his voice:-]

Ravana shot back at Laxman vehemently with these contemptuous and scornful words, ‘Oh you who are the one who killed my dear son (Meghanad). I was searching for you. Oh my good fortune; I have finally got hold of you, and now I will cool my burning heart by slaying you with a vengeance (to avenge my son’s death and give rest to his soul)².’ (2)

[Note—¹To wit, if you are indeed so eager for a fight and wish to prove your gallantry in the battle-field, you ought to choose someone who is your match. It’s foolish and cowardly for you to vent your frustration and anger on these poor fellows, the humble monkeys and bears, who are no match for your might and the high stature of your royal majesty! Why do you wish to waste your energy, why do you demean yourself, why do you invite scorn and dishonour yourself by fighting with these poor creatures? It’s a shameful thing to do for you. Well, do you wot naught that a valiant warrior worth his honour always fights with someone who is of an equal stature as himself? So, it is not a good and honourable thing for you, who are the great king of the mighty and proud demon race, to vent your fury on these simple creatures, the poor and humble monkeys and bears.

Come on then; meet me, for I am someone of an equal stature as you are, for you are the king of Lanka while we two brothers, myself and my elder brother Lord Ram, are the princes of a mighty kingdom of Ayodhya. I have come to greet you and invite you for an honourable duel. Accept my challenge like a gallant warrior, and let’s prove ourselves before the world which is watching us closely. Come hither; let’s see what we can do.

²Meghanad was killed by Laxman in a battle during of previous day—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-16 that precede Doha no. 76.

When Ravana saw Laxman standing before him, it was natural for him to lose his cool for he was meeting the killer of his son. His anger was provoked much like a smouldering fire in a hearth that leaps up fiercely in a burst of unrestrained flames when fresh air is pumped into it from the side.]

अस कहि छाड़ेसि बान प्रचंडा । लछिमन किए सकल सत खंडा ॥ ३ ॥
कोटिन्ह आयुध रावन डारे । तिल प्रवान करि काटि निवारे ॥ ४ ॥

asa kahi chārēsi bāna pracaṇḍā. lachimana ki’ē sakala sata khaṇḍā. 3.
kōṭinha āyudha rāvana ḍārē. tila pravāna kari kāṭi nivārē. 4.

Saying this, Ravana shot a thick volley of sharp and powerful arrows; Laxman shot his own arrows to counter them, and successfully broke the incoming arrows into hundreds of pieces. (3)

Ravana shot countless (literally ‘hundreds of thousands’—“kōṭinha”) weapons of various denominations; Laxman swiftly demolished all of them, cutting them into splinters¹. (4)

[Note—¹All sorts of missiles, such as arrows, spears, lancers, dumb-bells, sharp-edged wheels, serrated rings and discuses that had razor-sharp edges, et al, were shot by Ravana in a rapid-fire action. Laxman showed alacrity and swiftness of reaction as

he neutralized all the missiles as quickly as they came, demolishing them before they could hit their target, which obviously was Laxman himself.]

पुनि निज बान्ह कीन्ह प्रहारा । स्यंदनु भंजि सारथी मारा ॥ ५ ॥
सत सत सर मारे दस भाला । गिरि संगन्ह जनु प्रबिसहिं ब्याला ॥ ६ ॥

puni nija bānanha kīnha prahārā. syandanu bhan̄ji sārathī mārā. 5.
sata sata sara mārē dasa bhālā. giri sṛnganha janu prabisahim̄ byālā. 6.

After neutralizing Ravana's weapons, Laxman fiercely retaliated by shooting his own arrows, which broke Ravana's war chariot and killed his charioteer. (5)

Then he (Laxman) shot another volley of arrows that pierced through Ravana's head, ten arrows in each of his ten heads¹; it looked as if so many flying serpents were entering inside caves located on the top of a huge mountain. (6)

[Note—¹Laxman had first shot 2 arrows that broke Ravana's chariot and killed the charioteer. Then he shot a total of 100 arrows as ten arrows had pierced through each of Ravana's ten heads: 10 heads x 10 arrows in each head = 100 arrows.

To wit, Laxman had shot a total of 2 + 100 = 102 arrows at Ravana.]

पुनि सत सर मारा उर माहीं । परेउ धरनि तल सुधि कछु नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
उठा प्रबल पुनि मुरुछा जागी । छाड़िसि ब्रह्म दीन्हि जो साँगी ॥ ८ ॥

puni sata sara mārā ura māhīm̄. parē'u dharani tala sudhi kachu nāhīm̄. 7.
uṭhā prabala puni muruchā jāgī. chāḍisi brahma dīnhi jō sām̄gī. 8.

Then Laxman shot another volley of a hundred powerful arrows aimed at Ravana's chest; these arrows slammed in and pierced through his body, felling him down on the ground, gravely wounded and unconscious. (7)

Soon Ravana regained his senses and got up. Peeved and exasperated, the ferocious Ravana, who was now in full fury, took out a very powerful weapon given to him by the creator Brahma (known as Brahmastra)¹. (8)

[Note—¹This weapon was infallible and sure to have a serious and devastating effect on its target. It was employed only in cases of emergency when all other weapons failed. Burning with anger, Ravana invoked it and used it to hit Laxman back with it.

It could have been a special arrow, a spear, a lancet, or some other kind of missile that could be thrown at the target from a distance.]

छं०. सो ब्रह्म दत्त प्रचंड सक्ति अनंत उर लागी सही । १ ।
पर्यो बीर बिकल उठाव दसमुख अतुल बल महिमा रही ॥ २ ॥
ब्रह्मांड भवन बिराज जाकें एक सिर जिमि रज कनी । ३ ।

तेहि चह उठावन मूढ़ रावन जान नहिं त्रिभुवन धनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sō brahma datta pracaṇḍa sakti ananta ura lāgī sahī. 1.
paryō bīra bikala uṭhāva dasamukha atula bala mahimā rahī. 2.
brahmāṇḍa bhavana birāja jākēṁ ēka sira jimi raja kanī. 3.
tēhi caha uṭhāvana mūrha rāvana jāna nahim tribhu'ana dhanī. 4.

That Brahma's infallible weapon, which had an inherent quality of striking hard and felling its target without fail, hit Laxman (who is also known as 'Anant') in his chest. (Chanda line no. 1)

The strike was so hard that it made the valiant and brave Laxman fall down to the ground unconscious by its sheer force. Then Ravana, who had phenomenal strength of arms and stupendous might at his command, came forward agitatedly and tried to lift Laxman (with the intention of taking him as hostage inside the fort of Lanka). But he failed in his endeavours, for he could not move Laxman.

Thus Laxman was able to maintain his dignity, and retain his honour and glory by making Ravana fail to lift him. (Chanda line no. 2)

[What was the reason why Ravana failed to lift Laxman? Here's the answer:-]

He (i.e. Lord Seshnath, the celestial Serpent who is the primary form of Laxman) on whose head the whole universe, including its different divisions, lie like a small speck of sand --- (Chanda line no. 3)

--- The stupid and dumb-witted Ravana tried to lift the same cosmic Being (who was presently in the form of Laxman) because he was not aware of the fact that he was the Lord of Tribhuvan (the three divisions of the world)¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial Serpent, who is believed to support the entire creation by holding it on his head—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 197; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17; (b) Ayodhya Kand—Doha no. 253 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

The 'Tribhuvan' refers to the three divisions of this world: viz. heaven, earth, and nether world.

This inability of Ravana to lift Laxman is easy to understand if we just apply common sense. Laxman, in his primary form as Seshnath, supports the world, which obviously includes this earth where Lanka was situated, on his head. How can anyone, no matter how strong he might be, lift the very piece of earth, the area of land or the ground on which he is standing?

Suppose a person is standing on a mat, and the mat is spread over floor of his room. How can he dig that floor and lift it on his shoulders or head while standing on the same part of the floor? It's like trying to lift one's own self; it's absolutely absurd and madness to even think of doing it. One can lift someone else, but not one's own self!

So therefore, trying to lift Laxman was logically and physically impossible for Ravana because he was standing on the very piece of ground which Laxman supported on his head in his primary form as Seshnath; it would be like lifting his own

self along with the ground on which Ravana was standing, which is a ridiculous proposition, a senseless thought, and against all principles of science.]

दो०. देखि पवनसुत धायउ बोलत बचन कठोर ।
आवत कपिहि हन्यो तेहिं मुष्टि प्रहार प्रघोर ॥ ८३ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi pavanasuta dhāya'u bōlata bacana kaṭhōra.
āvata kapihi han'yō tēhiṁ muṣṭi prahāra praghōra. 83.

When the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) saw Ravana making attempts to lift Laxman, he dashed forward (to intervene and stop him from doing so), shouting at him and strongly admonishing Ravana by using harsh words against him.

Almost simultaneously, when Ravana observed that Hanuman is approaching him menacingly, he raised himself and hit the latter hard with his clenched fists as if a mighty Vajra (a very hard and strong weapon used by Indra, the king of gods) was used to strike Hanuman¹. (Doha no. 83)

[Note—¹A very interesting observation can be made here. Earlier on in the war, when Laxman was shot and made unconscious by Meghanad (Ravana's son), the latter too had tried to lift Laxman, but had failed. Then Meghanad left the wounded Laxman lying on the ground and went away. So by the time Hanuman came there to lift and take Laxman away to Lord Ram, there was no one to oppose him. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 54 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 55.}

But now in the case of Ravana we find that he did not go away, but continued to make efforts to lift Laxman till the time Hanuman came to intervene.]

चौ०. जानु टेकि कपि भूमि न गिरा । उठा सँभारि बहुत रिस भरा ॥ १ ॥
मुठिका एक ताहि कपि मारा । परेउ सैल जनु बज्र प्रहारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jānu ṭēki kapi bhūmi na girā. uṭhā saṁbhāri bahuta risa bharā. 1.
muṭhikā ēka tāhi kapi mārā. parē'u saila janu bajra prahārā. 2.

Hanuman tottered a bit but overall succeeded in overcoming the force of the blow by kneeling down on his knees and supporting himself on the ground; this strategy prevented him from falling down flat on the ground.

He soon recovered himself and got up, full of excess of fury and seething with vehement wrath¹. (1)

Hanuman retaliated viciously by striking Ravana ferociously with his clenched fists; the blow was so hard that it struck Ravana as if the Vajra (the hard and strong weapon of Indra) itself had hit him with its full force. (2)

[Note—¹Why was Hanuman's anger so mightily provoked? First it was because he saw Ravana felling Laxman by hitting the latter with Brahm's weapon, then whatever little anger was yet left unprovoked inside Hanuman was stoked when Ravana hit him with his fists. That was intolerable for Hanuman, so he decided to teach this villain some bitter lesson by giving him his own medicine by way of a counter fist-attack.]

मुरुछा गै बहोरि सो जागा । कपि बल बिपुल सराहन लागा ॥ ३ ॥
धिग धिग मम पौरुष धिग मोही । जौं तैं जिअत रहेसि सुरद्रोही ॥ ४ ॥

muruchā gai bahōri sō jāgā. kapi bala bipula sarāhana lāgā. 3.
dhiga dhiga mama pauruṣa dhiga mōhī. jaum̐ taim̐ ji'ata rahēsi suradrōhī. 4.

[What was the effect of Hanuman's mighty strike?] Ravana fell down unconscious by the mighty force of the fist blow, but he soon recovered his senses and praised Hanuman's valour and courage¹. (3)

When Hanuman observed that Ravana had recovered himself, he vehemently cursed his own self and moaned: 'Shame to me; shame to my valour, honour and fame. I am terribly ashamed of myself that I left you, the enemy of gods, alive (instead of doing you to death immediately after you fainted when I struck you with my fist).²' (4)

[Note—¹This indeed was the way great and true warriors thought and behaved in ancient times. Instead of cursing and abusing Hanuman and calling him several filthy names in uncouth language, Ravana praised him for his gallantry and valour; he recognized and gave credit to Hanuman's astounding strength and stupendous powers that succeeded in felling Ravana, a feat that of course was not easy.

In today's world, we kill each other from hiding, using guns and rockets and remote controlled bombs raining down from the sky upon the helpless enemy on the ground, and then we claim victory over a much weaker adversary. How cowardly this is; what kind of 'victory' is it? A true soldier worth his honour and name is one who praises the valour and martial skills of the other soldier, even though the latter is his mortal enemy.

²Well, Hanuman could have done it now, he could have killed Ravana still yet, couldn't he? So why didn't Hanuman lunge at Ravana and caught hold of him and dash him to the ground to kill him if he was so regretful to have left him alive?

The reason is this: Laxman was lying unconscious on the ground, and a huge, angry and ferocious army of demons was teeming all around. There was grave danger to Laxman if any time was wasted in removing him from the battle-field to a safer place. Some heavy demon may trample upon him, or some mighty monkey or bear warrior might do it by mistake, because during the heat of war warriors become literally blind to whom they hit, or who is lying dead or still alive but wounded on the ground. This possibility was too risky to overlook in the eagerness to kill Ravana.

Hence, Hanuman decided to first take Laxman to a safer place, for Ravana could be tackled later on; it wasn't that urgent now.]

अस कहि लछिमन कहूँ कपि ल्यायो । देखि दसानन बिसमय पायो ॥ ५ ॥

कह रघुबीर समुझु जियँ भ्राता । तुम्ह कृतांत भच्छक सुर त्राता ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi lachimana kahum̃ kapi lyāyō. dēkhi dasānana bisamaya pāyō. 5.
kaha raghubīra samujhu jiyam̃ bhrātā. tumha kṛtānta bhacchaka sura trātā. 6.

After expressing extreme anger and exasperation at himself for not having killed Ravana at the spot itself (due to the exigency of the situation and the urgent call of duty requiring him to take Laxman to a safe place first, and keep everything else pending for a while), Hanuman lifted the prostrate Laxman, very swiftly and very easily, and brought him to where Lord Ram was¹.

When Ravana saw this (i.e. when he observed that Hanuman could easily lift Laxman when he himself hadn't been able to move the latter a wee bit despite trying his best and employing all the strength that he could muster for the job, strength which was truly phenomenal), he was greatly astounded and utterly awed at this strange development². (5)

Lord Ram looked at Laxman and explained: 'My dear brother. Think for yourself; recall your mighty glory and majesty. You are the one who can devour even the god of death, and you are the one who is the protector of gods!³' (6)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read that Hanuman had easily lifted Laxman and brought him to Lord Ram when he was shot and made unconscious by Meghanad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55.

There we have read that Meghanad too had tried his best to lift Laxman but failed—apropos: Doha no. 54.

An elaborate note has been appended to these verses to explain how and why Hanuman was able to lift Laxman when all others had failed.

We will briefly site here a simple example of ordinary life to explain how it was made possible. Suppose a green leaf of a tree is plucked off its branch by some miscreant; the leaf would obviously fall on the ground below. It wouldn't move on its own, but suppose again that a strong wind starts blowing. What will happen? The wind would easily lift the leaf, bear it along or carry it aloft to a certain point, and then drop it there. Now, a sudden force in the wind is needed to actually lift the leaf from the ground; mild or soft breeze wouldn't lift it.

This example explains what might have happened on the battle-field of Lanka. Hanuman, as is well known and documented, was the 'son of the wind god'; he inherited the genes, and consequently the abilities and qualities of the 'wind god'. Added to this factor was another: since Lord Ram and his brother were fighting this war on behalf of the gods, and on their behest, it was obligatory for the gods to help them in the best way they could; they were morally duty-bound to do it. So therefore, when the time came to help Lord Ram by removing Laxman from the dangers of the battle-field, the 'wind god' decided to do his bit by aiding his son Hanuman in lifting Laxman and taking him out of harms way, which meant bringing him to Lord Ram.

So be it. But then, why couldn't Ravana not move Laxman even a fraction of a millimeter from the ground where he was lying inspite of the well-known fact that he had successfully lifted the mighty Kailash mountain, the abode of Lord Shiva, when he laid siege on it and decided to bring it to Lanka along with its Patron Lord, Shiva—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 29.

The answer is this: Ravana had an extremely gross nature; he was very sinful and evil and full of vices in his body, and so therefore he represented more closely the 'earth element', which is the grossest and the most heavy of the five elements of creation, which incidentally are the sky, wind, fire, water and earth elements in ascending order of grossness. In sharp contrast with the nature of Ravana was Hanuman, for he stood for the 'subtler and lighter forces of creation represented by the wind element'. So therefore, since Ravana himself was 'gross and heavy as lead', and consequently symbolized the nature of the 'earth' which itself is heavy and gross, he differed remarkably from the nature of Hanuman who symbolized the 'subtle and lighter forces of creation represented by the wind element'.

To wit, Ravana was an image of the 'heavy and gross earth element', while Hanuman was an image of the 'subtler and lighter wind element'.

Heavy things go down; lighter things move up. If we put a ball of lead in water, it will sink; but if we put a balloon filled with air on the same water, it will float on the surface; won't it?

This observation answers our question on its own accord: Ravana, being gross and heavy as the earth element, could not lift Laxman because here Laxman's own weight was added to the mighty weight of the earth which he carried on his head in his primary form as Lord Seshnath, the celestial Serpent—apropos: Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 83 herein above.

On the other hand was Hanuman; he had the qualities of the wind element which is an invisible stupendous force of creation, strong enough to be able to easily uproot large trees, and make even the mighty ocean heave and rise in the form of gigantic waves, many meters high, that move forward in the form of a high wall that moves fast and furious with devastating force, when it is whipped up by the force of a fierce storm, so much so that it can topple huge ships and lay to ruin vast coastal areas where it makes landfall. What is a humble leaf lying on the ground before the might of this wind force? To wit, when Hanuman employed his inherent force of the power of the wind element, lifting Laxman was only like a child's play; like a child lifting a leaf from the ground and taking it somewhere.

Come to think of it; anything that is gross like the earth element is visible also like the earth in its physical form as we know it, but anything that is subtle and light like the wind element remains invisible to us like our own breath or the air that surrounds us. So therefore, we can see or visualize Ravana flexing his muscles, biting his teeth, sweating and fretting and fuming and cursing and calling names as he physically applies all the might of his twenty strong arms in an attempt to lift Laxman, but we have no such account for Hanuman! It is because Ravana's efforts were visible to us as he was a gross person, while Hanuman's efforts remained invisible as his was a subtler and sublime presence, a persona that transcended the grossness of this physical world.

We must remember in this context that Hanuman was able to lift the mighty mountain containing the medicinal herbs needed to revive Laxman when he had fainted earlier, and held it aloft on his hands as he cruised all the way across the night sky for thousands of miles from the northern Himalayas to the battle-field of Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 58. If he could do that, there is no wonder he could lift Laxman as well, because he had the technical skill and the acumen needed to perform this feat, something others didn't have.

Besides this incident, Hanuman had also streaked across the sky over the ocean like an arrow while coming to and going back from Lanka when he had been

sent to search for Sita— apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1.

²Ravana was confounded because he couldn't see deeper into the truth. It is because of the effects of 'Maya', the Supreme Lord's power to create delusions that overwhelmed him and clouded his wisdom. It was because his time was up; 'death' was coming closer to him, and its dark shadow had engulfed his intellect and discretion like the creeping shadow that precedes total lunar or solar eclipse.

³See note appended to verse no. 7 herein below.]

सुनत बचन उठि बैठ कृपाला । गई गगन सो सकति कराला ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि कोदंड बान गहि धाए । रिपु सन्मुख अति आतुर आए ॥ ८ ॥

sunata bacana uṭhi baiṭha krpālā. ga'ī gagana sō sakati karālā. 7.
puni kōdaṇḍa bāna gahi dhā'ē. ripu sanmukha ati ātura ā'ē. 8.

No sooner did the merciful Laxman heard Lord Ram's pleas, then he sat up, as if nothing at all had happened to him¹. Meanwhile, the deadly 'Shakti', i.e. the powerful energized weapon that Ravana had used to strike Laxman with, went back to the heavens². (7)

Thence, Laxman grabbed a formidable bow called 'Kodanda'³ and its compatible arrows, and rushed once again very eagerly to face the enemy in the battle-field. (8)

[Note—¹When Laxman was made unconscious the last time during his battle with Meghanad, we have read that he was revived with the help of certain medicinal herbs that grew on a mountain brought by Hanuman from the higher reaches of the Himalayas. Now, once the usefulness of these herbs was proved, it can be reasonably and logically assumed that Lord Ram and his wise ministers had kept the rest of the herbs safely for any future use, because they couldn't take any further risks while a bloody and deadly war was raging.

So this time around, these herbs came in handy to them; for as soon as Laxman was brought in, he was immediately administered the potion that had revived him earlier. Wonderful war strategy indeed it was; any commander of an army will instinctively do the same thing even today.

²And what about this 'Shakti' going to the heaven? Well, here heaven actually means the 'sky'. It implies that the shaft that had entered Laxman's body was pulled out by either Lord Ram himself or any one of his ministers, who immediately 'flung it off so violently that it appeared to fly away into the sky'. Meanwhile, the medicinal herb was applied to Laxman's wound, and its action was so rapid that he recovered very quickly. In ancient times when no modern medicines and healing technology were available, but the most ferocious of wars were fought nevertheless, surely some ancient method of healing the wounded soldiers were known to the commanders of great armies which helped them to get the wounded soldiers back on their feet fast.

To recall an example from classical literature, we read in 'Don Quixote' by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, in its chapter no. iii, book 2, that when the knight-

errant named Don Quixote was once seriously injured in his ears during one of his many misadventures, wherein one of his ears was just short of being ripped off his body, and he managed to escape with just a deep gash which was bleeding and paining extremely, the nomadic goatherds with whom had been discoursing on some subject and to whom he complained about his misery, came to his aid; they crushed some leaves of the rosemary plant, mixed some salt in the paste, and bandaged the injured part of the ear with this concoction. It had a rapid healing effect, and our brave knight-errant found immediate relief.

Well, let's come back to the story. We have read that this weapon was known as Brahma Shakti; so it went to its original owner, i.e. to the creator Brahma. This is why it is said here that it went to the 'heaven'.

³The Kodanda Bow is the special bow belonging to Lord Ram, and it was used sparingly during the war; it was the one which was used to slay Ravana. It was different from other bows, for it had some special virtues unique to it. It was crafted by with the specific purpose of eliminating the scourge of the evil forces of Nature symbolized by Ravana and his vile demon compatriots.]

छं०. आतुर बहोरि बिभंजि स्यंदन सूत हति व्याकुल कियो । १ ।
गिर्यो धरनि दसकंधर बिकलतर बान सत बेध्यो हियो ॥ २ ॥
सारथी दूसर घालि रथ तेहि तुरत लंका लै गयो । ३ ।
रघुबीर बंधु प्रताप पुंज बहोरि प्रभु चरनहि नयो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ātura bahōri bibhan̄ji syandana sūta hati byākula kiyō. 1.
giryō dharani dasakandhara bikalatara bāna sata bēdhyō hiyō. 2.
sārathī dūsara ghāli ratha tēhi turata laṅkā lai gayō. 3.
raghubīra bandhu pratāpa puñja bahōri prabhu carananhi nayō. 4.

Laxman went back hastily, and with renewed fury, to face Ravana once again in the battle-field. He shot a volley of fierce arrows that broke Ravana's second chariot¹ into splinters, killed his charioteer, and made the demon warlord extremely exasperated. (Chanda line no. 1)

He (Laxman) pierced Ravana's chest with a hundred arrows shot simultaneously; they had a devastating effect on Ravana, making him totter and swoon, and fall down on the ground in great agitation. (Chanda line no. 2)

In the meantime, another charioteer, who was waiting with a spare chariot², immediately picked up the fallen Ravana and scampered away with great haste, taking him back to the fort of Lanka. (Chanda line no. 3)

After having chased back the enemy and avenging himself, Lord Ram's valorous brother (Laxman) came back to the Lord. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Laxman had broken Ravana's first chariot and killed its charioteer before he was shot and made unconscious by the demon king—apropos: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83 herein above.

Meanwhile, during the intervening time, while Hanuman had taken Laxman to Lord Ram and then Laxman had come back to the battle-field to face Ravana once again after regaining his senses, Ravana called in another chariot that was kept in reserve, as a stand-by. It was this new chariot, the second one, that Laxman broke now.

²This was the '3rd chariot' used by Ravana that we come across. The demon king kept many war chariots in reserve during battles so that he can quickly switch from one to another should any emergency arise.]

दो०. उहाँ दसानन जागि करि करै लाग कछु जग्य ।

राम बिरोध बिजय चह सठ हठ बस अति अग्य ॥ ८४ ॥

dōhā.

uhām̐ dasānana jāgi kari karai lāga kachu jagya.

rāma birōdha bijaya caha saṭha haṭha basa ati agya. 84.

There, inside Lanka, when the ten-headed Ravana regained his consciousness after some time, he started doing some kind of fire sacrifice¹ that would enable (or empower) him to win the war against Lord Ram.

Indeed and in all sooth, he was truly an ignorant and dumb-witted fellow, whose mind was pervert and heart wicked, that he even imagined he would gain victory in a war by antagonizing Lord Ram, by standing as the Lord's enemy with the hope of defeating the Supreme Lord of the world². (Doha no. 84)

[Note—¹This is the second time we come across performance of a fire sacrifice by the demon clan during the course of the war. Earlier it was Meghanad who did it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 75.

In both these cases, i.e. in the case of Meghanad earlier and of Ravana now, the fire sacrifices were done during the night, at the end of the day's battle.

The light of the fire lit for the purpose of the sacrifice lighted up the night sky. It was a tell-tale sign that would warn Vibhishan that a fire sacrifice was being undertaken by Ravana in Lanka. We shall read in the following verse that Vibhishan came to know about the developments and went to warn Lord Ram about it.

²This marked the end of the 6th day of the war.]

चौ०. इहाँ बिभीषन सब सुधि पाई । सपदि जाइ रघुपतिहि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

नाथ करइ रावन एक जागा । सिद्ध भएँ नहिं मरिहि अभागा ॥ २ ॥

पठवहु नाथ बेगि भट बंदर । करहिं बिधंस आव दसकंधर ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ihām̐ bibhīṣana saba sudhi pā'ī. sapadi jā'i raghupatihi sunā'ī. 1.
 nātha kara'i rāvana ēka jāgā. sid'dha bha'ēm̐ nahim̐ marihi abhāgā. 2.
 paṭhavahu nātha bēgi bhaṭa bandara. karahim̐ bidhansa āva dasakandhara. 3.

In the meantime, Vibhishan learnt everything about the developments in Lanka (i.e. he got to know that Ravana was engaged in doing a fire sacrifice to gain victory in the war)¹. So he immediately rushed and told all about it to Lord Ram². (1)

Vibhishan said: 'Oh Lord; Ravana is doing a fire sacrifice. If that unfortunate fellow completes it successfully, then he would become invincible, and it will not be possible to kill him any longer. (2)

So therefore oh Lord, it has become imperative (for us) to send monkey and bear warriors to interrupt it. They must go forthwith and disrupt the sacrifice so that Ravana would be provoked and forced to come here (in the battle-field) before he manages to complete it successfully and gain invincibility.³' (3)

[Note—¹How did Vibhishan come to know what Ravana was doing inside his fort? There are two possibilities: One, some spy had informed Vibhishan about it, who was also keeping him abreast of everything that was happening inside the fort. And two, as soon as the sacrificial fire was lit, its flames lighted the night firmament above, and it was a tell-tale sign which led Vibhishan to conclude that Ravana was performing a great fire sacrifice. We must remember that Vibhishan was Ravana's brother, and so he was well acquainted with family practices and his elder brother's habits, and the rituals he was likely to perform when faced with emergencies.

²Earlier too, when Meghanad had done a similar fire sacrifice, Vibhishan had rushed to tell Lord Ram about it, and warn him that if he succeeded in finishing it, then he would become invincible—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 75.

³Remarkable indeed! It ought to be noted that the initiative to disrupt the fire sacrifice was taken by Vibhishan, and not Lord Ram. Here it is clear that Vibhishan had expressly requested that troops be dispatched to prevent the completion of the sacrifice. This made it obligatory for Lord Ram to heed this advice, because Vibhishan was a trusted military advisor, a close confidential aide and the strategist of the Lord during this campaign, and failing to listen to him, and then if the war was lost, the entire blame would lie squarely on the Lord's shoulders.

Besides this, the Lord was employing the ancient wisdom of paying back a wicked fellow with the sort of money with which he does his own business; or rather, to give him the taste of his own medicine. Demons were known to defile and destroy fire sacrifices of sages, and so now it was high time to repay them and giving them the same remedy by destroying their own sacrifices. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 181; and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 183.}

In sage Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramayan', Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 4-16, it is clearly mentioned that Ravana was advised by his guru Sukracharya that he should do a particular kind of fire sacrifice in some secret place. His guru also told him the secret of how to do it and the Mantras to be employed. This ritual, if completed successfully, would provide him with certain war paraphernalia, such as a

chariot, horses, bows, arrows, quiver etc., which would make him invincible in the war. So Ravana retired to his palace and got a deep underground cavern made for this purpose. But unfortunately for him, a huge plume of smoke emanating from the fire sacrifice rose and went up high in the sky; it also contained the aroma of the various herbs that were used for the sacrifice. Vibhishan had spotted this smoke and also smelled the smell of herbs, most probably because the smoke wafted towards the camp of Lord Ram by the force of the breeze that was blowing in that direction.

So Vibhishan immediately became alert; he came to the conclusion that the only cause of this smoke and its aromatic smell was that Ravana was doing some sort of fire sacrifice, and there could be no other reason for him doing it in the middle of night other than gaining victory in the war.]

प्रातः होत प्रभु सुभट पठाए । हनुमदादि अंगद सब धाए ॥ ४ ॥

कौतुक कूदि चढ़े कपि लंका । पैठे रावन भवन असंका ॥ ५ ॥

जग्य करत जबहीं सो देखा । सकल कपिन्ह भा क्रोध बिसेषा ॥ ६ ॥

prāta hōta prabhu subhaṭa paṭhā'ē. hanumadādi aṅgada saba dhā'ē. 4.

kautuka kūdi caṛhē kapi laṅkā. paiṭhē rāvana bhavana asaṅkā. 5.

jagya karata jabahīṁ sō dēkhā. sakala kapinha bhā krōdha bisēṣā. 6.

As soon as it was dawn, Lord Ram sent agile and valiant warriors such as Hanuman, Angad etc. to accomplish this task¹. All of them dashed forward to Lanka with great haste. (4)

The monkeys leapt over the walls of the fort of Lanka² very easily, and then fearlessly entered the palace of Ravana. (5)

When they found him doing the fire sacrifice, they lost their cool and became excessively furious and wild with anger. (6)

[Note—¹Throughout the war we will observe that it were Angad and Hanuman who had led the assault from the front. Other great warriors, such as Nala, Neela, Dwivid, Jamvant etc. had their own roles to play and had accompanied them, but the main pillars on which the success of the war rested were undoubtedly Angad and Hanuman. Lord Ram was acquainted with their exceptional abilities, stupendous valour and phenomenal strength, and so he would always summon them first and ask them to lead each phase of the assault.

A question arises in one's mind that was it good for Lord Ram to order the destruction of a fire sacrifice? Well, though apparently this ordering of destruction of a fire sacrifice was not a good act for Lord Ram to do, as he was an upholder of righteousness and supporter of good deeds, but we must remember that he was fighting a war with a cunning and vicious enemy who would go to any length to defeat his opponent; and times of wars have different set of rules as compared to peaceful times. Besides this, the Lord wished to give a message that a thorn has to be plucked out by another thorn or a needle if the whole body is to be prevented from developing gangrene; it was a literal tit-for-tat for the demons who had been relentlessly defiling fire sacrifices of sages.

If mercy was shown on the demons in this final stage when the objective of Lord Vishnu to come down to earth as Lord Ram was about to be fulfilled, then all efforts would be wasted. To wit, if Ravana was allowed to survive, which he surely would if he successfully completed the fire sacrifice, then the sufferings he had caused to the world and the horrors he had perpetrated, would continue unabated. He would become all the more brazen and reckless; sins and evil deeds would multiply, and all things under the banner of 'Dharma', such as the virtues of goodness and righteousness, would become the casualty.

If this was allowed to happen then Lord Ram, who was the Supreme Being, would fail in his duty in upholding the tenets of Dharma and protecting the humble creatures of his own creation who were being mercilessly tormented and made to suffer interminably by the demons. So such niceties as avoiding the destruction of a fire sacrifice on the grounds of high moral and scrupulous were not the need of the hour, especially in the context of what was already happening and what would happen in the world if Ravana survived.

Lord Ram also wished to make Ravana and Meghnad, both of whose fire sacrifices were ordered to be destroyed, have a taste of their own medicine. They were used to defiling the fire sacrifices of sages, hermits and seers, so let them feel how bad they must have felt.

It also shows that when all means to avoid confrontation were exhausted, when the wicked, the pervert, the rascal and the unrighteous evil fellows who were embodiments of every imaginable forms of sin and evil, would not see reason and mend their ways, then for the larger good of the world, in the larger interest of restoring order and peace in this world, the Lord had no other alternative but to administer a bitter medicine to the demons to which they were so accustomed. Drastic situations need equally drastic remedies, for oftentimes it does become imperative to use harsh methods for the larger interest of the society and humanity. If the carrot doesn't work, the stick has to be oftentimes used.

If the Lord shows mercy and compassion—which is actually his habit and wont—then multitudes suffer due to the wickedness of a handful of persons. It is better to sacrifice them and salvage the boat of peaceful and harmonious existence rather than pretending to be righteous and let the humanity suffer. Being a King and Lord of the universe and a caretaker of its inhabitants, it was morally bound on Sri Ram to protect his suffering subjects from the cruelty and tyranny unleashed by Ravana and his kith and kin.

So the ordering of the destruction of Ravana's fire sacrifice should be seen in this context.

²All the gates of the fort of Lanka were closed. So it became necessary for Angad and Hanuman to take a giant leap and enter the city forthwith, as no time could be wasted in stopping Ravana from completing the sacrifice. In Adhyatma Ramayan, a similar thing is described in its Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 16-20.

Even if the gates were not closed, it would be a waste of crucial time and sapping of vital energy trying to engage with the demon army stationed to protect the fort. Angad and Hanuman were tasked with destroying the fire sacrifice, and not clashing with and decimating the enemy army.]

रन ते निलज भाजि गृह आवा । इहाँ आइ बक ध्यान लगावा ॥ ७ ॥

अस कहि अंगद मारा लाता । चितव न सठ स्वारथ मन राता ॥ ८ ॥

rana tē nilaja bhāji gr̥ha āvā. ihām̐ ā'i baka dhyāna lagāvā. 7.
asa kahi aṅgada mārā lātā. citava na saṭha svāratha mana rātā. 8.

They scornfully teased Ravana by saying, 'Oh you shameless and cowardly fellow. You ran away from the battle-field, and came here to pretend to be doing meditation like a heron.¹' (7)

Saying this, Angad kicked him (Ravana) viciously. But the wicked fellow paid no attention to it as his mind was preoccupied with other things². (8)

[Note—¹This metaphor of the heron is used for a person who is very pretentious, deceitful, and full of falsehood, who pretends to be a harmless, nice and holy person to mislead other from his true intention, for he is the most wicked creature one may come across.

This bird stands in water on one leg and bent neck, appearing to be engaged in silent meditation. But its attention is fixed on any fish that may come within its range, for then it would swiftly pick it up from water with its long beak and gobble it up, only to resume its meditative, saintly and holy posture the next moment.

Here the monkeys mean that Ravana was a coward who ran away from battle, but now he pretends to be a holy man engaged in his religious pursuit. Is this his true character; is he really a holy man doing a fire sacrifice? Well, if it was so then they would never dare ruin his fire sacrifice, but the truth is that he is a crook who is assuming this posture with the evil intention of acquiring powers that would enable him to wreak havoc, to unleash the fire of hell on his enemy, the monkeys and bears as well as their Lord Ram and his close advisors. So this being the case, surely there is no harm in disrupting his fire sacrifice.

This observation makes it clear why the monkey troops were not accused of committing a sinful act by destroying the sacrifice of Ravana: for it was being done with evil intentions. Compared to this, the destruction of the fire sacrifices of sages by the demons was a sinful act as their sacrifices were a part of their religious duties and spiritual practices that had no evil component in it; they weren't aimed against anybody.

²Credit must be given to Ravana at least for once in this regard, that when he was engaged in doing the fire sacrifice, all his attention was focused on it as it rightly ought to be. He was immune to everything else; external stimuli did not affect him at all, nor was he disturbed by them, for his inner-self was deeply immersed in meditating on the deity to whom he was offering this sacrifice and his physical body was as good as dead and numb.

Even if we do not accept this argument and say that Ravana was fully conscious of his surroundings, then at least one thing is sure: as soon as a noisy raucous was created by the invading monkeys, Ravana immediately realized why they had come, which was to disrupt his sacrifice. So he mentally geared himself up to defeat their design by not allowing himself to be disturbed and get provoked by anything they do.

Hence, when Angad kicked him violently, Ravana maintained his cool.]

छं०. नहिं चितव जब करि कोप कपि गहि दसन लातन्ह मारहीं । १ ।
 धरि केस नारि निकारि बाहेर तेऽतिदीन पुकारहीं ॥ २ ॥
 तब उठेउ क्रुद्ध कृतांत सम गहि चरन बानर डारई । ३ ।
 एहि बीच कपिन्ह बिधंस कृत मख देखि मन महुँ हारई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nahim citava jaba kari kōpa kapi gahi dasana lātanha mārahīm. 1.
 dhari kēsa nāri nikāri bāhēra tē'tidīna pukārahīm. 2.
 taba uṭhē'u krud'dha kṛtānta sama gahi carana bānara ḍāra'ī. 3.
 ēhi bīca kapinha bidhansa kṛta makha dēkhi mana mahum'hāra'ī. 4.

When he (Ravana) did not open his eyes (i.e. when he remained calm and continued with his fire sacrifice, neglecting all insinuating words and provocative actions of Angad who had kicked him and called him a coward and a pretentious crook), all the monkeys who had come to disrupt his sacrifice attacked him all at once; some biting him with their teeth and others kicking him violently. (Chanda line no. 1)

They went on the rampage; some entered his palace and dragged his women (i.e. the female members of Ravana's royal household) out into the open by pulling them by their hairs, as a result of which they wailed in terror and screamed in abject fear (of being dishonoured and seriously injured)¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

It was too much for Ravana to cope with (because never ever in his long life had he been subjected to this extreme low level of humiliation where his women would be dragged out of the palace by their hairs, wailing and crying helplessly, and subjected to such wild dishonour in his presence).

So finally he lost his poise and got up in a huff. Bursting in the seam in surging anger, with all his restraint cracked beyond repair, he was a personified Kaal (Death) raging mad with vehemence and wrath. He reacted most violently and vengefully by quickly catching whosoever monkey warrior he could lay his hands by their legs, and dealing with all of these unfortunate victims most viciously, by throwing them away violently, felling some unconscious to the ground while thrashing and dashing others most brutally, and flicking some into the raging fire of the sacrificial pit (where they would char to death and roasted alive). (Chanda line no. 3)

During this time (while he was engaged in venting his anger on those monkeys who had dragged out his women), the other monkey warriors destroyed his fire sacrifice². When Ravana finally took notice of it, he was extremely dismayed and completely devastated, for now he lost all hopes of winning this war². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The monkeys were representing Lord Ram. It therefore implies that what they did had an indirect approval or tacit support of the Lord, for the Lord had never scolded them for doing such nasty things as dragging out women from inside their private chambers by pulling at their hairs. What does it mean? The Lord wanted to tell Ravana, albeit silently, that it is his punishment for what he had done with the women folk of others—for it is documented in ancient histories related to him that when he

attacked the gods and other great rulers, he would grab their women and bring them as mistresses of his household—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182-b.

One such instance of Ravana's pervert and lascivious nature is right before us—the abduction of Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, which, as we are well acquainted with by now, was the reason why this epic war erupted—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25; and (ii) Doha no. 28.

²Once again, this was exactly what Ravana himself had ordered his demons to do—to destroy the fire sacrifices of sages and kill them, and was now being paid in his own coin—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 181 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 206; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 207; and (b) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

³Ravana had pinned his hopes of victory in the war on the successful completion of his fire sacrifice. With this sacrifice in ruins, all hopes were lost; he felt himself sinking and weak in his knees. Now he was sure that the end was near; that the game was up for him. As it is said that when a person becomes very desperate and loses all hopes of recovery from his misfortunes, he becomes a very frustrated and dangerous man, like an injured lion or tiger, and if this person is in command of anything with which he can vent his anger on him who he believes has been the cause of his fall and misfortunes, then all hell breaks loose. Knowing now that death was a forgone conclusion for him, Ravana pulled out all stops and went berserk in anger.

So we shall discover now when we read on with this most fascinating narration of this equally fascinating Story, that the last phase of the war was the most vicious and brutal of all; it was a terrifying war fought with the extreme viciousness and hair-raising horror imaginable; a war the like of which was never again fought on earth.

Imagine the mismatch between the two great warring armies: on one side were ferocious giants, the vicious demons, armed to the teeth with the best of weapons and war paraphernalia in vogue at that point of time in history, and on the other side were the humble creatures known as monkeys and bears, who are regarded as primitive creatures low down in the ladder of evolution, who had nothing worth the name to be called as proper weapons of war, except their own teeth and the strength of their muscular arms, or the access to primitive attack weapons provided by mother Nature herself, such as trees, rocks and boulders! With these primitive tools at their disposal, the monkeys and bears succeeded in conquering the mightiest empire on earth at that time—the Demon Empire ruled by Ravana, an empire that stretched its sway and tentacles from the high heavens where the almighty Gods lived, right up to the nether world where other powerful Spirits ruled, those who had no less importance and no less powers than the Gods of heaven, with the poor earth with its humble creatures, including the human race and the animals, lying somewhere in between!

All these things point to one obvious reason: it is that this victory of the monkeys and bears was made possible only by the grace and blessings of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being himself personified in the Lord's physical form, and there was no other reason.]

दो०. जग्य बिधंसि कुसल कपि आए रघुपति पास ।

चलेउ निसाचर क्रुद्ध होइ त्यागि जिवन कै आस ॥ ८५ ॥

dōhā.

jagya bidhansi kusala kapi ā'ē raghupati pāsa.

calē'u nisācara krud'dha hō'i tyāgi jivana kai āsa. 85.

After destroying Ravana's sacrifice successfully, the monkeys came back to Lord Ram. Meanwhile, the demon king (Ravana) lost all hopes of either attaining victory or surviving this war alive, and so he departed for the battle-field boiling over with rage and mad with vengefulness¹. (Doha no. 85)

[Note—¹Ravana now decided that there is no looking back for him, that there was no hope for him to retrieve his lost glory and fame. He had lived a proud life as an invincible conqueror who had vanquished even the mighty gods by the valour of his strong arms. Now faced with the horrifying prospect of defeat and its attendant ignominy and humiliation, which was by now magnified manifold times by his inability to protect the honour and dignity of his own women folk who were pulled out unceremoniously from their palace by the monkey troops and ridiculed publicly, coupled by the infamy attached to the earlier deaths of his mighty son Meghanad and equally mighty brother Kumbhakaran, Ravana by now had turned into a mad and fanatic killer, who wots no boundaries and transcends all limits in his determination to unleash his fiery fury, like an erupting volcano spewing out molten lava or a ferocious dragon out to annihilate the world by breathing fire and brimstone, upon those whom he thinks are the cause of his fall from grace and loss of fortunes.

In this mental state of excessive aggressiveness and frustration, where he lost all hopes of living, and was therefore turned into a ferocious messenger of death and destruction, Ravana left the fort of Lanka and plunged head-on into the battle. He was determined now onwards to fight like a mad bull that is gravely injured, resolved to obliterate anything that stood in his way in the battle-field.]

चौ०. चलत होहिं अति असुभ भयंकर । बैठहिं गीध उड़ाइ सिरन्ह पर ॥ १ ॥

भयउ कालबस काहु न माना । कहेसि बजावहु जुद्ध निसाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calata hōhiṁ ati asubha bhayaṅkara. baiṭhahim gīdha uṛā'i siranha para. 1.
bhaya'u kālabasa kāhu na mānā. kahēsi bajāvahu jud'dha nisānā. 2.

No sooner had Ravana left the fort for the battle-field, than all sorts of ill omens of the worst kind, portending calamities and horrors of destruction without forbearance, commenced to reveal themselves. For instance, vultures (that are harbingers of death as they feed on dead bodies and rotting corpses) came in droves to alight on his head and then fly away. (1)

But he was so tightly under the grip of Death and entangled firmly by its deadly tentacles that he won't listen to anything sane or to anybody whosoever he might be (as he had become excessively stubborn, exceptionally furious with anger, and filled with burning desire for revenge that engulfed his entire being).

He declared an all-out war with no holds barred, and asked war trumpets to be sounded with full vigour, in high decibel. (2)

[Note—¹Having decided that for aught he saw there was no other future left for him but death, Ravana cared no more for his own life, nor for what would befall upon anyone else.

So, without waiting or caring to weigh his options any longer, he ordered the war trumpets to be sounded with full vigour, screwed his face menacingly in a grisly sign of unleashing his nasty vengeance upon his enemy, he immediately sallied out of the fort of Lanka, mad and furious with anger and raging wrath.

He didn't even bother whether his demon warriors followed him or not, for let us remember he had declared earlier that he relied on no body but the valour and might of his own arms when he had first decided to pick up the cudgel of animosity with Lord Ram, and so he would prove it in this war once the enemy has come directly to challenge him for a duel—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 78.]

चली तमीचर अनी अपारा । बहु गज रथ पदाति असवारा ॥ ३ ॥

प्रभु सन्मुख धाए खल कैसें । सलभ समूह अनल कहँ जैसें ॥ ४ ॥

calī tamīcara anī apārā. bahu gaja ratha padāti asavārā. 3.

prabhu sanmukha dhā'ē khala kaisēm. salabha samūha anala kham' jaisēm. 4.

The huge and formidable army of the demon race sallied out of the fort and headed for the battle-field. It had countless war elephants, chariots, foot soldiers (infantry) as well as those mounted on horses (cavalry)¹. (3)

These wicked and dumb-witted fellows rushed towards Lord Ram (and his army) just like insects fly towards a flame to meet their death. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79 where it is said that the demon army had four wings—implying foot soldiers or infantry, horse-riding soldiers or the cavalry, those who rode war elephants or the warrior mahouts, and those who used war chariots, which in modern parlance we call the 'mechanized division'.]

इहाँ देवतन्ह अस्तुति कीन्ही । दारुन बिपति हमहि एहिं दीन्ही ॥ ५ ॥

अब जनि राम खेलावहु एही । अतिसय दुखित होति बैदेही ॥ ६ ॥

ihām' dēvatanha astuti kīnhī. dārūna bipati hamahi ēhīm dīnhī. 5.

aba jani rāma khēlāvahu ēhī. atisaya dukhita hōti baidēhī. 6.

Meanwhile, on this side (i.e. on the side of the battle-field where Lord Ram and his army were assembled) the gods (who had collected in the heaven to watch the proceedings on the ground) prayed fervently to Lord Ram, pleading with the Lord:

‘Oh Lord. This fellow (Ravana) had inflicted uncountable horrors and miseries upon us. (5)

So therefore oh Lord, don’t play hide and seek with him for long, and get rid of him soon, for Sita (also known as Vaidehi) is getting very upset and feeling highly miserable as she is tormented with the uncertainty of fate that prevails in the war with the passage of each day.¹ (6)

[Note—¹The gods were correct in this, for we shall soon read about it directly while narrating the conversation that Sita had with Trijata, the pious old demoness appointed by Ravana to guard her, and who had become very friendly and sympathetic to her during her captivity in Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 100.

Here we note two things—The first is that the gods are reminding Lord Ram the primary reason why Lord Vishnu had come down to earth from heaven in the Lord’s form when the gods had prayed to him for deliverance from the terror unleashed by Ravana and his cruel demon race—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.

And two, the gods are reminding the Lord about what Hanuman had said when he came back from Lanka with Sita’s report, hearing which the Lord decided not to waste any more time but launch a campaign to free her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 32; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 34, which is very explicit on this subject.

So, when the gods observed that the war was dragging on and on without any end in sight, they were worried, and decided to remind Lord Ram to hurry up and bring it to an end.]

देव बचन सुनि प्रभु मुसुकाना । उठि रघुबीर सुधारे बाना ॥ ७ ॥
जटा जूट दृढ़ बाँधें माथे । सोहहिं सुमन बीच बिच गाथे ॥ ८ ॥

dēva bacana suni prabhu musukānā. uṭhi raghubīra sudhārē bānā. 7.
jaṭā jūṭa dṛṛha bāṁdhēm māthē. sōhahim sumana bīca bica gāthē. 8.

When Lord Ram heard the words of the gods, he smiled¹ and got up to get ready for the final phase of the war. He took up his arrows (as well as the bow) to put them in order, and make them ready for use. (7)

He also wound the long hairs on his head tightly into a coil, and looked so charming in this form as flowers were also tucked in between the layers of this coil to form a wreath on his head (as a symbolic token of victory)². (8)

[Note—¹Why did the Lord smile? There are several reasons. He smiled because the gods want him to do everything for them, but they do not even have the basic courtesy and common sense of extending some help to him on their part. Don’t they know that the Lord is on foot while his enemy Ravana is riding a war chariot? Couldn’t the gods

arrange a chariot for the Lord; couldn't Indra, the king of gods, send his own chariot to help Lord Ram? Well, the Lord smiled at the selfishness of the gods: for they want the Lord to do everything for them, and they not considering any simple way of helping him to help them. The Lord smiled in amusement, thinking to himself that he would fulfill his obligations irrespective of how the gods are.

He also smiled that the gods have started getting nervous; they have begin to doubt about the outcome of this war, inspite of being aware that once Lord Vishnu had promised them to eliminate the scourge of the demons he would not fail his words. But everything is done at the proper time, and that proper time regarding the hour of Ravana's physical death had not arrived as yet.

The Lord smiled as he was waiting for the gods to make another fervent plea for protection and deliverance from the fear of Ravana, lest they should forget the Lord's obligation upon them and say later on that Ravana died on his own accord when his lifespan had ended. Or, the God of Death, the 'Kaal', may boast that it was he who had killed Ravana, and Lord Ram had no role in it. Lord Ram was aware of the selfish nature of the gods. Were the gods really 'selfish'? Yes indeed they were, and it is clearly reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 295; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

Another reason for the Lord smiling is that these gods were so clever that they have cited Sita's miseries as the main reason for asking Lord Ram to hurry up in ending the war, instead of acknowledging that they themselves are dying of fear with the passage of each day.

²The flowers and leaves intertwined in the matted hairs of Lord Ram look odd in the background of the fierce war underway in the bloody fields of Lanka. But it indicates two things: One, that the Lord was complete at ease and confident, even finding time to groom himself properly in anticipation of certain victory. And two, the wreath on his head was a clear signal to the gods that they need not worry as the victory was now a certainty, for only a victorious warrior becomes entitled to wear the wreath symbolizing conquest on his head.]

अरुन नयन बारिद तनु स्यामा । अखिल लोक लोचनाभिरामा ॥ ९ ॥

कटितट परिकर कस्यो निषंगा । कर कोदंड कठिन सारंगा ॥ १० ॥

aruna nayana bārīda tanu syāmā. akhila lōka lōcanābhirāmā. 9.
kaṭitaṭa parikara kasyō niṣaṅgā. kara kōdaṇḍa kaṭhina sārāṅgā. 10.

The Lord's reddened eyes (as they were angry; or it may also mean 'eyes that were like a lotus flower with a pink shade) and his dark complexion looked majestic and charming; they were so fascinating to behold that this sight gave unbound pleasure to everyone in this world who had the good fortune to observe it at that time (and to everyone else in this world who can close his eye and have this divine view revealed on the canvas of his mind). (9)

The Lord had the quiver tied firmly around his waist with the help of the waist-cloth that was girdled tightly around the middle part of his body. He also held the formidable bow called Kodanda¹ as well as powerful arrows in his two hands. (10)

[Note—¹This ‘Kodanda’ bow was used sparingly during the war, at only crucial points. This bow was the one which was used by Lord Ram to fulfil his promise made to the gods and mother earth in his original form as Lord Vishnu that he would remove the cause of their fears and miseries by getting rid of the cruel demon race led by its king Ravana. Therefore, the Bow was called ‘Sarang’ when it was held by Lord Vishnu, and when held by Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu, it came to be known as ‘Kodanda’.

A very remarkable thing has happened here, and it is worth pausing a bit here to understand its significance. The bow which Lord Ram picks up now to kill Ravana is called ‘Kodanda’. Well, if we go back to the time when the Lord had married Sita by breaking the bow in Janakpur, that bow was also called ‘Kodanda’, and it belonged to Lord Shiva! This is explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 261.

So what does this mean? How can Lord Ram use a bow, named Kodanda, that he had himself broken long ago? Well, come to think of it—herein lie the great mystery about Lord Ram, about what he did in this world, about his actions that have been invariably described by the scriptures as being beyond comprehension and logic. On the one hand he had broken the Kodanda bow, and on the other hand he picks up the same Kodanda bow to eliminate Ravana. It is obviously difficult to reconcile these two opposite and apparently contradictory situations unless and until we understand that everything the Lord did here in this world was a play of his cosmic Maya—the supreme power vested with the Supreme Being to create fantastic delusions, magical mysteries and unexplainable illusions like a Great Charmer or Master Magician.

To wit and in all sooth, he had neither broken Lord Shiva’s bow named Kodanda, nor had he ever insulted Shiva by doing it. The breaking of that bow then was merely a magical trick done by Lord Ram like any other magician would do on stage. For let us understand one thing: that if the Kodanda bow was actually broken at that time, how then can it be used by Lord Ram now in the battle-field of Lanka?

Lord Ram had intended to use this Kodanda bow to slay Ravana later on, so he spread the spell of his magical charm called Maya much like a magician who would make his audience believe whatever he says, and literally have them eat out of his hands things that do not actually exist. So in effect, Lord Ram gave the impression that he had broken the Kodanda bow, but it is quite possible that it was given to him by King Janak as part of his marriage gift. Remember: Sita used to clean and pay homage to this bow when she was a child. So she loved it, and would not have parted with it after her marriage. Hence, she brought it with her to Ayodhya as part of her personal belongings.

At the time of going to the forest, Lord Ram carried it along, with his other bow called the Sarang. The world thought that since it was a ‘broken bow’, broken into two pieces, it was harmless. No one knew the reality—that it was merely made to appear like that, and would be the fatal bow that would one day do Ravana in one day.

This is evidently the reason why Lord Shiva had never felt offended when it was declared that Lord Ram had ‘broken his bow’. Lord Shiva merely smiled and kept quiet to keep the secret, to prevent Ravana from being aware of the reality.

Such are indeed the mysterious and mystical ways of the Supreme Being; and how foolish would it be for ordinary human beings who have limited knowledge, and that too limited to this mortal world, try to comprehend the play of the Lord who is the Master Puppeteer of this Creation.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 91. The term ‘Kodanda’ is used to indicate how fierce the Lord would be for those who try to disrupt peace and order in the Lord’s creation—because the term ‘Kodanda’ includes the word “Danda” which means punishment.]

छं०. सारंग कर सुंदर निषंग सिलीमुखाकर कटि कस्यो । १ ।
 भुजदंड पीन मनोहरायत उर धरासुर पद लस्यो ॥ २ ॥
 कह दास तुलसी जबहिं प्रभु सर चाप कर फेरन लगे । ३ ।
 ब्रह्मांड दिग्गज कमठ अहि महि सिंधु भूधर डगमगे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sāraṅga kara sundara niṣaṅga silīmukhākara kaṭi kasyō. 1.
 bhujadaṇḍa pīna manōharāyata ura dharāsura pada lasyō. 2.
 kaha dāsa tulasī jabahim prabhu sara cāpa kara phērana lagē. 3.
 brahmāṇḍa diggaja kamaṭha ahi mahi sindhu bhūdhara ḍagamagē. 4.

[In this verse, the beauteous and charming form of Lord Ram—who besides being the warrior fighting the demon race in a bloody war for the sake of the welfare and the well-being of humble creatures of this creation who were being subjected to endless merciless cruelty by the demons, was also at the same time the most merciful and compassionate Lord God of this creation who had no personal enemy and no personal grudge against anyone, for the Lord treated all the members of this creation equally—is being described.

A reference to the virtues of beauty and charm in the midst of chaos and bloodshed so typical of a battle-field is to remind the reader not to be distracted from the truth by the illusion of mayhem and blood-letting that is created on the ground of Lanka, for though it appears that Lord Ram is very angry and vengeful, out to crush his mortal enemy for the sake of his wife, but it is merely a smokescreen to hide the reality—which is that, one, Lord Ram is protecting the rest of the creation by disciplining a few wayward members of the same creation who had gone astray from the path of Dharma and have become a nuisance for all others, and two, the Lord decided to use this war as an excuse to grant deliverance to the souls of all the demons who would have otherwise perished in hell for their life spent in evil deeds.

To wit, though Lord Ram appears to be shooting arrows and ordering killing of the demons in a merciless war like the one of which the world had never witnessed, yet internally he was calm and poised and cheerful and happy as if nothing was happening, for otherwise his physical form would have surely betrayed his vehement nature and excess of cruelty and seething anger, but surely, if nothing else, it could never have been so peaceful, calm, charming and pleasant to behold; it would have been furious and fearful to look at, a form that is usually the norm with merciless conquerors who have no qualms in going berserk and killing, looting, burning and plundering wherever they set their foot.

Remember: Lord Ram embodied in his physical form the virtues of charm and beauty that are invariably associated with Mother Nature; he was actually a visible representation of these eternal qualities of cosmic Nature which manifested themselves in all their finery and glory in the Lord’s form.]

There was a beautiful bow called Sarang¹ in the Lord's hand; and at his waist was tied a quiver that had the mystical ability to supply an endless numbers of powerful arrows without exhausting its reserve. (Chanda line no. 1)

The Lord's arms were well-formed, robust and muscular; and on his broad chest was marked the footprints of sage Bhrigu, the Brahmin². (Chanda line no. 2)

Tulsidas (the primary author of this wonderful story of Ram Charit Manas) says that when Lord Ram was preparing himself for the battle-field (and the duel with Ravana that was to be fought there) by stringing and testing his bow and examining his arrows by holding them in his hands --- (Chanda line no. 3),

--- There was a tremor throughout the world. The whole universe, including all the elephants that support it in different directions (i.e. the Diggajas)³, the legendary Tortoise (said to support the earth and its mountains on its back), Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial Serpent also believed to hold the earth on his gigantic hood), the earth with all its mountains and oceans—all began to shake and tremble⁴. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹As has been noted earlier, the 'Sarang Bow' is the one that belongs to Lord Vishnu. By citing it here, especially immediately after citing the 'Kodanda Bow' in the previous verse, it is being hinted that Lord Ram was no one else but Lord Vishnu, and now Lord Ram is assuming his original form of Lord Vishnu to fulfill his promise made to the gods and mother earth—that he would come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the demon race.

²The story of the mark of footprints of sage Bhrigu on the chest of Lord Vishnu is briefly as follows. This particular sign is being alluded to here to reiterate that Lord Ram is Lord Vishnu himself, for this sign cannot be present on anybody else except Lord Vishnu.

Sage Bhrigu once tested the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and determined that Lord Vishnu is the best amongst them and alone deserves worship. This story in brief is as follows—

Once all the sages had collected and decided to judge which of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, is the greatest. Sage Bhrigu was appointed to find it out. Bhrigu first went to Brahma and did not show any respect to him. This enraged Brahma, but somehow he managed to control himself. Then Bhrigu went to meet Shiva. Shiva came forward but Bhrigu did not want to meet him, accusing the Lord of following inauspicious way of life. This enraged Shiva who lifted his trident to kill Bhrigu. Then Parvati, the consort of Shiva, intervened and pacified him.

Finally, Bhrigu went to Vishnu who was reclining in his divine abode known as Vaikuntha. Bhrigu got annoyed that Vishnu did not get up to welcome him, and so he kicked the Lord on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep, and instead of becoming angry at Bhrigu asked for his forgiveness as he was unaware that the Brahmin has arrived as he was asleep. Further, Vishnu showed Bhrigu great respect and said that instead of feeling insulted on being kicked on the chest, he is feeling honoured that a great sage had blessed him by touching his body with his august feet. This stunned Bhrigu; he was dumbfounded at the gracious and forgiving nature of Vishnu. But Vishnu's consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was

extremely peeved, and she cursed the Brahmin that henceforth the entire Brahmin race will have to suffer because of lack of wealth and would be forced to beg for their sustenance.

Lord Vishnu wears the mark made by the sage's footprint on his chest as a token of respect that he has for learned Brahmins.

Bhrigu came back and narrated the entire thing to the assembly of sages. They decided that indeed it was Lord Vishnu who was the greatest because he had conquered anger, the worst of all the negative qualities and the cause of all strife and destruction. Anger was to become the greatest of evils and vices in this world, and forgiveness as the greatest of virtues.

³The Diggajas: There are said to be eight 'Diggaj' who support the earth from eight directions or corners. These Diggajs are believed to be strong and muscular 'elephants' stationed at eight strategic points in eight directions of the earth to support it from rolling or toppling over. The word 'Diggaj' itself means anyone who is very strong and muscular.

According to the Purans, these eight directions and their respective Diggajs are the following—(i) in the north, the Diggaj (elephant) is known as 'Saarvabhoum'; (ii) in the north-east, the Diggaj is known as 'Suprateek or Saptateek'; (iii) in the east, the Diggaj is known as 'Airaawat'; (iv) in the south-east, the Diggaj is known as 'Pundareek'; (v) in the south, the Diggaj is known as 'Vaaman'; (vi) in the south-west, the Diggaj is known as 'Kumud'; (vii) in the west, the Diggaj is known as 'Anjan'; and (viii) in the north-west, the Diggaj is known as 'Pushpa-danta'.

However, according to Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 40, verse nos. 14, 18, 20 and 22, when king Sagar's sons went to dig the earth in search of the horse of the sacrifice that had gone missing, they saw only four Diggajs as follows—(i) in the east they saw the Diggaj named 'Virupaaksha', (ii) in the south, the Diggaj named 'Maha-padma', (iii) in the west, the Diggaj named 'Saumnas' (pronounced as Saw+um+nus), and (iv) in the north, the Diggaj named 'Bhadra'.

These Diggajs are referred to in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 254 as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 260 in the context of Lord Ram breaking the bow. In the first instance, when Laxman became angry, these Diggajs shifted from the place out of fear, and in the second instance Laxman alerted them to be careful and hold the earth properly so that it does not topple over when Lord Ram prepared to lift and break Lord Shiva's bow in order to marry Sita.

⁴The same thing had happened when Lord Ram had broken the bow to marry Sita in Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 261.]

दो०. सोभा देखि हरषि सुर बरषहिं सुमन अपार।

जय जय जय करुनानिधि छबि बल गुन आगार ॥ ८६ ॥

dōhā.

sōbhā dēkhi haraṣi sura baraṣahim sumana apāra.
jaya jaya jaya karunānidhi chabi bala guna āgāra. 86.

Observing the exceptional charm and the bewitching beauteous form of Lord Ram, the gods were exhilarant; they showered countless flowers upon the Lord from the heaven.

Overjoyed, they exclaimed repeatedly in unison: ‘Glory to the Lord who is an ocean of abounding compassion, mercy, kindness and grace, as well as a repository of immense charm and beauty’. (Doha no. 86)

चौ०. एहीं बीच निसाचर अनी । कसमसात आई अति घनी ॥ १ ॥

देखि चले सन्मुख कपि भट्टा । प्रलयकाल के जनु घन घट्टा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhīm bīca nisācara anī. kasamasāta āī ati ghanī. 1.

dēkhi calē sanmukha kapi bhaṭṭā. pralayakāla kē janu ghana ghaṭṭā. 2.

[After the brief lull in the storm, or we can say after the calm before the storm actually unfolds its full fury before finally dissipating itself, as marked by the brief pause herein above where we read about the gods appreciating the beautiful form of Lord Ram and showering flowers upon him from the sky, and Lord Ram smiling and calmly preparing to step out into the battle-field, we once again plunge into the heat and fire of the battle that rages on in Lanka.]

In the meantime, while Lord Ram was preparing himself for the battle and the gods had been appreciating his charming form and showering flowers upon him, the huge demon army that was packed from end to end with ferocious soldiers, came grinding in. (1)

As soon as the valorous monkey (and bear) warriors saw them arrive, they started off at once in huge numbers to face them. The army of these monkeys (and bears) looked like a bank of thick dark clouds that rise from the horizon to sweep across the sky during the calamitous events of the doomsday. (2)

बहु कृपान तरवारि चमंकहिं । जनु दहँ दिसि दामिनीं दमंकहिं ॥ ३ ॥

गज रथ तुरग चिकार कठोरा । गर्जहिं मनहुँ बलाहक घोरा ॥ ४ ॥

bahu kṛpāna taravāri camaṅkahim. janu dham̐ disi dāminīm damaṅkahim. 3.
gaja ratha turaga cikāra kaṭhōrā. garjahim manahum̐ balāhaka ghōrā. 4.

Numerous polished swords and sharp scimitars were glistening and dazzling in the rays of the sun as if streaks of lightening tore relentlessly through the body of the doomsday cloud. (3)

The clamour and the noise produced by trumpeting of elephants, the rattling caused by the movement of giant chariots, and the furious neighing of war horses, seemed to be like the deafening roar of thunder accompanying the advancing cloud¹. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, as the two giant armies came nearer, the din and the raucous created by excited warriors of both the sides, to which was added the defeating shrieks of intoxicated elephants, excited horses who were jumping furiously when whipped and spurred on viciously by their mounts, and the loud rattling sound produced by the rumbling of the heavy chariots across the uneven ground, together with the flashing swords and other war paraphernalia—all gave the horrifying general impression of two thick banks of clouds arising simultaneously from opposite directions and heading towards each other for a violent meeting at the time of the end of the world.]

कपि लंगूर बिपुल नभ छाए । मनहुँ इंद्रधनु उए सुहाए ॥ ५ ॥
उठइ धूरि मानहुँ जलधारा । बान बुंद भै बृष्टि अपारा ॥ ६ ॥

kapi laṅgūra bipula nabha chā'ē. manahum'indradhanu u'ē suhā'ē. 5.
uṭha'i dhūri mānahum'jaladhārā. bāna bunda bhai br̥ṣṭi apārā. 6.

The giant monkeys, who had different shades of colour of their skin, waved their long tails in the sky, giving the impression of the appearance of so many magnificent rainbows simultaneously in the sky. (5)

A huge dust storm arose, covering the whole place, and giving the impression of a heavy rainfall; the shower of arrows raining down from the sky looked like drops of rain¹. (6)

[Note—¹When there is heavy rainfall, one is not able to see anything beyond a limited area. So likewise, the dust that was kicked up by the movement of these two armies covered the battle-field so thickly that view became extremely limited.

If one stands out in a fierce storm that is lashing violently, the rain does not appear soothing and comforting; it rather becomes annoying, and one begins to feel that the rain drops are striking his body like so many tiny pebbles hitting him with some force.

In this metaphor, the rain drops are the arrows, and the heavily falling rain is the thick cloud of dust that was kicked up and obscured all view.]

दुहुँ दिसि पर्वत करहिं प्रहारा । बज्रपात जनु बारहिं बारा ॥ ७ ॥
रघुपति कोपि बान झरि लाई । घायल भै निसिचर समुदाई ॥ ८ ॥

duhum'disi parbata karahim prahārā. bajrapāta janu bārahim bārā. 7.
raghupati kōpi bāna jhari lā'ī. ghāyala bhai nisicara samudā'ī. 8.

Huge rocks and boulders as large as mountains were being used on both the sides to attack and pulverize the enemy; these were dumped on the adversary thick and fast, and with great violence, giving the impression that Vajra (the heavy and sturdy weapon of Indra, the king of gods) is striking the warring factions repeatedly. (7)

Seeing that his troops are under stress, Lord Ram let out a thick volley of arrows that rained upon the demon army and wounded a lot many of its warriors. (8)

लागत बान बीर चिक्करहीं । घुर्मि घुर्मि जहँ तहँ महि परहीं ॥ ९ ॥
 स्रवहिं सैल जनु निर्झर भारी । सोनित सरि कादर भयकारी ॥ १० ॥

lāgata bāna bīra cikkarahīm. ghurmi ghurmi jaham̃ taham̃ mahi parahīm. 9.
 sravahim̃ saila janu nirjhara bhārī. sōnita sari kādara bhayakārī. 10.

When the brave demon warriors were hit by the arrows, they shrieked furiously, swooned and fell down, rolling over on the ground. (9)

When they fell down and rolled over the ground with blood streaming out of their gigantic bodies, it appeared that streams of water were rolling down from high mountains, or like many waterfalls cascading down the side of lofty mountains¹. (10)

[Note—¹The comparison with the mountain is made because the demons were huge giants, with a huge body. The blood streaming out of their wounds resembled streams and rivulets that emerge from crevices and holes on the sides of mountains to fall down as waterfalls on the ground below. Here, the wounds are the crevices and holes in the mountains, and the blood flowing out of them is like the streams and rivulets coming out from the mountain and cascading down along its craggy sides.]

छं०. कादर भयंकर रुधिर सरिता चली परम अपावनी । १ ।
 दोउ कूल दल रथ रेत चक्र अबर्त बहति भयावनी ॥ २ ॥
 जलजंतु गज पदचर तुरग खर बिबिध बाहन को गने । ३ ।
 सर सक्ति तोमर सर्प चाप तरंग चर्म कमठ घने ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kādara bhayaṅkara rudhira saritā calī parama apāvanī. 1.
 dō'u kūla dala ratha rēta cakra abarta bahati bhayāvanī. 2.
 jalajantu gaja padacara turaga khara bibidha bāhana kō ganē. 3.
 sara sakti tōmara sarpa cāpa taraṅga carma kamaṭha ghanē. 4.

[The metaphor of a River, albeit of flowing blood and not of water, is employed in this verse to give the reader an idea of the horrors of the War of Lanka.]

An inauspicious and horrifying river of blood—the sight of which created terror for those who were coward in their hearts, fickle in their minds, and weak in their resolve to fight and defeat their enemy—began flowing over the ground of the battle-field. (Chanda line no. 1)

The ‘two warring armies’ were like the two opposite banks of this river. The ‘chariots’ were like sand that was sprinkled along these banks, and their ‘wheels’ were the rapidly whirling whirlpools of this fearsome river. Forsooth, this river indeed looked scary and blood-curdling as it flowed through the battle-ground (sometimes

slowly and at other times rapidly, depending on the volume of blood that poured into it in an endless stream). (Chanda line no. 2)

The multitudes of war ‘elephants, foot soldiers, horses and mules’ that filled the battle-field symbolized the countless creatures of various denominations that lived in this river. (Chanda line no. 3)

‘Arrows, spears and lancers’ were like the countless water-serpents flowing up and down this strange river, both against and along its current; the ‘bows’ were like the many currents themselves (ebbing and flowing, and changing course every now and then, and often clashing or rubbing against one another as this metaphoric river rapidly flowed down the ground); and the ‘shields of the warriors’ were like the hard shells of the many tortoises that floated on the surface of this river (bobbing up and down as they fought with one another to gain some space in the flow of current). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—In this excellent imagery, the learned poet draws our attention to the immensity of blood-shed and horrors that were enacted on the ground in the battle-field during the epic War of Lanka. Whosoever came near this river would fall in its swiftly flowing currents, either on their own or when pushed in by those standing at the back; those who still managed to remain on its banks would get sucked in when the current swelled and overflowed the bank of this metaphoric river with an inflow of fresh supply of blood as more and more warriors died on its banks and discharged more blood into it. Those who fell in this river got immediately sucked in and taken away by its rapidly turning whirlpools and swift currents.

The shields held by the warriors, both alive and dead, looked like so many tortoises bobbing up and down on the surface of this scary river as they flowed down its current. The bows were like the ever changing currents as they quickly changed their contours when their strings were pulled and released in rapid succession, or when they were moved and pointed in different directions by the warriors who held them.

The war chariots were so many in their numbers, and so thickly packed, moving and changing their locations quickly that they were like sand particles strewn on the banks of a river. The sand is not fixed at one place on the ground, and it is easily moved aside when some heavy object passes over it, or is easily blown away when a strong gust of wind flows. So therefore, sand is likened to the fast moving chariots, ever changing their locations, and thickly packed in the field. Their wheels turned rapidly like the whirlpools in a churning river, either pushing away some object or sucking in others with the twin forces of nature known as centrifugal and centripetal respectively.

And of course, to complete the picture we have the many creatures who have their natural habitat in the river—like the water-serpent and tortoise and many others who represented the elephants, horses, mules and soldiers that also were the natural components of an army.]

दो०. बीर परहिं जनु तीर तरु मज्जा बहु बह फेन ।

कादर देखि डरहिं तहँ सुभटन्ह के मन चेन ॥ ८७ ॥

dōhā.

bīra parahiṃ janu tīra taru majjā bahu baha phēna.
kādara dēkhi ḍarahiṃ taham̐ subhaṭanha kē mana cēna. 87.

Warriors were falling on the ground along the banks of this frightful river just like trees along the banks of a swiftly flowing river topple over and fall to the ground (when the soil under them is undercut and loosened because of the river's swift currents).

The abundant bone marrow that flowed on the surface of this river looked like the scum that the river normally scoops up during the course of its flow.

It was such a horrifying sight that those who were cowards and timid, those who were weak in mind and heart, shuddered at it and felt terrified, while those who were brave veterans of war, gallant in their hearts and firm in their minds, found delight in it (as they were accustomed to such scenes, and were aroused and got excited when they saw it). (Doha no. 87)

चौ०. मज्जहिं भूत पिसाच बेताला । प्रमथ महा झोटिंग कराला ॥ १ ॥
काक कंक लै भुजा उड़ाहीं । एक ते छीनि एक लै खाहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

majjahiṃ bhūta pisāca bētālā. pramatha mahā jhōtiṅga karālā. 1.
kāka kaṅka lai bhuja uṛāhīṃ. ēka tē chīni ēka lai khāhīṃ. 2.

Horrifying fiends and evil spirits that frequent battle-fields, such as ghosts, ghouls, phantoms and goblins, as well as Pramaths (attendants of Lord Shiva; those who roam around corpses and cremation grounds) who had long disheveled hairs, jumped into this river of blood to take a bath in it. (1)

Crows and kites dived into this river to pick up and fly away with severed limbs of dead warriors, fighting with each other to snatch and eat their share of flesh. (2)

एक कहहिं ऐसिउ सौँघाई । सठहु तुम्हार दरिद्र न जाई ॥ ३ ॥
कहँरत भट घायल तट गिरे । जहँ तहँ मनहुँ अर्धजल परे ॥ ४ ॥

ēka kahahiṃ aisi'u sauṅghā'ī. saṭhahu tumhāra daridra na jā'ī. 3.
kaham̐rata bhaṭa ghāyala taṭa girē. jaham̐ taham̐ manahum̐ ardhajala parē. 4.

After snatching meat from others, these birds of prey chided them, saying: 'Oh you most greedy and rapacious fellows. Even when there is an abundant supply of our natural food, of which there is no dearth at present, it is so shameful a thing that you do not desist from exhibiting your habit of being greedy and rapacious to the extreme (like a miserly person who will not give away anything to others in charity inspite of having an oversupply of something that he does not need any more).¹' (3)

Wounded and seriously injured warriors, who had fallen on the ground on the bank of this river (of blood), groaned and sighed and moaned grievously in pain as half of their bodies lay on the ground and the other half was dangling inside the river.

It was like a scene witnessed on the banks of a holy river where infirm and desolate persons, those who are destitute and have no one to take care of them, lie half on the ground and half submerged in the water in the hope that when they die the sacred water of the river would wash away their mortal remains automatically and grant deliverance to their souls because they have nobody to do their last rites. (4)

[Note—¹A description of the physical appearance of these ghouls and spirits that frequent battle-fields is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 95.]

खँचहिं गीध आँत तट भए । जनु बंसी खेलत चित दए ॥ ५ ॥
बहु भट बहहिं चढ़े खग जाहीं । जनु नावरि खेलहिं सरि माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

khaimcahiṁ gīdha ānta taṭa bha'e. janu bansī khēlata cita da'e. 5.
bahu bhaṭa bahahiṁ caṛhē khaga jāhīṁ. janu nāvāri khēlahiṁ sari māhīṁ. 6.

Vultures were tearing out the intestines of these unfortunate warriors (who were lying half dead on the banks of this river, with their bodies half submerged and half on the ground) giving the impression that fishermen, who are sitting on the banks of a river attentively watching their fishing lines, would pull out the string with a jerk as soon as the fish caught the bait dangling at the end of the line. (5)

Many dead bodies of warriors were floating on the surface of this river, and different kinds of birds were alighting on these corpses and flying away in merriment as if they all enjoyed this free boat ride without any fear of being harmed or shooed away. (6)

जोगिनि भरि भरि खप्पर संचहिं । भूत पिसाच बधू नभ नंचहिं ॥ ७ ॥
भट कपाल करताल बजावहिं । चामुंडा नाना बिधि गावहिं ॥ ८ ॥

jōgini bhari bhari khappara sañcahiṁ. bhūta pisāca badhū nabha nañcahiṁ.
7.
bhaṭa kapāla karatāla bajāvahiṁ. cāmuṇḍā nānā bidhi gāvahiṁ. 8.

Female fiends of the battle-field, called Joginis, were collecting blood in cups made of hollow skulls. Other female ghosts, ghouls and phantoms were dancing in the sky in merriment. (7)

Another type of female fiend known as Chamunda, the patron spirit of the battle-field, was so overjoyed that she sang war songs to the accompaniment of sound of clanging or crushing produced by striking two empty skulls, extracted from dead warriors, with each other like so many pairs of cymbals. (8)

जंबुक निकर कटक्कट कट्टहिं । खाहिं हुआहिं अघाहिं दपट्टहिं ॥ ९ ॥

कोटिन्ह रुंड मुंड बिनु डोल्लहिं । सीस परे महि जय जय बोल्लहिं ॥ १० ॥

jambuka nikara kaṭakkaṭa kaṭṭahim. khāhim hu'āhim aghāhim dapaṭṭahim. 9.
kōṭinha ruṇḍa muṇḍa binu ḍōllahim. sīsa parē mahi jaya jaya bōllahim. 10.

Hordes of jackals grinded their teeth and snapped at each other as they tore apart corpses, ate them, snarling and growling menacingly at each other as was their wont, even though they had sufficient to satisfy their own hunger. (9)

So intoxicated and excited were the warriors, and so feverish was their enthusiasm for battle that was stoked by the invigorating environment of the battle-field which was so much in consonance with their inherent nature, that even after their heads were severed from their bodies yet their headless torsos roamed around aimlessly in the battle-field.

Nay, even the heads of these warriors that had fallen on the ground were active, for even while lying there they continued to yell and shriek war cries, repeatedly applauding their own sides and glorifying their compatriots, cheering them on and declaring their victory. (10)

छं०. बोल्लहिं जो जय जय मुंड रुंड प्रचंड सिर बिनु धावहीं । १ ।

खप्परिन्ह खगग अलुज्झि जुज्झहिं सुभट भटन्ह ढहावहीं ॥ २ ॥

बानर निसाचर निकर मर्दहिं राम बल दर्पित भए । ३ ।

संग्राम अंगन सुभट सोवहिं राम सर निकरन्हि हए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bōllahim jō jaya jaya muṇḍa ruṇḍa pracaṇḍa sira binu dhāvahim. 1.
khapparinha khagga alujjhi jujjahim subhaṭa bhaṭanha ḍhahāvahim. 2.
bānara nisācara nikara mardahim rāma bala darpita bha'ē. 3.
saṅgrāma aṅgana subhaṭa sōvahim rāma sara nikaranhi ha'ē. 4.

Severed heads yelled war cries of 'Victory, victory'; torsos sans heads ran helter-skelter wildly all over the ground. (Chanda line no. 1)

Birds, singly and in flocks, alighted on skulls and got entangled within its hollows as they vied with each other to scoop up whatever flesh and marrow that still remained sticking to the sides, and in the ensuing tussle the stronger birds pushed away and trampled those who were weak. (Chanda line no. 2)

The valiant and brave monkey warriors, invigorated and energized by the grace and blessings of Lord Ram, were thrashing and decimating the demon warriors relentlessly. (Chanda line no. 3)

Countless multitudes of gallant warriors (of the demon army) were killed by the hail of arrows showered by Lord Ram, and they lay down on the ground in an eternal sleep. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—Really indeed, the imagery of the ferocious war, and the enormity of the bloodshed and mayhem and horrors that attended it, is gut churning, and evokes revulsion. One can well imagine the horrifying sight of how the otherwise sandy soil of Lanka would have turned into a slushy ground resembling a thick swamp of blood and flesh that was stinking with rotting corpses and shredded bodies from which intestines and other organs were being pulled out by birds and animals of prey. To add to this eerie, blood chilling scene was the chilling cries and painful groans of those who were not already dead but suffering intensely; or of those who were maddened with passion for blood and vengeance.]

दो०. रावन हृदयँ बिचारा भा निसिचर संघार ।
मैं अकेल कपि भालु बहु माया करौं अपार ॥ ८८ ॥
dōhā.

rāvana hr̥dayam̐ bicārā bhā nīsicara saṅghāra.
maiṁ akēla kapi bhālu bahu māyā karaum̐ apāra. 88.

When Ravana observed this large-scale decimation of his demon army, he was utterly dismayed and excessively exasperated. Thus finding himself alone to face a huge enemy army of monkeys and bears, he bethought to himself: ‘I am left alone to confront so many ferocious monkeys and bears baying for my blood. So it would be wise and prudent for me to employ Maya (which are the powers to create delusions and illusions to mislead the enemy) extensively at this crucial juncture.’ (Doha no. 88)

चौ०. देवन्ह प्रभुहि पयादें देखा । उपजा उर अति छोभ बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥
सुरपति निज रथ तुरत पठावा । हरष सहित मातलि लै आवा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

dēvanha prabhuhi payādēṁ dēkhā. upajā ura ati chōbha bisēṣā. 1.
surapati nija ratha turata paṭhāvā. haraṣa sahita mātali lai āvā. 2.

The gods, who were watching the proceedings of the battle-field from their stations in the sky, felt very sorry in their hearts when they saw that Lord Ram was suffering so much for them by fighting this ferocious war on foot, without the basic aid of a war chariot, while their mortal enemy, the demon king Ravana, whom the Lord fought at the behest of these gods, had this privilege. (1)

[This realization made the gods feel very guilt and shameful, so they collectively decided to help the Lord by sending the chariot that belonged to their king Indra. So therefore—] The king of gods immediately sent his own heavenly chariot, and his charioteer named Matali brought this chariot to the ground for Lord Ram’s use. (2)

तेज पुंज रथ दिव्य अनूपा । हरषि चढ़े कोसलपुर भूपा ॥ ३ ॥
चंचल तुरग मनोहर चारी । अजर अमर मन सम गतिकारी ॥ ४ ॥

tēja punja ratha dibya anūpā. haraṣi caṛhē kōsalapura bhūpā. 3.
cañcala turaga manōhara cārī. ajara amara mana sama gatikārī. 4.

This heavenly chariot was glorious, splendid, radiant and divine; it was one of its own kind. The Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram) immediately boarded it and moved forward in the battle-field¹. (3)

The chariot had four gifted horses that were agile and well-trained. These four horses were of an excellent breed, most charming to behold, and possessed exceptional and unique qualities that made them imperishable and invincible. They were very swift; in fact, they were as swift as the mind². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram immediately recognized Matali and the chariot. Remember: He was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the Lord of heaven; so there is no wonder that he could recognize the chariot at once, as being the one that belonged to the gods. He also knew Matali, the charioteer, personally.

Lord Ram knew that this chariot and its charioteer cannot be duplicated by anyone, so therefore he was sure that it was not a creation of Ravana's 'Maya' to trap him. Of course the Lord was in need of a chariot, so when he found that it had come to him without asking, he accepted it to oblige the gods; for if the Lord had not accepted this gift from the gods it would be tantamount to his insulting them. Lord Ram was well aware of the nature and temperament of these gods: that they took quick offence.

Lord Ram did not wish to create an unpleasant and unsavoury scene, while a fierce war was underway, by telling Matali to take the chariot back to the gods for he was competent to fight and win this war without their help or the gift of a chariot. Being the Supreme Lord, and therefore the Lord of the gods themselves, it was incumbent upon him to show restraint and modesty, and not act rashly by teasing the gods with the question: 'were they sleeping till now; why couldn't they send the chariot earlier'. Doing anything that may be construed as an insult by the gods might be counter-productive at this dangerous point of time, for who knows what not the gods might do if they feel offended, for they were very selfish by nature.

Remember: Vibhishan had felt this shortcoming of the absence of a chariot during a war when he had expressed his reservations to Lord Ram in this regard—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 80. Should the gods not have sent it then; shouldn't they have done what they could to help Lord Ram who was fighting this war for them? But Lord Ram was so magnanimous and broad-minded that he did not mind this neglect by the gods at all, for a great King has often to overlook many minor faults and missteps of his junior ministers and subjects, like the gods were in the Lord's case.

It is quite possible that the conversation between Lord Ram and Vibhishan was conducted in a low tone, almost in a whisper as if they were discussing some war strategy, so that the gods stationed high above in the heaven could not make out what they were talking about, and so they weren't even aware that the point of discussion was the need of a chariot, for it is incredulous to believe that had they been aware of it, even slightly, that Vibhishan was worried about the necessity of a chariot for Lord Ram, then the gods would have hastened to supply it immediately. They were so occupied with and in an absolute awe of what they saw happening all around them in the battle-field down below that they were almost dumbfounded and astonished and

out of their wits, as they hadn't seen such a horrifying war earlier, and therefore their mind could not register the need of a war chariot for Lord Ram.

But the astonishing thing is not this that a chariot was suddenly made available to Lord Ram by the gods, but the fact that Ravana did not take any note of it. What might have been the reason for it? Well, Ravana was so alarmed with the situation on the ground, as well as so preoccupied in his mind with his own problems that were mounting with the passage of every moment, and was so overworked in devising strategies for the war, that he could not see the difference between how Lord Ram stood on the ground a few while ago and how he was astride a war chariot the other moment.

²The 'Mana', the mind, is said to be extremely agile and swift because a person can think of one thing at a given point of time, and within a fraction of a second his mind starts thinking of a completely different and unrelated thing a moment later. He may be thinking of something happening here, and the next moment his thoughts take him to something that happened long ago somewhere else.

The horses of this chariot were exceptionally swift, and to give an idea of the rapidity of their movement this simile of the Mana (i.e. one's mind, and the quick way it is able to jump from one subject to another in a fraction of a second) is cited.]

रथारूढ रघुनाथहि देखी । धाए कपि बलु पाइ बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
सही न जाइ कपिन्ह कै मारी । तब रावन माया बिस्तारी ॥ ६ ॥

rathārūṛha raghunāthahi dēkhī. dhā'ē kapi balu pā'i bisēṣī. 5.
sahī na jā'i kapinha kai mārī. taba rāvana māyā bistārī. 6.

When the monkeys (and bears) saw Lord Ram riding a chariot, they were exhilarant and greatly enthused. They rushed forward (to attack the enemy) with renewed energy, vigour and dynamism. (3)

When Ravana could not bear the ferocity of the attack and beating by the monkeys and bears, he expanded his Maya (spread the veil of delusions and its attendant illusions) to mislead and ward off his attackers. (4)

सो माया रघुबीरहि बाँची । लछिमन कपिन्ह सो मानी साँची ॥ ७ ॥
देखी कपिन्ह निसाचर अनी । अनुज सहित बहु कोसलधनी ॥ ८ ॥

sō māyā raghubīrahi bām̐cī. lachimana kapinha sō mānī sām̐cī. 7.
dēkhī kapinha nisācara anī. anuja sahita bahu kōsaladhanī. 8.

This Maya (delusion; illusion) was so powerful and surreal that except Lord Ram all else, including Laxman as well as all the monkeys, took what they saw to be a reality. (7)

[And, what did they see?] They saw that the battle-field was covered with an army of Lord Ram ("kōsaladhanī"; the Lord of Kaushal, or Ayodhya) which had countless

forms of the Lord himself and that of his younger brother Laxman leading the warriors¹. (8)

[Note—¹What was the effect of this illusion? The rushing monkey and bear warriors suddenly stopped in their tracks, for while a moment ago they saw their enemy, the demons and their king Ravana whom they were eager to hit, now all of a sudden they saw Lord Ram's army, i.e. an image of their own selves. This astonishing change of scene utterly baffled the monkeys and bears, leaving them confounded and puzzled.

The result was what Ravana had expected. Suddenly the attack ceased; suddenly calm prevailed in the battle-field. To wit, it was like the calm that precedes a fierce storm; it was a lull before the strike of the storm. But nonetheless, it gave Ravana some breathing space and time to recover his wits.]

छं०. बहु राम लछिमन देखि मर्कट भालु मन अति अपडरे । १ ।
 जनु चित्र लिखित समेत लछिमन जहँ सो तहँ चितवहिं खरे ॥ २ ॥
 निज सेन चकित बिलोकि हँसि सर चाप सजि कोसल धनी । ३ ।
 माया हरी हरि निमिष महँ हरषी सकल मर्कट अनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bahu rāma lachimana dēkhi markāṭa bhālu mana ati apaḍarē. 1.
 janu citra likhita samēta lachimana jaham̃ sō taham̃ citavahiṃ kharē. 2.
 nija sēna cakita bilōki haṃsi sara cāpa saji kōsala dhanī. 3.
 māyā harī hari nimīṣa mahum̃ haraṣī sakala markāṭa anī. 4.

When the monkey and bear warriors saw countless images of Lord Ram and Laxman that were created by Ravana spreading his Maya (magical powers to produce illusions) over the battle-field, they were taken aback, being utterly confounded and totally perplexed at this unexpected sight that stunned and greatly scared them out of their wits. (Chanda line no. 1)

So therefore, all of them, along with Laxman, were so dazed and confounded that they stood motionless on their tracks as if paralyzed, giving the impression that they weren't living beings but portraits painted on a canvas. (Chanda line no. 2)

When Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (kōsala dhanī), observed that his army was dazed and utterly shocked by Ravana's tricks (i.e. by his Maya), the Lord smiled in amusement¹, and mounted his arrow on the bow. (Chanda line no. 3)

Lord Hari (for this is another name of Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram) shot the arrow which in an instant cut through the veil of delusions or Maya spread by Ravana, that had created the illusion which had so much confounded his army². As soon as this Maya was removed, the army of monkeys and bears was overjoyed; everyone felt relieved and greatly excited. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram knew that what was seen on the ground was actually a mirage, an illusion created by Ravana to confuse the army of the Lord. It must be remembered here that Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, is the Lord of all Maya; he is like the Master

Magician. So, Lord Ram stepped in to neutralize the effects of Ravana's Maya just like this Master Magician who initially feels amused when a junior magician spreads his illusions to completely daze his audience, but soon finds out, at some point of time, that this junior fellow is behaving mischievously and transcending limits of discipline by deriving sadistic pleasure at the cost of the terrified audience, then the Master intervenes, and by his superior abilities neutralizes the spell of the mischievous fellow to relieve the tension and fear that had gripped the helpless audience.

Lord Ram smiled both in amusement, as he appreciated Ravana's abilities, as well as in annoyance, because Ravana was crossing limits of tolerance.

²So the Lord shot an arrow that ruptured this veil of delusions, and restored the original situation on the battle-field.]

दो०. बहुरि राम सब तन चितइ बोले बचन गँभीर ।
द्वंदजुद्ध देखहु सकल श्रमित भए अति बीर ॥ ८९ ॥

dōhā.

bahuri rāma saba tana cita'i bōlē bacana gambhīra.
dvandajud'dha dēkhahu sakala śramita bha'ē ati bīra. 89.

Then, Lord Ram addressed every one of his troops in a serious tone, instructing them; 'All of you are tired by now. So take a break; draw back a bit and move aside to clear the front line. From the sidelines, quietly watch a close hand duel that would now unfold directly between me and Ravana¹.' (Doha no. 89)

[Note—¹Both the chief commanders of their respective armies, Lord Ram of the army of monkeys and bears on this side, and Ravana commanding the army of demons on the other side, were now on equal footing, as both were astride magnificent war chariots that were fully armed and well equipped. So, this was the first time in the war that a duel between two powerful Lords and valiant warriors would take place on equal terms. On earlier occasions the fight was a mismatch as Lord Ram or Laxman were on foot while their adversaries were better placed as they rode chariots, as we find in the case of Meghanad as well as with Ravana.

However, Kumbhakaran's case was different as he had come to the battle-field on foot, trampling and crushing large numbers of monkeys and bears as he rampaged in the battle-field, furious with mad anger. So Lord Ram had faced him directly, because both were engaged in this duel on equal terms, with both of them standing on the ground, and not that one had the privilege of riding a war chariot and the other being disadvantaged by not having one.

Another question is this: The tide of the battle, at this point of time, was in favour of Lord Ram and his army, for the enemy army was virtually decimated and its commander-in-chief, the demon king Ravana, was besieged from all sides and left alone to fend for himself. This is the precise reason why Ravana decided to use his Maya to deflect the ferocious attack of the monkey and bear warriors who were trashing him wildly from all the sides, and he was unable to cope with this drubbing—apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 89 herein above. This being the case, Lord Ram could have allowed his army to continue pounding and pulverizing

Ravana, for then, sooner or later, the demon king would have automatically succumbed under this ferocious thrashing, sparing the Lord any more trouble. But why then did Lord Ram order his soldiers to hold back and stop their advance, and watch as he engages the demon king directly in a duel?

Well, when we ponder over this question to find an answer, the following points come to our mind:

The first is this: These monkeys and bears were no ordinary creatures; they were born carrying the genes of various gods—this undeniable fact is explicitly mentioned in (a) *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it; and (b) *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 29-32. These gods were fed up by Ravana's belligerence and had vowed to get rid of him anyhow, and with the support of the almighty Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram, their wishes were finally coming to be true.

Therefore, when the monkeys and bears were fighting Ravana, they had their personal scores to settle with him, and when given an opportunity they would not have waited for Lord Ram, who himself was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, to carry out his words, that 'he would come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the cruel demon race'—apropos: (a) *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187; and (b) *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 22-28.

To wit, the gods were so eager for settling scores with Ravana that they wouldn't have had the decency and the courtesy to wait and let their own Lord, i.e. Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram, to do the job for them to help him keep his word and maintain his honour, which would be possible only if Ravana was eliminating by Lord Ram. It is quite possible that the gods would have wished to take the credit of killing their arch enemy Ravana themselves rather than letting Lord Vishnu do so, and later on making them feel obliged to him by reminding them that he had suffered so much for their sake, and that if he had not helped them then Ravana would have continued to torment them endlessly. Yes indeed, this is true and quite feasible because we must remember that the gods 'were all very selfish by their inherent nature'—apropos: *Ram Charit Manas*, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 295; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

This is one primary reason why Lord Ram stepped in and ordered the monkeys and bears to hold back and let him do what he was expected to do.

The second plausible reason is this: It would have been very unbecoming of a noble commander-in-chief of the stature of Lord Ram to subject his opponent Ravana, who was of equal stature as him because he too was a mighty king of an equally mighty race, to such abject humiliation that he would be left to be thrashed and killed by junior soldiers of the Lord's army, while he was alone, without giving him an opportunity to prove himself in a direct conflict with the chief Lord. History would have recorded that 'Ravana was finally subdued and beaten to death by the monkeys and bears, and did not die fighting Lord Ram'. It would have been a great matter of shame and concern for the noble line of kings of Ayodhya if Lord Ram was accused by history on this account; it would have been an ignominy that would have lowered his head for all times to come.

Lord Ram was careful that he must fight and win this war by conforming to the laws of Dharma applied alongside the laws of Warfare. The laws of Dharma mandated that an enemy must be treated fairly and in a transparent manner, giving him an equal opportunity to fight his opponent, and not done to death when he is

helpless and feels trapped. That is not the noble law of knight-hood. The laws of Warfare also mandated that Ravana must be given an equal opportunity to prove his valour and gallantry in the battle-field, and not battered to death when he was finding himself cornered and all alone, for allowing that to happen would be demeaning for Lord Ram's own glory and fame.

In effect, here we find that Ravana was virtually marooned and left all alone to fend for himself against a vastly superior army of extremely ferocious warriors, the monkeys and bears, who were battering and bludgeoning him mercilessly from all sides. On the other hand, Lord Ram did not face this dire state; there was no direct threat to his life or body; nobody was attacking him physically. So therefore, to allow this situation to continue, where a lonely warrior, in this case Ravana, was being pummeled mercilessly from all the sides while his equally strong and able opponent, in this case Lord Ram, stood watching merrily and enjoying his sufferings, would have been tantamount to a battle that was unfair and fought on unequal terms. That was not acceptable either under the law of Dharma or of Warfare.

And suppose Ravana had died due to some reason during this confrontation with the monkeys and bears, what face would Lord Ram have to show the world as well as the gods—especially when they have provided him with a war chariot now, and he therefore had no excuse to offer—when confronted by the taunt that he had dared not face the mighty demon king face-to-face, that the real credit of killing Ravana should go the monkeys and bears and not to Lord Ram. Would it not have been a dark blot on the Lord's glory; would history excuse him for letting Ravana die a humiliating death at the hands of monkeys and bears when he was cornered and found himself alone, instead of like a valiant and brave warrior falling to the ground during a duel with an equally valiant and brave warrior?

Lord Ram did not wish to create a scandal; he had to ensure that Ravana's soul gets its due right of attaining deliverance, emancipation and salvation, which could only happen if he was killed by the Lord himself, and not by the monkeys. To be sure, this is what exactly happened—that when Ravana finally died, a brilliant shaft of light representing his Atma, his pure consciousness, emerged from his body and entered the divine body of Lord Ram, to clearly show the world that Lord Ram had accepted Ravana's soul within his own divine Self, which was pure cosmic Consciousness itself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

चौ०. अस कहि रथ रघुनाथ चलावा । बिप्र चरन पंकज सिरु नावा ॥ १ ॥

तब लंकेस क्रोध उर छावा । गर्जत तर्जत सन्मुख धावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi ratha raghunātha calāvā. bipra carana paṅkaja siru nāvā. 1.

taba laṅkēsa krōdha ura chāvā. garjata tarjata sanmukha dhāvā. 2.

Saying this (i.e. after instructing his warriors to fall back from the front lines and watch the hand-on-hand combat between himself and Ravana), Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram) mentally bowed his head before the revered (literally “lotus-like”) feet of Brahmins (to pay his obeisance to elders and seek their blessings), and then moved his chariot to the front of the line. (1)

No sooner did the Lord appear in the front of the battle line than Ravana's heart burnt with excess of anger as he became exceedingly furious; he raged and ranted and yelled and thundered as he dashed forward madly to meet the Lord head-on¹. (2)

[Note—¹When Ravana saw that his arch rival, who had killed his brother Kumbhakaran and his son Meghanad, had come boldly before him, there is no wonder he lost control over himself as all his pent-up feelings of revenge and retribution suddenly erupted like a suppressed volcano spewing hot lava of anger and indignation.

In Lord Ram the demon king Ravana saw the cause of all his misfortunes and troubles; and he was all the more infuriated when he saw the Lord calm and confident as if nothing was disturbing or bothering him. Ravana took exception to this display of nonchalance by Lord Ram as an open affront to his authority and majesty as he was accustomed to being treated with fear and awe, because even the mighty gods would ordinarily run away as soon as they heard his name, with no one in this creation ever daring to even to stand before him, what to talk of confronting or challenging him for an open duel. It was too much for Ravana's self-esteem and ego to cope with; so he burst out cursing and swearing vehemently, without any let and pause.

In the following verses we shall read how he vented his indignation and fury at Lord Ram.]

जीतेहु जे भट संजुग माहीं । सुनु तापस मैं तिन्ह सम नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

रावन नाम जगत जस जाना । लोकप जाकें बंदीखाना ॥ ४ ॥

jītehu jē bhaṭa saṅjuga māhīm. sunu tāpasa mair̥m tinha sama nāhīm. 3.
rāvana nāma jagata jasa jānā. lōkapa jākēm bandīkhānā. 4.

Ravana vented his anger and indignation at Lord Ram by shouting at him haughtily with these acerbic remarks with an underlying tone of boastfulness: 'Listen you hermit (tāpasa)¹! I am not like the many warriors you claim to have vanquished in battles till now.

[So therefore, don't befool thyself. I am no ordinary demon warrior as thou might be thinking. Don't live in a fool's paradise; don't hallucinate! Be warned that fighting with me and subduing me is a completely different proposition; it's a completely different cup that thee will find very bitter to put to thine lips, and even bitter to gulp down. Don't weigh me with the same scale as thou have been weighing others. Thou think that thou wilt easily drub me; well let's see who drubs whom.] (3)

My name is Ravana (don't thou wot that?). This name is famous the world over; it belongs to the One in whose prisons even the great Lokpals (the many gods who are deemed to be the custodians of the world) languish.

[Well, well; do thou imagine it would be an easy job and a joke for anyone to capture and enslave these mighty Lokpals who themselves are very powerful and resourceful? I have done exactly this, aren't thou aware of it? So it's merely thine figment of imagination that thou wilt trounce me like the way thou had done others; there's aught naught further from the truth. So be ware, I warn thee.] (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was dressed like a hermit during his sojourn in the forest, as this was one of the conditions imposed on him at the time he had left Ayodhya to spend 14 years in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.]

खर दूषन बिराध तुम्ह मारा । बधेहु ब्याध इव बालि बिचारा ॥ ५ ॥
 निसिचर निकर सुभट संघारेहु । कुंभकरन घननादहि मारेहु ॥ ६ ॥
 आजु बयरु सबु लेउँ निबाही । जौं रन भूप भाजि नहिं जाही ॥ ७ ॥
 आजु करउँ खलु काल हवाले । परेहु कठिन रावन केपाले ॥ ८ ॥

khara dūṣana birādha tumha mārā. badhēhu byādha iva bāli bicārā. 5.
 nisicara nikara subhaṭa saṅghārēhu. kumbhakarana ghananādahi mārēhu. 6.
 āju bayaru sabu lē'um' nibāhī. jauṁ rana bhūpa bhāji nahim jāhī. 7.
 āju kara'um' khalu kāla havālē. parēhu kaṭhina rāvana kē pālē. 8.

You have slayed Khar, Dushan¹ and Viradh², and you have killed the unfortunate poor fellow Baali³. (5)

You have killed great demon warriors who were most valiant and renowned for their gallantry⁴; and of course you have slayed Kumbhakaran (my brother)⁵ and Meghanad (my son)⁶. (6)

Oh King (bhūpa)! If you do not run away from the battle-field (out of terror, or when you are battered and bludgeoned by me), then come, today is the time for me to settle old scores with you by avenging all these deaths. Forsooth, the time has come for me to exact my retribution from you with a vengeance. (7)

In all sooth and without gainsay, I shall cast you to the jaws of Kaal (death) today, for remember you are up against me who is famed for his ruthlessness and stern and uncompromising nature⁷. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 7.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8—Doha no. 10.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede Doha no. 62.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 67—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 76 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-16 that precede it.

⁷The word “Ravana” means someone who makes others weep and wail. So here Ravana alludes to this interpretation of his name to threaten Lord Ram that today he will lash out so viciously and violently at the Lord that he will remember the battering for generations to come.]

सुनि दुर्बचन कालबस जाना । बिहँसि बचन कह कृपानिधाना ॥ ९ ॥
सत्य सत्य सब तव प्रभुताई । जल्पसि जनि देखाउ मनुसाई ॥ १० ॥

sunī durbacana kālabasa jānā. biham̐si bacana kaha kṛpānidhānā. 9.
satya satya saba tava prabhutā'ī. jalpasi jani dēkhā'u manusā'ī. 10.

Lord Ram, who was an embodiment of the virtues of mercy, grace, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhānā), heard the angry outburst of Ravana gracefully. He smiled and answered: (9)

‘Verily indeed; all that you have said about your majesty and powers are true¹ (and I don’t doubt it a wee whit). But come on; prove yourself and show your valour and gallantry in practical terms (to help us verify that all the things you have said about yourself are really true, and not merely loud bluster and empty talk). (10)

[Note—¹It is a noble and gentlemanly gesture for Lord Ram to publicly acknowledge Ravana’s greatness and majesty, though the latter was his enemy. But this acknowledgement is tinged with underlying taunt and scorn, for the Lord immediately teases him to prove himself worthy of what he claims to be.]

छं०. जानि जल्पना करि सुजसु नासहि नीति सुनहि करहि छमा । १ ।
संसार महँ पुरुष त्रिबिध पाटल रसाल पनस समा ॥ २ ॥
एक सुमनप्रद एक सुमन फल एक फलइ केवल लागहीं । ३ ।
एक कहहि कहहि करहिं अपर एक करहिं कहत न बागहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jani jalpanā kari sujasu nāsahi nīti sunahi karahi chamā. 1.
sansāra maham̐ pūruṣa tribidha pāṭala rasāla panasa samā. 2.
ēka sumanaprada ēka sumana phala ēka phala'i kēvala lāgahīm. 3.
ēka kahahīm kahahīm karahīm apara ēka karahīm kahata na bāgahīm. 4.

[Lord Ram continued—] ‘Don’t waste your breath by boasting so much about yourself as it would undermine your own fame (because those who are hollow from within try to hide their shortcoming by resorting to making a lot of noise about their achievements).

Excuse me, but there are some established norms and principles in this regard. Listen to them; I’ll tell you. (Chanda line no. 1)

Verily, there are three types of people in this world, and they are likened to these three plants—viz. the rose, the mango, and the jackfruit. (Chanda line no. 2)

[Now, pay attention to the difference between these three.] The first, i.e. the ‘rose’, gives flowers; the second, i.e. the ‘mango’, produces both flowers and fruits; while the third, i.e. the ‘jackfruit’, bears only fruits. (Chanda line no. 3)

Thus, the first sort of people are those who only talk and do nothing (like the rose plant that only bears flowers which gives visual pleasure to the world but gives it nothing worth more than that).

The second types of people are those who talk and do what they talk about (like the mango plant which has flowers as well as fruits).

And then lastly, there is the third category of people who actually do things but do not go about beating their own drum about their achievement (like the jackfruit plant that bears only fruits which the world eats, and no flowers to boast about in the world)¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram meant to say that he would prefer not to list his achievements and boast about himself like Ravana has done just a while ago; for the Lord believes in actions rather than loud talk. He teases Ravana and chides him for talking too much, instead of carrying out his threats on the ground.

These remarks of the Lord, said calmly with a sarcastic smile, were sure to engage Ravana further and stoke his anger, as the demon king had expected that Lord Ram would also shout back at him to counter his threats with equal vigour as Angad had done during their meeting some time ago, when they, i.e. Angad and Ravana, had engaged in a heated oral spat using all sorts of bitter insults and acerbic comments about each other. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Lord Ram’s composure and patience unnerved Ravana, and though he was taken aback and felt jolted, yet he gathered his wits and haughtily rebuked the Lord in the following Doha.]

दो०. राम बचन सुनि बिहँसा मोहि सिखावत ग्यान ।

बयरु करत नहिं तब डरे अब लागे प्रिय प्रान ॥ ९० ॥

dōhā.

rāma bacana suni bihamśā mōhi sikhāvata gyāna.

bayaru karata nahim taba ḍarē aba lāgē priya prāna. 90.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram, the exasperated Ravana laughed aloud boisterously, shooting back at the Lord in a haughty and sarcastic manner: ‘Ah, you are preaching me wisdom. At the time when you decided to develop hostility with me you had no fear, but now it seems you hold your life dear when you face me and feel that it is in danger.

[To wit, you act like a wise person calmly giving some solemn advice, of course in this case it is to someone who isn’t interested in it, to give an impression that you aren’t in affright of him and that nothing bothers you, whereas the fact is you

might be shuddering inside at the prospect of complete rout and abject defeat, and are looking desperately for a window for an honourable means of escape).’ (Doha no. 90)

[Note—Ravana retorts to Lord Ram’s cool response by saying that the latter is trying to hide his mortal fear of the former by behaving as if nothing serious faces him, as if the presence of the dreaded demon king is of no matter worth paying attention to because the Lord thinks that he would easily trounce Ravana.

Lord Ram had started his statement with the use of a courteous phrase “excuse me” (refer: Chanda line no. 1 herein above), and Ravana thought that it was a sign of weakness and fear, for he concluded that his opponent is trying to appease him by being courteous and polite, instead of being belligerent as is the usual case with warriors facing each other in a duel unto death, when such niceties are thrown to the wind, and replaced with provocative words and phrases to denounce the adversary.

Ravana thundered: “Hey, Look here ye all. Here is a hermit preaching me how a valorous and gallant knight ought to act. Well, come to think of it: why then does this King-turned-Hermit not practice himself what he professes. Oh King, come on now. Instead of employing the muscles of thy tongue in giving futile lectures, it would be fit for the occasion if thou employed the powers of the muscles of thine arms, and spare the trouble to the tongue. Hence, I strongly object to thy expostulating on how or how not I ought to behave, and I prithee instead to come forward to settle the question of who is greater and wiser by letting the Duel decide the matter for good.

I loathe being lectured. If thou wert as brave and valiant as thou claim to be, then why do thee hesitate and procrastinate in the matter of charging at me with full tilt and vigour like noble and gallant warrior-in-arm is expected to do? Say why have thee developed cold feet when face-to-face with someone whom thee treats as thine mortal enemy? It’s surely not behooving of a great warrior to hold back his reins when challenged by his opponent to prove his valour and mettle in open battle-field, and on equal terms. So welcome, charge; I am waiting for thee.”]

चौ०. कहि दुर्बचन क्रुद्ध दसकंधर । कुलिस समान लाग छाँड़े सर ॥ १ ॥

नानाकार सिलीमुख धाए । दिसि अरु बिदिसि गगन महि छाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahi durbacana krud'dha dasakandhara. kulisa samāna lāga chāmṛai sara. 1.
nānākāra silīmukha dhā'ē. disi aru bidisi gagana mahi chā'ē. 2.

Having said these taunting words to Lord Ram, the ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) began shooting a hail of arrows that were as powerful as the strike of thunder. [To wit, anyone who was hit by an arrow, fell to the ground immediately.] (1)

There was a rush of arrows that covered the sky and the earth from all sides. [The whole battle-field was blanketed by arrows that rained down from the sky in all directions.] (2)

पावक सर छाँड़ेउ रघुबीरा । छन महुँ जरे निसाचर तीरा ॥ ३ ॥

छाड़िसि तीब्र सक्ति खिसिआई । बान संग प्रभु फेरि चलाई ॥ ४ ॥

pāvaka sara chāmṛē'u raghubīrā. chana mahum̐ jarē nisācara tīrā. 3.
chāḍisi tībra sakti khisi'ā'ī. bāna saṅga prabhu phēri calā'ī. 4.

Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) responded by shooting fiery arrows that immediately dashed forward and not only intercepted the incoming arrows shot by Ravana but also burnt them to ashes¹. (3)

Feeling peeved and ashamed at his failure, Ravana shot a powerful weapon called Shakti (which probably was a special missile more powerful than ordinary arrows shot by him).

Lord Ram intercepted it by shooting a precisely aimed arrow which hit the incoming Shakti at its tip with such a mighty force that it turned around and retraced its path (to return to Ravana and fall down before him in a crumbled mass of the burnt-out shaft)². (4)

[Note—¹It was like the case of modern-day missile interception system. The incoming missiles launched by Ravana in the form of his arrows fired in rapid succession were intercepted and destroyed mid-air by the missiles shot by Lord Ram in the form of his arrows.

²The defensive arrow shot by Lord Ram intercepted Ravana's Shakti mid-air which such a great force that surely there must have been a mighty flash and explosion as the two darts met each other head-on. This resulted in the Shakti's power keg exploding in a fiery display of light and thunder, after which the diffused shaft of the missile was flung back to the place from where it was launched.]

कोटिन्ह चक्र त्रिसूल पबारै । बिनु प्रयास प्रभु काटि निवारै ॥ ५ ॥
निफल होहिं रावन सर कैसें । खल के सकल मनोरथ जैसें ॥ ६ ॥

kōṭinha cakra trisūla pabārai. binu prayāsa prabhu kāṭi nivārai. 5.
niphala hōhim rāvana sara kaisēm. khala kē sakala manōratha jaisēm. 6.

Ravana was not to be so easily outwitted. He (grounded his teeth in anger and) launched a fresh salvo of weapons such as discs with sharp razor-like edges, and lancets that were shaped like tridents. But Lord Ram neutralized them as well, by cutting and breaking them all (with the help of his powerful arrows). (5)

All the arrows and other missiles shot by Ravana failed in the same way as all crooked intentions and evil plans of a wicked person are destined to failure¹. (6)

[Note—¹The idea here is that no matter how intelligent and great a crooked person thinks himself to be, no matter how carefully he may have designed his evil plans, but wickedness never pays in the long run, and such a person cannot finally prevail over those who are good and righteous.]

तब सत बान सारथी मारेसि । परेउ भूमि जय राम पुकारेसि ॥ ७ ॥
राम कृपा करि सूत उठावा । तब प्रभु परम क्रोध कहूँ पावा ॥ ८ ॥

taba sata bāna sārathī mārēsi. parē'u bhūmi jaya rāma pukārēsi. 7.
rāma kṛpā kari sūta uṭhāvā. taba prabhu parama krōdha kahum̐ pāvā. 8.

Then he (i.e. Ravana) shot a hundred arrows at the charioteer of Lord Ram, who gave a loud cry hailing the glory of the Lord and calling for his victory as he fell down unconscious to the ground, gravely wounded by the strike. (7)

Lord Ram invoked his mystical powers and showed his compassionate nature by lifting the charioteer back on his feet (i.e. reviving him)¹.

This action of Ravana highly infuriated the Lord², and he became exceedingly wrathful³. (8)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that when Laxman was made unconscious for the second time by Meghanad, Lord Ram had easily revived him in a similar manner—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 84.

²Lord Ram indeed had this mystical ability to revive any person who was on the verge of death. We have a fine example of it when the Lord had asked Jatau, the old vulture king who was mortally wounded by Ravana while the latter was taking Sita away to Lanka aboard his chariot and Jatau had tried to save her. When Lord Ram met Jatau, he had asked him that if he so wished then the Lord can bless him with the boon of life, but Jatau refused, saying that he would rather attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation than live now, because not again would he ever get this opportunity to die while the Supreme Being was himself there right before him. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 31.

Another clear example is found in the case of Baali, the brother of Sugriv, whom also the Lord had given the option to live a long and stable life if he so wished, but he too preferred to die in the Lord's presence just like Jatau had wished. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 10.

The idea is that though Lord Ram had desisted from performing any super-human deeds in order to conceal his true identity as being Lord Vishnu himself, but often times he let it known to those on whom he had shown his grace who he actually was, to make them feel blessed and spiritually blissful.

We shall soon read that Ravana would shoot down all the four horses of the Lord's chariot, but once again the Lord would immediately get them on their feet—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 92 herein after.

³Why was Lord Ram so infuriated when his charioteer, named Matali, was wounded? It is because the charioteer was innocent; he had not caused any harm to any of the demons like other monkeys and bears had been doing during the course of the war. So therefore, by showing anger the Lord gave a message to one and all that if an innocent person, who is quietly doing his duty, is harmed in any manner, then the Lord would not tolerate it.]

छं०. भए क्रुद्ध जुद्ध बिरुद्ध रघुपति त्रोन सायककसमसे । १ ।
 कोदंड धुनि अति चंड सुनि मनुजाद सब मारुत ग्रसे ॥ २ ॥
 मंदोदरी उर कंप कंपति कमठ भू भूधर त्रसे । ३ ।
 चिक्करहिं दिग्गज दसन गहि महि देखि कौतुक सुर हँसे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bha'ē krud'dha jud'dha birud'dha raghupati trōna sāyaka kasamasē. 1.
 kōdaṇḍa dhuni ati caṇḍa suni manujāda saba māruta grasē. 2.
 mandōdarī ura kampa kampati kamaṭha bhū bhūdhara trasē. 3.
 cikkarahim diggaja dasana gahi mahi dēkhi kautuka sura haṁsē. 4.

When the Lord of the Raghus (“raghupati”; Lord Ram) became angry in the battle-field and wished to punish the opponent (Ravana, who had offended the Lord by injuring his innocent charioteer), the arrows in his quiver became agitated, eager to become active and shoot forth. (Chanda line no. 1)

The thunderous twang made by the Lord’s bow created such a fierce sound that the sound-waves produced by it hit the man-eating demon with a mighty force so hard that they were stunned, tottering and trembling wherever they stood. (Chanda line no. 2)

[Ravan’s wife] Mandodari’s heart fluttered too. The ocean, the legendary Tortoise, the earth with its mountains, et al, all felt terrified, and all began to tremble¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

The Diggajas (the legendary Elephants who support the earth in the eight corners) shrieked wildly as they caught the earth in their teeth (to prevent it from getting dislodged from its position).

It was such an awe-inspiring and strange sight that the gods wondered at it, but at the same time they felt happy at the development². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹A similar thing had occurred when Lord Ram had broken the bow in Janakpur to marry Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 261.

Once again, such a development is recorded when Lord Ram and his vast army departed from Kishkindha for Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 35.

²There was a great upheaval, as if a mighty quake is shaking up this world. All this commotion was caused by one thing—Lord Ram’s bow twanging. This was a thing that filled the gods with awe and wonder. But since it was the sound of Lord Ram’s bow, the Lord who was their well-wisher and protector, and in this particular instant he twanged his bow to show his annoyance at his charioteer’s injury, the gods felt happy. It was not something to worry, but rather an occasion to celebrate, as now it became all the more certain for the gods that Lord Ram would definitely slay Ravana without showing any mercy on him.

Earlier the gods may have had some hidden fear that it may perhaps be that Ravana decides to surrender before the Lord, and if this happens the merciful Lord Ram would find it difficult to refuse his plea for mercy. If that came to pass, then their tormentor Ravana would escape unharmed, and then everything would come to a naught. But now that Lord Ram had become angry at Ravana, the gods felt rested as their fear was unfounded, for now it was certain that Lord Ram would show no mercy on Ravana as the latter had offended the Lord by injuring his innocent charioteer.]

दो०. तानेउ चाप श्रवन लागि छाँडे बिसिख कराल ।

राम मारगन गन चले लहलहात जनु ब्याल ॥ ९१ ॥

dōhā.

tānē'u cāpa śravana lagi chāmṛē bisikha karāla.

rāma māragana gana calē lahalahāta janu byāla. 91.

Lord Ram pulled the string of his bow right back up to his ears (i.e. pulled the string tight), and then shot fierce arrows. These arrows of the Lord dashed forward like so many ferocious dragons or serpents flying in the air (with their heads aiming straight in the direction of Ravana, and their tails waving behind them in a slow motion to the right and the left). (Doha no. 91)

चौ०. चले बान सपच्छ जनु उरगा । प्रथमहिं हतेउ सारथी तुरगा ॥ १ ॥

रथ बिभंजि हति केतु पताका । गर्जा अति अंतर बल थाका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calē bāna sapaccha janu uragā. prathamahim hatē'u sārathī turagā. 1.

ratha bibhanji hati kētu patākā. garjā ati antara bala thākā. 2.

The Lord's arrows moved ahead towards their target (Ravana) as if so many winged serpents were flying speedily in that direction. They first slammed down the charioteer and the horses of Ravana's chariot, killing them. (1)

Then they slammed at the chariot itself, breaking it down into splinters, and at the same time tore through the royal flag and the war standard of the demon race, as well as the banner atop his chariot, reducing them into tatters. (2)

तुरत आन रथ चढ़ि खिसिआना । अज सज छाँडेसि बिधि नाना ॥ ३ ॥

बिफल होहिं सब उद्यम ताके । जिमि परद्रोह निरत मनसा के ॥ ४ ॥

turata āna ratha caḍhi khisi'ānā. astra sastra chāmṛēsi bidhi nānā. 3.

biphala hōhim saba udyama tākē. jimi paradrōha nirata manasā kē. 4.

Feeling extremely embarrassed and ashamed at this humiliation¹, Ravana wasted no time in climbing onto a second chariot (which he had kept as a standby)², and angrily

shot many varieties of weapons and missiles of different denominations at his adversary (Lord Ram). (3)

All his efforts proved futile in the same way as an evil person's intentions to cause ill to others would fail in the long run³. (4)

[Note—¹Ravana felt exasperated because when he had shot his own arrow or missile aimed at Lord Ram's chariot, it had only felled the charioteer whom the Lord immediately revived; but Ravana's arrow could not do more harm other than this small diversion.

On the other hand, when Lord Ram shot his arrow in retaliation, it completely demolished Ravana's chariot, killing its horses and the charioteer, and tearing apart his flag and banner, proving at once that the Lord was superior to Ravana in the art and skill of warfare and use of weapons. This realization not only peeved and embarrassed Ravana greatly but also sent a chill down his spine, as now he was gaping at the alarming prospect of trying to outwit an enemy who was far more superior and capable and skilled and empowered than what he had earlier envisioned him to be.

²We have noticed earlier too that Ravana had always kept an extra chariot, fully armed and well equipped, as a standby in the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 84.

Another remarkable point to be noted here is this: Lord Ram was able to revive his charioteer when he was struck down by the missile shot by Ravana, but it is obvious that Ravana did not possess the knowledge of how to do it. This was another reason of his getting extremely alarmed. He wondered at how his enemy was able to revive those who fell down mortally wounded and unconscious on the ground. Earlier it was Laxman who was revived, and now it was the charioteer.

Well, come to think of it: How actually was Lord Ram able to achieve this miraculous feat besides the factor of his being the Supreme Being who is all-able, all-knowing and all-powerful, the Lord who can do the impossible should he wish to do it?

The plausible answer is this: When Laxman was revived by the concoction prepared from the medical herbs brought by Hanuman on the advice of the doctor named Sushen, Lord Ram realized its wonderful properties, and surely he had kept aside the rest of the remedy after a part of the preparation successfully revived Laxman, to be used in emergencies during the war. Lord Ram had used it first to revive Laxman when he fell for the second time upon being hit by Ravana's powerful Shakti (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 84), and now again when he revived his charioteer who was also struck down by Ravana (refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 91). The Lord would also revive his four horses when they would be struck dead by Ravana soon—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 herein below.

Ravana was dumb-struck; he could not understand the mystery of how Lord Ram managed to perform this magical trick of fully reviving someone who was almost dead. What does it indicate? Well, it means that Sushen, Ravana's own doctor, was privately annoyed at his own Lord, at his high-handedness and arrogant nature; the doctor was very sad and angry when the pious Vibhishan was ill-treated by the demon king. So he mentally resolved not to help him any further. This is also the reason that Sushen told the correct herb to Lord Ram in order to revive Laxman, for if

the doctor had so wished he could have administered a wrong medicine to Laxman that would have done him to death, instead of reviving him with all his original vigour. This was Sushen's way of punishing his cruel Lord Ravana for the way the latter had been behaving throughout his life.

But this point did not strike Ravana; he had never thought in his wildest of dreams that Sushen, the royal doctor of the demon race, would also betray him by not disclosing the secret medicine by which the almost-dead could be revived back to life. But some blame goes to Ravana as well—for he had never, in his arrogance and haughtiness, sought Sushen's advice on this matter, thinking he did not need it, as no one in this creation would ever be able to trounce him and create a situation where he would need someone's help to revive those who were on the verge of death. Ravana thought: "I have conquered the God of Death himself; so what's the worry."

The point to remark here is that if a king, or any ruler for that matter, fails to keep his subjects in good humour and favourably inclined towards himself, then one or the other day these same subjects of his would vent their suppressed anger at him by turning hostile, and pulling the rug from under his feet at a time when he least expects. In the case of the poor and unfortunate demon king Ravana, many of his trusted aides had turned their backs on him when the tides of time and fortune themselves turned against him.

³A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 91.]

तब रावन दस सूल चलावा । बाजि चारि महि मारि गिरावा ॥ ५ ॥
तुरग उठाइ कोपि रघुनायक । खैंचि सरासन छाँड़े सायक ॥ ६ ॥

taba rāvana dasa sūla calāvā. bāji cāri mahi māri girāvā. 5.
turaga uṭhā'i kōpi raghunāyaka. khainci sarāsana chāmṛē sāyaka. 6.

Then Ravana shot ten fierce tridents or lancets, which struck and fell the four horses of Lord Ram's chariot almost as dead. (5)

Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) immediately lifted the fallen horses (i.e. he revived the horses back to life and put them on their feet once again in the same way as he had lifted his charioteer a while ago).

The enraged Lord Ram pulled his bow and furiously shot a powerful volley of arrows in retaliation. (6)

रावन सिर सरोज बनचारी । चलि रघुबीर सिलीमुख धारी ॥ ७ ॥
दस दस बान भाल दस मारे । निसरि गए चले रुधिर पनारे ॥ ८ ॥

rāvana sira sarōja banacārī. cali raghubīra silīmukha dhārī. 7.
dasa dasa bāna bhāla dasa mārē. nisari ga'e calē rudhira panārē. 8.

The group of arrows of Lord Ram went towards the heads of Ravana like hordes of bees were moving towards a cluster of lotus flowers, as is their natural wont or habit¹. (7)

Lord Ram shot a volley of arrows in such a way that a cluster of ten of them struck the forehead of each of Ravana's ten heads, pierced through them, and emerged on the other side². This resulted in producing large gaping holes in his heads, from which gushed out streams of blood like water flowing from water spouts or drains from which rain water flows out from rooftops during heavy rainfall². (8)

[Note—¹The bees have a natural habit of moving in large numbers towards a dense cluster of lotus flowers where they hover for a while before alighting on the flowers to suck out their nectar. In this metaphor, the large numbers of Lord Ram's arrows are likened to the bees, and the heads of Ravana to the lotus flowers. Just like the bees aim straight at the lotus flower and alight directly on it without being attracted by any other flower, the arrows aimed straight at Ravana's head without going off track. Once they strike the heads these arrows would suck the life out of them just as the bees suck out the nectar from the lotus flowers after alighting on them.

²A total of 100 arrows were shot by Lord Ram. There were 10 arrows aimed at each of Ravana's 10 heads—i.e. 10 x 10 = 100.

Remember: Ravana's heads were huge as mountains; so therefore his foreheads were also broad like the sides of these mountains.

Ravana had shot ten tridents (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 herein above), so Lord Ram answered by shooting an equal number of arrows aimed at each of his heads.]

स्रवत रुधिर धायउ बलवाना । प्रभु पुनि कृत धनु सर संधाना ॥ ९ ॥
तीस तीर रघुबीर पबारे । भुजन्हि समेत सीस महि पारे ॥ १० ॥

sravata rudhira dhāya'u balavānā. prabhu puni kṛta dhanu sara sandhānā. 9.
tīsa tīra raghubīra pabārē. bhujanhi samēta sīsa mahi pārē. 10.

Ravana, who was exceptionally strong and valorous, dashed forward even while blood flowed out in a steady stream from his foreheads. Lord Ram once again mounted his arrows on his bow, and took aim. (9)

The brave Lord of the Raghus ("raghubīra"; Lord Ram) this time shot thirty arrows at one go. These arrows sliced away Ravana's twenty arms and ten heads which fell to the ground. (10)

काटतहीं पुनि भए नबीने । राम बहोरि भुजा सिर छीने ॥ ११ ॥
प्रभु बहु बार बाहु सिर हए । कटत झटिति पुनि नूतन भए ॥ १२ ॥

kāṭatahīm puni bha'e nabīnē. rāma bahōri bhujā sira chīnē. 11.
prabhu bahu bāra bāhu sira ha'ē. kaṭata jhaṭiti puni nūtana bha'ē. 12.

No sooner had Lord Ram severed Ravana's heads and arms than they grew back once again, immediately.

Not to be daunted, the Lord cut off his heads and arms once again. (11)

But the same thing was repeated: for as soon as these were severed from Ravana's body, new ones (10 heads and 20 arms) took their place instantly¹. (12)

[Note—¹It is like the case of a Hydra. We learn in basic zoology that when any part of this primary organism is cut, it is able to regenerate the severed part on its own. This phenomenon of Ravana regenerating his heads and arms applies especially to the Hydra whose heads regenerate automatically if cut off.]

पुनि पुनि प्रभु काटत भुज सीसा । अति कौतुकी कोसलाधीसा ॥ १३ ॥
रहे छाड़ नभ सिर अरु बाहू । मानहुँ अमित केतु अरु राहू ॥ १४ ॥

puni puni prabhu kātata bhuja sīsā. ati kautukī kōsalādhīsā. 13.
rahē chā'i nabha sira aru bāhū. mānahuṁ amita kētu aru rāhū. 14.

[Now it was the turn of Lord Ram to be amazed and left wondering. Why? Because—]

Lord Ram repeatedly severed the heads and arms of Ravana, but each time they grew back on his body. The Lord of Kaushal ("kōsalādhīsā"; Lord Ram) was playing this strange game with Ravana to amuse himself (kautuka)¹. (13)

The severed heads and arms of Ravana filled the sky as if so many comets and falling stars, represented by Rahu and Ketu in mythology², were dashing hither-thither through the firmament. (14)

[Note—¹This verse can have another interpretation: "This strange phenomenon of Ravana growing his heads and arms every time Lord Ram cut them filled him with awe and amazement."

²In this analogy, the heads of Ravana are like the many 'Rahus', and his arms are like the 'Ketus'. The 'Rahu' is the severed head of a demon of this name; the Rahu is said to devour the disc of the moon and the sun to produce the lunar and solar eclipses respectively according to mythology.

The 'Ketu' is the torso of the same demon Rahu, and after his head was cut off the rest of the body moved around in the universe. The 'comet' that we witness in the sky is said to be the Ketu of mythology.

Since Ravana's heads were round, they are compared to Rahu; and his arms, being muscular and tubular, are likened to the Ketu which is like a long and broad ribbon.]

छं०. जनु राहु केतु अनेक नभ पथ स्रवत सोनित धावहीं । १ ।
रघुबीर तीर प्रचंड लागहिं भूमि गिरन न पावहीं ॥ २ ॥
एक एक सर सिर निकर छेदे नभ उड़त इमि सोहहीं । ३ ।

जनु कोपि दिनकर कर निकर जहँ तहँ बिधुंतुद पोहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

janu rāhu kētu anēka nabha patha sravata sōnita dhāvahīm. 1.
raghubīra tīra pracaṇḍa lāgahīm bhūmi girana na pāvahīm. 2.
ēka ēka sara sira nikara chēdē nabha uṛata imi sōhahīm. 3.
janu kōpi dinakara kara nikara jaham̐ taham̐ bidhuntuda pōhahīm. 4.

It appeared that countless Rahus and Ketus were streaking through the sky while blood flowed from them and formed a trail behind their path. (Chanda line no. 1)

These heads and arms of Ravana continued to fly across the sky as they couldn't fall down to the ground, because they were flung off so violently when Lord Ram's arrows cut them off from the demon king's body that they were put in a trajectory that neutralized the effect of gravity and kept them air-borne for a long time (much like the kite flies). (Chanda line no. 2)

The heads of Ravana flew through the sky, with each of them being pierced by Lord Ram's arrows that passed through them, to create an impression that the countless rays of the angry sun were picking up the Rahus one by one and impaling them by their energized darts¹. (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹The Sun became angry at Rahu; so it decided to shoot its rays in the form of energized darts that impaled Rahu, and forced it to go round and round around the blazing disc of the Sun to get roasted alive.

In this analogy, the arrows of Lord Ram are like the darts of Sun's rays shot to impale Rahu, and the severed heads of Ravana are like Rahu himself.]

दो०. जिमि जिमि प्रभु हर तासु सिर तिमि तिमि होहिं अपार ।
सेवत बिषय बिबर्ध जिमि नित नित नूतन मार ॥ ९२ ॥

dōhā.

jimi jimi prabhu hara tāsū sira timi timi hōhīm apāra.
sēvata biṣaya bibardha jimi nita nita nūtana māra. 92.

Ravana's heads grew back soon as Lord Ram cut them off in the same way as longing for the world and its material objects, as well as the yearning for the pleasures of the senses continue to increase in direct proportion to one's involvement in them. (Doha no. 92)

[Note—To wit, the more a person allows himself to get involved with the material world, and derive pleasure and comfort from its sense objects, the more his desire for them increases. So likewise, the more heads of Ravana were cut off by Lord Ram, the more heads grew back.

The idea is this: After a certain point of time, Lord Ram realized that it was a waste of time and energy trying to kill Ravana by cutting off his heads. Some other means had to be devised now.]

चौ०. दसमुख देखि सिरन्ह कै बाढ़ी । बिसरा मरन भई रिस गाढ़ी ॥ १ ॥

गर्जेउ मूढ़ महा अभिमानी । धायउ दसहु सरासन तानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dasamukha dēkhi siranha kai bāṛhī. bisarā marana bhaī risa gāṛhī. 1.
garjē'u mūrha mahā abhimānī. dhāya'u dasahu sarāsana tānī. 2.

When the ten-mouthed (dasamukha)¹ demon Ravana observed that his heads were multiplying endlessly, he forgot about the danger of death that had been looming over his head a while ago (because now he was sure that he wouldn't die, for it is next to impossible for a living being to survive once its head is cut off from its body, but this principle didn't seem to apply to Ravana).

With that fear out of the way, with the peril of imminent death no more occupying his mind, Ravana was now seized with severe pangs of revenge as flames of burning wrath and desire for vengeance swept through his entire being. (1)

That extremely haughty and arrogant fool of a monster (mūrha mahā abhimānī) thundered boisterously (garjē'u) even as he dashed forward with all his ten bows² drawn and strung tight, ready to shoot (arrows). (2)

[Note—¹Ravana had ten heads, and therefore 'ten mouths'.

²He had 'twenty arms', which means 'ten pairs of arms'. So he held ten bows in each of his ten arms on one side of his gigantic body, while the other ten arms were ready to mount arrows on the bows of the corresponding side in order to shoot them.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 81 where this arrangement of bows and arrows is clearly marked.]

समर भूमि दसकंधर कोप्यो । बरषि बान रघुपति रथ तोप्यो ॥ ३ ॥

दंड एक रथ देखि न परेऊ । जनु निहार महुँ दिनकर दुरेऊ ॥ ४ ॥

samara bhūmi dasakandhara kōpyō. baraṣi bāna raghupati ratha tōpyō. 3.
daṇḍa ēka ratha dēkhi na parē'ū. janu nihāra mahum'ṁ dinakara durē'ū. 4.

The ten-shouldered (dasakandhara)¹ Ravana became wrathful and vengeful in the battle-field; he rained down a dense volley of arrows that covered the chariot of Lord Ram (also known as "Raghupati", the Lord of the Raghu-race of great kings of Ayodhya). (3)

The chariot of Lord Ram was so covered by this thick veil of arrows that for about an hour (daṇḍa ēka) it remained out of sight like an object that becomes invisible for some time during thick fog or mist². (4)

[Note—¹Ravana had 'ten shoulders' upon which were his ten necks and ten heads like a Hydra of ancient Greek mythology.

²Even as an object remains unharmed, though it is not visible, when it is covered by a thick cover of fog or mist, which however is short-lived by its very nature, and as soon as the fog or mist dissipates the object comes to view once again, so was the case with Lord Ram's chariot. To wit, for some time the Lord's chariot became invisible because Ravana's arrows had covered it from all sides, but when the hail of arrows cleared, the chariot was once again seen in all its splendour and magnificence.]

हाहाकार सुरन्ह जब कीन्हा । तब प्रभु कोपि कारमुक लीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
सर निवारि रिपु के सिर काटे । ते दिसि बिदिसि गगन महि पाटे ॥ ६ ॥

hāhākāra suranha jaba kīnhā. taba prabhu kōpi kāramuka līnhā. 5.
sara nivāri ripu kē sira kātē. tē disi bidisi gagana mahi pātē. 6.

But during this time when Lord Ram's chariot became invisible, the gods panicked and became extremely alarmed; they raised a pitiful cry of woe and fear.

When the Lord observed the piteous condition of the terrified gods, he angrily lifted his formidable bow which was like the mouth of Death (kāramuka). (5)

Letting out a fierce volley of arrows from it, the Lord severed the heads of the enemy once again. These severed heads covered the firmament, the landscape of the sky, from one end to another¹. (6)

[Note—¹Imagine the confoundedness of the terrified gods: The sky was already thickly covered with countless heads and arms of Ravana flying randomly in all directions like so many Rahus and Ketus (apropos: Chaupai line no. 14 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 92 herein above); then Ravana's arrows flew thickly to conceal Lord Ram's chariot (apropos: Chaupai line no. 3 herein above); and now whatever space was left was filled with a fresh supply of Ravana's heads that the Lord now cut.

There was a thick carpet of heads, arms and arrows spread in the space of the sky between where the gods were stationed in the heaven and the ground below where the war was being fought. In this smokescreen the gods were literally blinded as they could perceive nothing of what was happening on the battle-field.

To wit, this cover of heads, arms and arrows which obscured the view of the battle-field from the gods was actually Lord Ram's way of spreading his Maya upon these gods: the Lord had performed certain mystical deeds and magical tricks which perhaps he wished to keep to himself and concealed from the gods; and so he employed this ruse to keep the gods in oblivion of what was actually happening in the battle-field.]

काटे सिर नभ मारग धावहिं । जय जय धुनि करि भय उपजावहिं ॥ ७ ॥
कहँ लछिमन सुग्रीव कपीसा । कहँ रघुबीर कोसलाधीसा ॥ ८ ॥

kāṭē sira nabha māraga dhāvahiṃ. jaya jaya dhuni kari bhaya upajāvahiṃ. 7.
kaham'lachimana sugrīva kapīsā. kaham'raghubīra kōsalādhīsā. 8.

The severed heads of Ravana dart hither and thither through the path of the sky, letting out shrieks of 'victory-victory; hail-hail' that create terrible fear in all those who listen to these ghostly voices¹. (7)

Even as these heads streak through the sky they kept on howling gravely: 'Where is Laxman; where is Sugriv, the king of the monkeys. Where is Raghubir, the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram)?' (8)

[Note—¹The ghostly sound produced by severed heads of Ravana terrified the gods in heaven, as well as the army of monkeys and bears on the ground.]

छं०. कहँ रामु कहि सिर निकर धाए देखि मर्कट भजि चले । १ ।
संधानि धनु रघुबंसमनि हँसि सरन्हि सिर बेधे भले ॥ २ ॥
सिर मालिका कर कालिका गहि बृंद बृंदन्हि बहु मिलीं । ३ ।
करि रुधिर सरि मज्जनु मनहुँ संग्राम बट पूजन चलीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kaham'rāmu kahi sira nikara dhā'ē dēkhi markāṭa bhaji calē. 1.
sandhāni dhanu raghubansamani ham'si saranhi sira bēdhē bhalē. 2.
sira mālikā kara kālīkā gahi bṛnda bṛndanhi bahu milīm. 3.
kari rudhira sari majjanu manahum'saṅgrāma baṭa pūjana calīm. 4.

'Where is Ram'—saying these words, clusters of severed heads whistled through the sky in every direction, and this sight so much terrified the monkeys and bears on the battle-ground that they ran helter-skelter out of fear. (Chanda line no. 1)

Lord Ram, who was like a gem in the race of kings belonging to Raghu's race (raghubansamani), smiled in amusement even as he lifted his bow and shot arrows that pierced these flying heads properly in such a way that they stopped creating any more howling sound¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, on the battle-field itself there were hordes of Kalikas (female forms of the god of death known as 'Kaal') roaming around in groups while holding garlands of skulls in their hands. (Chanda line no. 3)

It created an impression that these patron goddesses of the battle-field had first taken a bath in a river of blood and were now proceeding to offer their worship of a Vat Tree (a banyan tree) symbolized by the war². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The next set of arrows shot by Lord Ram punctured bigger holes in the heads of Ravana that were making so much noise as they flew in the sky so as to completely silence them. Perhaps the holes made previously were very small, say like those in a flute or any other wind-based musical instrument, and when these heads flew through the sky with great speed they produced a whistling sound when air passed through

these apertures. So, Lord Ram shot a second volley of arrows that drilled bigger holes into these heads, which helped to stop the ghostly sound that they made.

²The Kalikas were carrying garlands of skulls just like women folk carry garlands of flowers when they go to offer worship to a holy tree, which is the banyan tree in this case. Here this ‘banyan tree’ is represented by the raging ‘war’, and like the banyan tree that has many roots and branches of different shapes spreading over a large area, the war too had different phases and different aspects, with its ups and downs and changing contours, where the tide of fortune would change sides swiftly, once favouring the demon army and at another moment favouring the army of monkeys and bears.]

दो०. पुनि दसकंठ क्रुद्ध होइ छाँड़ी सक्ति प्रचंड ।

चली बिभीषन सन्मुख मनहुँ काल कर दंड ॥ ९३ ॥

dōhā.

puni dasakaṇṭha krud'dha hō'i chāmṛī sakti pracaṇḍa.
calī bibhīṣana sanmukha manahum̐ kāla kara daṇḍa. 93.

Once again, Ravana shot another powerful weapon called ‘Shakti’ (a lancet or a trident that possessed exceptional ability to strike down the target at which it was aimed)¹. It was aimed at Vibhishan, and so it headed straight to him as if the fearful baton of Kaal (i.e. the weapon of the god of death) was thrown at Vibhishan (with the intention to kill him). (Doha no. 93)

[Note—¹The term “Shakti” applied to a powerful and strong weapon that had a lot of energy and punch incorporated into it; it had the potential to create extensive damage to the target it was aimed at. It was invincible and infallible as it rarely failed to attain its objective.

Ravana had many such exclusive weapons in reserve, and he used them when other weapons failed to satisfy him. He had used a Shakti earlier to hit Laxman with the result that the latter fell down on the ground unconscious by its impact—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 83.

Presently, when Ravana saw Vibhishan, his estranged brother, his indignation and anger knew no bounds. He flew into a rage when he sighted Vibhishan because he treated the latter as a traitor and one who had betrayed his own family and race. Ravana’s anger leapt up into a flame when he saw Vibhishan in the same manner as when he had become furious upon seeing Laxman, because the sight of Laxman reminded Ravana that it was he who had killed his dear son Meghanad. Now once again, the sight of Vibhishan revived the memory of the bitter moment when he had kicked him out of Lanka for advocating the cause of Lord Ram.

To wit, Ravana became incensed by the sight of Vibhishan so much that he decided to get done with him; so he shot the powerful Shakti to kill his brother and get him out of his way for good.]

चौ०. आवत देखि सक्ति अति घोरा । प्रनतारति भंजन पन मोरा ॥ १ ॥

तुरत बिभीषन पाछें मेला । सन्मुख राम सहेउ सोइ सेला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

āvata dēkhi sakti ati ghōrā. pranatārati bhañjana pana mōrā. 1.

turata bibhīṣana pāchēm mēlā. sanmukha rāma sahē'u sō'i sēlā. 2.

When Lord Ram saw this formidable Shakti approaching to target Vibhishan, he bethought to himself: ‘It is my declared vow that I would eliminate all fears of those who have surrendered themselves to me and have sought my protection. [Therefore, it is obligatory upon me to protect Vibhishan and get him out of harms way, even if it means that I have to suffer as a consequence.]’¹ (1)

Deciding thus, the Lord immediately pushed Vibhishan behind and stood in the front to bear the brunt of the attack of the incoming Shakti, thereby effectively shielding Vibhishan from the horrifying deadly effects of the missile². (2)

[Note—¹This determination of Lord Ram, that he would not flinch or demur, nor procrastinate even for a while, when it comes to extending his protection to those who have come to him in the time of distress to surrender themselves before him and seek his protection, is explicitly stressed by the Lord himself earlier too with reference to Vibhishan himself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 44.

Lord Ram had made this declaration publicly, and so it was now incumbent upon him to show everyone that he keeps his words like a true and gallant knight.

²Another very significant point to note at this juncture is this: Lord Ram was riding a chariot at this point of time, and so was Ravana. How then did Vibhishan come into the picture?

Well, there are three possibilities here; let us consider them one by one as follows—

(i) The first possibility is that Vibhishan was also on the chariot alongside Lord Ram in order to assist him, being his constant companion and special advisor during the war, as he was hand-picked by the Lord himself because Vibhishan was fully aware about the secrets of Lanka and its army like no one else in the Lord’s army.

(ii) The second probability is that after the Lord’s charioteer Matali was wounded when he was hit by Ravana’s arrows (apropos: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91), he was replaced by Vibhishan who took the reins of the chariot himself in order to give Matali some rest.

(iii) The third likelihood is that after the charioteer Matali was revived by Lord Ram, the Lord decided to give him some rest, and so he left the chariot and stood on the ground near it, where his chief commanders such as Vibhishan and others were already present. When Ravana saw his estranged brother standing close to his arch enemy Lord Ram, his anger knew no bounds; he flared up with vengeance when he recalled how his own brother had betrayed him. So Ravana shot a deadly dart at Vibhishan to kill him.

All these three possibilities can be true, though nothing is clearly mentioned regarding how Lord Ram could ‘push Vibhishan behind him’ when he saw the Shakti coming. It is surely not practically possible to happen if the Lord was on a chariot and Vibhishan was standing on the ground with other commanders who were directed

earlier by the Lord to stand by and watch the duel between himself and Ravana—apropos: Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Now therefore, if we take into consideration the first option, that ‘Vibhishan was on the chariot sitting or standing alongside Lord Ram’, then it is easy to visualize Ravana spotting him and shooting his Shakti at his brother to vent his suppressed anger and indignation at him; it is also easy then for Lord Ram to push Vibhishan behind the seat and take the hit himself.

The second option—that ‘Vibhishan had replaced Matali as the charioteer of Lord Ram for some time’—also works well with the narration and to explain what may actually have happened during those crucial moments. During such duels it was a common-place thing to immobilize one’s adversary by falling his charioteer and horses—both Lord Ram and Ravana had done it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91 (Ravana felling Lord Ram’s charioteer); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 92 (Lord Ram retaliating in the same way by felling Ravana’s charioteer and horses).}

When Ravana’s sight fell on Vibhishan taking charge of Lord Ram’s chariot, obviously the former lost his cool and flew into a raging fit of anger—because the very sight of his estranged brother filled Ravana with loathing, for he was overcome with extreme disgust and burning indignation. When he aimed his Shakti at Vibhishan, Lord Ram immediately pushed the latter aside and stepped in his place to bear the brunt of the attack.

Likewise, the third option—that ‘Lord Ram had left the chariot for a while and stood on the ground while Vibhishan and others came close to him, and then Ravana shot his Shakti at Vibhishan’—also seems plausible, because then it would be natural for Lord Ram to push Vibhishan behind him and take the hit himself.

In any case, what happened to Vibhishan? Well, we shall read in the following verses that he took up his fighting mace and rushed at Ravana. It clearly means that if we take into consideration either of the first two options then the chariot of Lord Ram had stopped on its track, and Vibhishan had jumped off it and ran on foot to confront his brother.

On the other hand, if we regard the third possibility as what actually might have transpired during those moments, then also everything fits in well with the description of what happened during those moments.

Vibhishan dashing forward to challenge and engage Ravana after Lord Ram fell down unconscious was a natural and spontaneous reaction on his part, for he was greatly obliged to the Lord for giving him unconditional shelter and promising him his full support and protection at a time when his own brother Ravana would have certainly killed him if he had remained a little longer in Lanka.

To wit, in the absence of any clear description of what might have actually happened during those crucial moments, the above three possibilities are the only ones that come to mind to explain the development; there is no practical way of what might have happened then other than this.]

लागि सक्ति मुरुछा कछु भई । प्रभु कृत खेल सुरन्ह बिकलई ॥ ३ ॥

देखि बिभीषन प्रभु श्रम पायो । गहि कर गदा क्रुद्ध होइ धायो ॥ ४ ॥

lāgi sakti muruchā kachu bha'ī. prabhu kṛta khēla suranha bikala'ī. 3.
dēkhi bibhīṣana prabhu śrama pāyō. gahi kara gadā krud'dha hō'i dhāyō. 4.

When the Shakti slammed into Lord Ram, he fell unconscious for some time. This play of the Lord confounded the gods who felt sore affright, alarmed and agitated¹. (3)

No sooner did Vibhishan see Lord Ram falling exhausted after being hit by the powerful Shakti, than he picked up his war mace and rushed angrily at Ravana². (4)

[Note—¹The reader might have recognized by now how impatient and nervous and fragile the gods were. Every time they found Lord Ram on the back-foot, they panicked; they didn't realize that it was a war, and in a war it is impossible that the tide of fortune would always and exclusively favour one combatant. They forgot that Lord Ram was actually 'Lord Vishnu', and therefore there was no question of his losing the war against the demon king Ravana. But everything takes its time.

Lord Ram, meanwhile, being the Supreme Lord of the world, wished to play an even game; the Lord wished that Ravana ought to be given his due share of fame and glory by allowing to prove himself as a mighty warrior; the Lord wished that history would give due credit to Ravana and honour him for his unrivalled gallantry, valour and qualities as a great and powerful warrior.

At the same time the Lord had to honour and recognize the mystical powers that the many weapons that were used at different times during the war inherently possessed. Remember: The Supreme Being had created every conceivable component in this creation; the demons too were obviously a part of the same creation, and so were the myriad weapons they used. The Lord had to take action on these demons because they were crossing the limits of tolerance, but that did not mean that they weren't a part of the creation created by the Supreme Being.

The demons represented the 'Tama Guna', or the third quality out of the three qualities created by the Lord at the time of creation—the other two being 'Sata Guna' and the 'Raja Guna'. These three qualities were like the tripod on which the character and nature of all creatures was based; and in an ideal situation there ought to be a balance between the three so that the tripod would stand stable and straight. Unfortunately this was not to be so and the balance failed over time so that the worst of the three, the 'Tama Guna', became dominant, pushing aside the other two and upsetting the delicate balance designed by the Supreme Lord. Now when this happened, it became obligatory for the Lord to reset things and bring normalcy in his creation. This in brief was why Lord Ram was fighting the 'demons'; it was just to bring the ancient balance back to the normal.

Therefore, the Lord played things patiently and with a cool head, though externally he had to act like an expert actor who shows so many emotions and sentiments on the stage in accordance to the role he is playing, but once off the stage he remains unconcerned and calm, becoming his earlier self.

²See note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein above. The missile sapped Lord Ram's energy for a while as it hit him hard, as a result of which the Lord sank to his feet, exhausted and tired like a person who loses his senses for some time when suddenly hit hard by a blow.]

रे कुभाग्य सठ मंद कुबुद्धे । तैं सुर नर मुनि नाग बिरुद्धे ॥ ५ ॥
सादर सिव कहूँ सीस चढ़ाए । एक एक के कोटिन्ह पाए ॥ ६ ॥

rē kubhāgya saṭha manda kubud'dhē. tair̥m sura nara muni nāga birud'dhē. 5.
sādara siva kahum̐ sīsa caṛhā'ē. ēka ēka kē kōṭinha pā'ē. 6.

Vibhishan sternly rebuked Ravana, saying: 'Oh you unfortunate, wicked and dumb-witted fellow whose mind has become pervert. You have become hostile to all living beings; you have not spared anyone, neither the gods, the human beings, the pious sages and hermits, nor the serpents (representing the reptiles who aren't even able to stand up and walk).

[To wit, thou hast oppressed and created animosity with every imaginable creature in the Lord's universe; thou hast spared neither the high and the mighty, nor the weak and the humble. Thy mind is so excessively pervert that it has eclipsed thine wisdom and senses so much that thee hast been blinded of everything. Forsooth, thee thinks that thou art the Lord of the world, but in thine haughty recklessness thou hast forgotten that everything has a limit, that one wouldst be well-advised to live within one's limits, and never overdo things in arrogant overconfidence. I had tried to show thee the correct path, but in thy arrogance thee didst naught pay any heed to it. So now, reap what thou hast sowed.] (5)

You had offered your heads to Lord Shiva as offerings at the time you had worshipped him, as a result of which you had been blessed by the boon that you will never be short of heads, as for each head you had offered to Shiva, you were granted countless heads in return¹.

[Lord Shiva was so pleased by thy self-sacrifice of thine heads that he granted thee access to countless heads, so that if by an unhappy chance thou wouldst lose thine head, then thee wouldst be compensated by another head immediately. That is why Lord Ram has failed to get rid of thee by cutting thine heads. Woe to thee, thou wicked fellow, for thy time has come!] (6)

[Note—¹This incident is hinted at in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 38-39; and verse no. 53.

Ravana has himself boasted of it while arguing with Angad in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 25.]

तेहि कारन खल अब लगि बाँच्यो । अब तव कालु सीस पर नाच्यो ॥ ७ ॥
राम बिमुख सठ चहसि संपदा । अस कहि हनेसि माझ उर गदा ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi kārana khala aba lagi bām̐cyō. aba tava kālu sīsa para nācyō. 7.
rāma bimukha saṭha cahasi sampadā. asa kahi hanēsi mājha ura gadā. 8.

That is the reason why you have survived for so long (inspite of Lord Ram severing your heads so many times). But now your death seems to be dancing over your head. (7)

How stupid you are to expect prosperity and welfare by being opposed to Lord Ram!'

Saying this, Vibhishan swung his battle mace and slammed it hard on Ravana's chest. (8)

छं०. उर माझ गदा प्रहार घोर कठोर लागत महि परचो । १ ।
 दस बदन सोनित स्रवत पुनि संभारि धायो रिस भर्यो ॥ २ ॥
 द्वौ भिरे अतिबल मल्लजुद्ध बिरुद्ध एकु एकहि हनै । ३ ।
 रघुबीर बल दर्पित बिभीषनु घालि नहिं ता कहूँ गनै ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ura mājha gadā prahāra ghōra kaṭhōra lāgata mahi paryō. 1.
 dasa badana sōnita sraṇata puni sambhāri dhāyō risa bharyō. 2.
 dvau bhirē atibala mallajud'dha birud'dha ēku ēkahi hanai. 3.
 raghubīra bala darpita bibhīṣanu ghāli nahim tā kahum'ganai. 4.

No sooner did the mighty battle mace struck Ravana in his chest with a deadly blow, than he fell down on the ground. (Chanda line no. 1)

Blood flowed from all his ten mouths. But not to be so easily outwitted, the valorous Ravana soon recovered himself and rushed forward, with renewed vengeance, towards Vibhishan. (Chanda line no. 2)

The two equally strong, valiant and gallant champions clashed with each other vigourously, slamming each other with all their might, and raining deadly blows. (Chanda line no. 3)

Vibhishan was encouraged to take on his formidable adversary Ravana with renewed vigour and confidence as he had the latent support and blessing of Lord Ram so much so that the former gave no credence to how mighty or valorous the latter may have been for anyone else.

[To wit, since Vibhishan had full support of Lord Ram, and he was fighting on the Lord's behalf, he had no fear from Ravana at all. Otherwise, left to himself, Vibhishan was no match against his mighty brother who was so powerful and strong that even his name would send the gods of heaven running for cover¹.] (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-13 that precede it; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 25; Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 28.]

दो०. उमा बिभीषनु रावनहि सन्मुख चितव कि काउ ।
 सो अब भिरत काल ज्यों श्रीरघुबीर प्रभाउ ॥ १४ ॥
 dōhā.

umā bibhīṣanu rāvanahi sanmukha citava ki kā'u.
sō aba bhirata kāla jyōm śrīraghubīra prabhā'u. 94.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this magnificent Story, said to his consort Uma who was listening to it.] 'Listen Uma. Could Vibhishan ever gather the courage to see eye to eye with Ravana? [No; never.]

That same Vibhishan now clashed fearlessly with Ravana as if he was a personified form of Kaal (god of death). Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, this was made possible only due to the grace and glory of Lord Ram¹. (Doha no. 94)

[Note—¹To wit, the very fact that Vibhishan could even as much as dare to face Ravana and hit him so hard that the mighty Lord of the demons would fall down, bleeding from his mouths, shows the secret power inherent to the grace of Lord Ram. Since Vibhishan had Lord Ram's blessings, he was very well empowered and protected so much so that he not only had no fear from his ferocious demon brother, but he also succeeded in bringing him down to earth by his blow. Ravana's powers and strength of arm were no secret from Vibhishan, and under any other situation he would have run away instead of confronting Ravana and getting squashed to death by him.]

चौ०. देखा श्रमित बिभीषनु भारी । धायउ हनूमान गिरि धारी ॥ १ ॥

रथ तुरंग सारथी निपाता । हृदय माझ तेहि मारेसि लाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhā śramita bibhīṣanu bhārī. dhāya'u hanūmāna giri dhārī. 1.
ratha turaṅga sārathī nipātā. hṛdaya mājha tēhi mārēsi lātā. 2.

Hanuman, who was watching the proceedings from the sidelines, observed that Vibhishan was getting exhausted. So he decided to come to Vibhishan's aid, and holding a huge boulder that resembled a mountain, he leapt forward with a mighty dash. (1)

He (Hanuman) dumped this mountain-like boulder with a great force on Ravana's chariot, crushing it to smithereens, and killing the horses as well as the charioteer. Thence he kicked Ravana viciously in the chest¹. (2)

[Note—¹This is not the first time that Hanuman had intervened during one-to-one duels, for he had reacted with the same swiftness and agility earlier also during the confrontation between Ravana and Laxman when the latter was shot down and felled unconscious by a powerful Shakti shot by Ravana, whereat Hanuman had dashed forward to intervene, giving a violent fist-blow to Ravana that made him swoon and fall down. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84.}

At other times too when Hanuman found that his companions were in dire danger, he was the first to come to their aid; there are several instances of it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 43; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.}

ठाढ़ रहा अति कंषित गाता । गयउ बिभीषनु जहँ जनत्राता ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि रावन कपि हतेउ पचारी । चलेउ गगन कपि पूँछ पसारी ॥ ४ ॥

ṭhārha rahā ati kampita gātā. gaya'u bibhīṣanu jaham' janatrātā. 3.
puni rāvana kapi hatē'u pacārī. calē'u gagana kapi pūm'cha pasārī. 4.

Ravana stood stunned and shaken by the blow, with his body trembling for a while (like the leaves that shake on a tree when a gust of wind passes through).

Meanwhile, Vibhishan went back to the place where Lord Ram, the protector of devotees, was. (3)

Recovering himself, Ravana challenged Hanuman and hit him hard; but Hanuman lengthened his tail and went up in the sky¹. (4)

[Note—¹Hanuman's blow left Ravana shuddering for a moment, but he did not fall down. Gathering his wits together, Ravana struck back at his assailant, thrusting a clenched fist at him. But Hanuman was prepared for it, and so before the fist-cuff could actually land on him he cleverly escaped unharmed by using his long tail as a lever to spring himself into the sky. Why did Hanuman employ this strategy? It is explained below.]

गहिसि पूँछ कपि सहित उड़ाना । पुनि फिरि भिरेउ प्रबल हनुमाना ॥ ५ ॥
लरत अकास जुगल सम जोधा । एकहि एकु हनत करि क्रोधा ॥ ६ ॥

gahisi pūm'cha kapi sahita urānā. puni phiri bhirē'u prabala hanumānā. 5.
larata akāsa jugala sama jōdhā. ēkahi ēku hanata kari krōdhā. 6.

Ravana caught hold of Hanuman's tail and flew alongside him into the sky. After some time (i.e. after a brief pause when both the champions were at a distance from the place where Ravana had first fought with Lord Ram, and later with Vibhishan), the mighty Hanuman turned back and clashed violently with Ravana¹. (5)

The two valiant and courageous warriors, who were equal in gallantry and bravado, fought each other in the sky, bravely and fiercely, with gusto and dare-devilry. They punched and boxed each other vehemently, both highly enraged and seething with anger. (6)

[Note—¹Hanuman wished to take Ravana away from the sight of where Lord Ram was. Remember: the Lord was struck and made unconscious by Ravana's Shakti, so Hanuman thought it was wise to take Ravana away from the sight and engage him in a duel so as to deflect his attention from Lord Ram, for which purpose he went some distance away into the sky, with Ravana in hot pursuit. When Hanuman felt that they were at a safe distance from Lord Ram, he turned back to clash with Ravana in a fierce duel.]

सोहहिं नभ छल बल बहु करहीं । कज्जल गिरि सुमेरु जनु लरहीं ॥ ७ ॥
बुधि बल निसिचर परइ न पाख्यो । तब मारुत सुत प्रभु संभाख्यो ॥ ८ ॥

sōhahim nabha chala bala bahu karahīm. kajjala giri sumēru janu larahīm. 7.
budhi bala niscara para'i na pāryō. taba māruta suta prabhu sambhāryō. 8.

The two mighty warriors were engaged in a close combat that was fought most fiercely and valiantly in the sky, with both using myriads of tricks and maneuverings. The sight was akin to Mt. Kajjal clashing with Mt. Sumeru¹. (7)

After having failed to subdue the demon king (“niscara”; Ravana) inspite of using all his wits and skills as well as his might, the son of the wind god (“māruta suta”; Hanuman) remembered Lord Ram (i.e. prayed to the Lord for help)². (8)

[Note—¹Here, Hanuman is compared to Mt. Sumeru, and Ravana to Mt. Kajjal. The reason is that Ravana had a dark body like Mt. Kajjal, which means a mountain of black soot. On the other hand, Hanuman’s complexion was fair, resembling the mountain with a golden hue, i.e. Mt. Sumeru.

Ravana has been likened to Mt. Kajjal earlier also, when Angad saw him for the first time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 19.

Similarly, Hanuman was likened to Mt. Sumeru in the invocation at the beginning of Sundar Kand—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Sanskrit verse line no. 9 that precedes the Chaupais before Doha no. 1.

²No matter how hard Hanuman tried, yet he failed to vanquish Ravana. So at last he invoked the glory and blessings of Lord Ram, praying for help.]

छं०. संभारि श्रीरघुबीर धीर पचारि कपि रावनु हन्यो । १ ।
महि परत पुनि उठि लरत देवन्ह जुगल कहूँ जय जय भन्यो ॥ २ ॥
हनुमंत संकट देखि मर्कट भालु क्रोधातुर चले । ३ ।
रन मत्त रावन सकल सुभट प्रचंड भुज बल दलमले ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sambhāri śrīraghubīra dhīra pacāri kapi rāvanu han'yō. 1.
mahi parata puni uṭhi larata dēvanha jugala kahum̐ jaya jaya bhan'yō. 2.
hanumanta saṅkaṭa dēkhi markṭa bhālu krōdhātura calē. 3.
rana matta rāvana sakala subhaṭa pracaṇḍa bhuja bala dalamalē. 4.

Remembrance of Lord Ram injected fresh courage and enthusiasm in Hanuman, who fought with renewed vigour and gallantry. He stood up and challenged Ravana once again, giving him a mighty blow that brought the demon king down. (Chanda line no. 1)

As has been said already, it was an equal fight, with both the champion warriors dashing and felling each other repeatedly, with no one emerging a clear winner. The gods were amused at this sight, and they applauded them both for their strength, might, vigour and gallantry, calling out 'hail and glory to you both'. (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, when the rest of the army of monkeys and bears saw that Hanuman was cornered and feeling weary, they immediately rushed forward angrily in order to help him. (Chanda line no. 3)

Ravana, who was intoxicated with passion for war, grabbed hold of and squashed all the brave warriors with his strong arms¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹We will recall that Kumbhakaran had done the same thing with the monkeys and bears when he stepped out into the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 67.

This is because both Ravana and Kumbhakaran, being brothers, had similar gigantic forms of their bodies and were similar in strength.]

दो०. तब रघुबीर पचारे धाए कीस प्रचंड ।

कपि बल प्रबल देखि तेहिं कीन्ह प्रगट पाषंड ॥ ९५ ॥

dōhā.

taba raghubīra pacārē dhā'ē kīsa pracaṇḍa.

kapi bala prabala dēkhi tēhiṁ kīnha pragata pāṣaṇḍa. 95.

Then, cheered on by Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram)¹, the fierce monkeys and bears dashed forward (to help Hanuman).

When Ravana observed that the Kapis (monkeys; bears), who were charging at him, had formidable strength and force, he spread his Maya (i.e. his power to create illusions) so as to deflect the attack by diverting the attention of the attackers². (Doha no. 95)

[Note—¹We have read herein above that when Hanuman was cornered by Ravana and felt exhausted, he had prayed to Lord Ram to help him—apropos: Chanda line no. 1 that precedes this Doha no. 95.

So this was Lord Ram's response. The Lord urged his army to go and intervene on his behalf, and help Hanuman out of harm's way.

²Whenever Ravana himself felt cornered and outnumbered, he had spread his Maya, i.e. his magical powers to create illusions, to deflect the attack by the monkeys and bears—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 88.]

चौ०. अंतरधान भयउ छन एका । पुनि प्रगटे खल रूप अनेका ॥ १ ॥

रघुपति कटक भालु कपि जेते । जहँ तहँ प्रगट दसानन तेते ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

antaradhāna bhaya'u chana ēkā. puni pragaṭē khala rūpa anēkā. 1.
raghupati kaṭaka bhālu kapi jētē. jaham̐ taham̐ pragaṭa dasānana tētē. 2.

The cunning fellow vanished from sight for some moments, and then reappeared by assuming many forms. (1)

The imposter assumed as many forms as they were monkeys and bears in Lord Ram's army. [To wit, Ravana assumed so many forms that there was one Ravana facing each member of Lord Ram's army.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹This sudden development mightily astonished the monkeys and bears out of their wits. Earlier there was one Ravana whom they fought, but now there were countless Ravana. Each monkey and bear warrior would now have to fight and defeat a Ravana all by himself, which was, in itself, an extremely difficult and daunting prospect as compared to the earlier situation when they could use their combined might against one single enemy. Naturally therefore, the entire army was in a panicky state, and all its warriors lost all hopes of victory. Not only the monkeys and bears, but even the gods were confounded and taken aback, fearing now that vanquishing Ravana seemed a lost dream. We shall read about it in the verses that follow herein below.

Ravana is an 'imposter and a cunning fellow' because he uses fowls means, tricks and delusions to overcome his opponent and fight a war deceitfully instead of using fair and transparent means as would behoove of a gallant knight and famed warrior worth his name and honour.

But Ravana can be excused for it, for this was a 'war', it was a question of life and death for him, and during such dangerous and testing times, means fair or foul matter not, as long as the objective is achieved.]

देखे कपिन्ह अमित दससीसा । जहँ तहँ भजे भालु अरु कीसा ॥ ३ ॥
भागे बानर धरहिं न धीरा । त्राहि त्राहि लछिमन रघुबीरा ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhē kapinha amita dasasīsā. jaham̐ taham̐ bhajē bhālu aru kīsā. 3.
bhāgē bānara dharahim̐ na dhīrā. trāhi trāhi lachimana raghubīrā. 4.

When the monkeys and bears saw that there were countless ten-headed Ravana (roaring and gesturing menacingly at them), they felt sore affright and panicky; they ran helter-skelter and scattered in all directions (to escape being caught and thrashed). (3)

The monkeys (and bears) scampered away in terror, unable to gather courage to hold their ground and retaliate. Even as they fled, they cried out aloud: 'have mercy upon us, Lord Ram and Laxman; save us from being slaughtered'¹. (4)

[Note—¹The sudden appearance of so many Ravana's was literally like a bomb that exploded within the rank and file of the Lord's army. Each monkey and bear saw that a Ravana was glaring at him with red eyes, stretched arms and loud yell, ready to grab him and squash him to pulp. The monkeys and bears therefore flew away like dry leaves that are scattered during a violent storm.]

दहँ दिसि धावहिं कोटिन्ह रावन । गर्जहिं घोर कठोर भयावन ॥ ५ ॥
 डरे सकल सुर चले पराई । जय कै आस तजहु अब भाई ॥ ६ ॥
 सब सुर जिते एक दसकंधर । अब बहु भए तकहु गिरि कंदर ॥ ७ ॥
 रहे बिरंचि संभु मुनि ग्यानी । जिन्ह जिन्ह प्रभु महिमा कछु जानी ॥ ८ ॥

daham̐ disi dhāvahiṁ kōṭinha rāvana. garjahiṁ ghōra kaṭhōra bhayāvana. 5.
 ḍarē sakala sura calē parā'ī. jaya kai āsa tajahu aba bhā'ī. 6.
 saba sura jitē ēka dasakandhara. aba bahu bha'ē takahu giri kandara. 7.
 rahē biran̄ci sambhu muni gyānī. jinha jinha prabhu mahimā kachu jānī. 8.

Countless Ravana could be seen in all the ten directions¹, running, roaring, looking frightening and fierce, gesticulating menacingly, and generally threatening the life out of one and all. (5)

[Not only was the army of monkeys and bears in terror, but even the gods panicked.] The gods were so sore affright and alarmed that they too fled away in terror, lamenting thus: 'Brothers, abandon all hopes of victory now. (6)

One ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) was able to conquer all the gods², but look now, there are countless numbers of him. It will be better for us to seek refuge in deep mountain caves to hide ourselves and escape him. (7)

All but the creator Brahma, the concluder Lord Shiva, and illustrious sages and seers who were learned and enlightened about the glory and potentials of Lord Ram (i.e. those who knew the truth of Lord Ram as being the almighty Lord of the world)³, were able to maintain calm and remain where they were in their stations in the sky even as all other gods fled from the sight. (8)

[Note—¹The ten directions are north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir. The idea is that wherever one could see, he would perceive Ravana in that direction.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it.

³These two wise and learned senior gods, Brahma and Shiva, as well as sages and seers knew that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, and therefore that it is impossible for Ravana to prevail over Lord Ram in the final game, and that all this was a drama that the Lord wishes to play to give Ravana an ample opportunity to prove his mettle and test his abilities so that later on he would not regret that he did not try this or that trick, that he was not given an even playing field to defend his honour and title to fame.

Lord Ram wished that the war should be fought like a war ought to be, where both sides win some and lose some, and not a one-sided game like the case when one combatant is overwhelmingly superior and domineering over the other, for in the latter case Ravana would claim that he was trounced and killed just because he was

fighting an uneven war with the almighty Lord God of creation against whom there was no question of winning, but for that he was invincible and unconquerable.

Remember: Ravana had extracted a promise from this same creator Brahma that no one but a human being or monkeys would be able to kill him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177. So it was obligatory for Lord Ram not to create a situation where it would appear that Ravana was killed by anyone but a human being, or that his demon warriors were defeated by anyone other than monkeys and bears.

Hence, the Lord had to fight this war like wars are normally fought on earth. Had the Lord's hands not been tied and subjected to such injunctions, he could have eliminated the entire demon army in a single day of war.]

छं०. जाना प्रताप ते रहे निर्भय कपिन्ह रिपु माने फुरे । १ ।
चले बिचलि मर्कट भालु सकल कृपाल पाहि भयातुरे ॥ २ ॥
हनुमंत अंगद नील नल अतिबल लरत रन बाँकुरे । ३ ।
मर्दहिं दसानन कोटि कोटिन्ह कपट भू भट अंकुरे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jānā pratāpa tē rahē nirbhaya kapinha ripu mānē phurē. 1.
calē bicali markāṭa bhālu sakala krpāla pāhi bhayāturē. 2.
hanumanta aṅgada nīla nala atibala larata rana bām̐kurē. 3.
mardahiṁ dasānana kōṭi kōṭinha kapaṭa bhū bhaṭa aṅkurē. 4.

To wit, those who were enlightened about the Truth and the Reality about Lord Ram and his glory, might and majesty (jānā pratāpa tē), remained fearlessly where there were (while others fled).

The Kapis (monkeys), however, were overwhelmed by the delusory effects of Ravana's powerful Maya so much so that they thought that the illusionary Ravanās that were seen all around them were real¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

All the monkeys and bears scampered away in fear, running helter-skelter in terror, crying out to Lord Ram for help and protection: 'Oh merciful Lord, kindly protect us.'² (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, gallant warriors such as Hanuman, Angad, Neela and Nala, who were singularly valiant and exemplarily brave in the battle-field (rana bām̐kurē), held their ground, and continued to fight with undaunted courage, bravery and resilience.

[To wit, while the general mass of the troops ran away in fear, the above-named warriors, who were steadfast in the battle-field, held their ground and continued to engage Ravana without any fear.] (Chanda line no. 3)

Though they continued to thrash and vanquish countless numbers of Ravanās relentlessly, yet all the while new forms of illusionary ten-headed monster continued to emerge from no where as if by magic (just like mushrooms sprout or flies spiral up from the wet ground during the rainy season)³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹To wit, Ravana's magic had its charming effect on the monkey and bear warriors, for they thought that the countless images of Ravana which they saw on the battle-field all around them were real Ravana, and not fake ones, not illusions. Come to think of it, even the gods, who are supposed to be more intelligent and better informed about anything as compared to other creatures in this world, also had fled in terror (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 herein above), so there is no wonder if the poor Kapis could not see through the trick of Ravana, and believed it to be true.

Now, who were those that remained there fearlessly, and not run away? The first were the wise gods and enlightened sages who were watching the war from the sky (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 herein above), and the others were Lord Ram's close companions on the battle-field, such as Vibhishan, Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad, Hanuman etc.

²We have already read in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 herein above that Ravana had assumed as many forms as there were monkey and bear warriors in the battle-field, facing each one of them individually, challenging and threatening each one of them, dashing at everyone menacingly from up close, gesturing at them wildly as if he would wring the life out of every single warrior. The Lord's troops were taken in by complete surprise; they were dazed and shocked beyond measure. Facing one single Ravana with the combined might of the entire monkey and bear army arrayed against him was a different proposition as compared to the horrifying prospect of a one-on-one challenge between individual monkey and bear warrior who was pitted against the formidable might of the mighty Ravana.

³There seemed to be no end to the numbers of Ravana on the battle-field. Remember: Ravana had employed this trick after he found that most of his troops have either been killed or have run away—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 88.

Finding himself thus alone and surrounded by a mounting wave of ferocious monkeys and bears, he created a magical charm that produced countless Ravana. He employed this trick to wear out his enemy, for sooner or later the opponent would be tired and exhausted fighting an illusive monster where he does not actually exist. Then, when Lord Ram's troops would be fatigued out, Ravana planned to hit them hard and crush all of them with ease.]

दो०. सुर बानर देखे बिकल हँस्यो कोसलाधीस ।
सजि सारंग एक सर हते सकल दससीस ॥ ९६ ॥

dōhā.

sura bānara dēkhē bikala haṁsyō kōsalādhīsa.
saji sārāṅga ēka sara hatē sakala dasasīsa. 96.

The Lord of Kaushal ("kōsalādhīsa"; Lord Ram, the Lord of Ayodhya) laughed in amusement when he saw that the monkeys as well as the gods were agitated and nervous¹.

He prepared his Sarang bow and shot one arrow which cut through the illusion created by the ten-headed Ravana, as a result of which all his fake images vanished from sight instantly. (Doha no. 96)

[Note—¹What made Lord Ram laugh? Well, the Lord felt amused and thought to himself: “These gods are said to be powerful and all-knowing; but now look at them—they are running away in fear like ordinary mortals. Don’t they know that all these countless Ravanaas are false? And look at these monkeys and bears; they also are supposed to be born out of genes of these gods, because the creator Brahma had advised them to come down to earth as monkey and bears to help me (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188). Imagine, what help would they render me when they are now pleading with me to help them!”

In the advanced stages of the epic war, Ravana unleashed his famed potentials of spreading terror and mayhem in his opponents, and uncorked the genie of his dreaded wrath upon them all, the monkey army on the ground as well as the gods who were witnessing the war and cheering the army of Lord Ram from their station in the sky. A fearful atmosphere of dread and horror spread in all the directions; Ravana employed his ability to create horrifying illusions to strike terror in the rank and file of his enemy by making it appear that there was not one but countless Ravanaas who were full of wrath and vengeance running everywhere in the battle-field, all over the place, pouncing on the monkeys and bears on the ground, and chasing the gods in the sky, all simultaneously. This caused a massive stampede.

When Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal, observed this alarming situation—that the monkeys on the ground and the gods in the sky were very agitated and panicky because of Ravana’s excessive aggressiveness and his use of tricks that created fearful illusions of countless Ravanaas attacking them simultaneously from all the sides, spreading utter dread and terror in all directions—the Lord readied his Sarang bow and shot one arrow which at once cut-off the illusion of there being so many Ravanaas attacking the monkeys and gods, providing instant relief to them all.

To wit, Lord Ram invoked his cosmic form of Lord Vishnu and used his Sarang bow to shoot an arrow that removed this illusion (of numerous Ravanaas attacking everyone from all sides instantaneously) with a snap. This dispelled the fear of everyone in an instant, as suddenly only one Ravana, the original demon king, was left on the battle-field, while all the illusionary Ravanaas vanished from sight. This sudden change in the situation for good led both the monkey and bear warriors on the battle-field and the gods in heaven rejoice and celebrate.]

चौ०. प्रभु छन महुँ माया सब काटी । जिमि रबि उएँ जाहिं तम फाटी ॥ १ ॥

रावनु एकु देखि सुर हरषे । फिरे सुमन बहु प्रभु पर बरषे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu chana mahum̐ māyā saba kāṭī. jimi rabi u'ēm̐ jāhiṁ tama phāṭī. 1.
rāvanu ēku dēkhi sura haraṣē. phirē sumana bahu prabhu para baraṣē. 2.

The Lord (Sri Ram) cut through the illusions created by Ravana in an instant, just like the case when the darkness of the night is immediately got rid of as soon as the sun rises. (1)

Seeing that there was one Ravana once again, all the gods felt exhilarated, and returning back (from their flight) they again showered flowers in abundance upon the Lord¹. (2)

[Note—¹In the context of the battle with Ravana, the gods had showered flowers upon Lord Ram in the beginning of the combat when the Lord had stepped out to engage the demon king. At that time however, it was a gesture to appreciate the Lord's charming form as he finally stepped out to eliminate Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 86.

And in the context of actually attaining some miraculous success in battle against a formidable demon, the occasion when the gods had showered flowers upon Lord Ram was the slaying of Kumbhakaran, the brother of Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chauapi line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 71.]

भुज उठाइ रघुपति कपि फेरे । फिरे एक एकन्ह तब टेरे ॥ ३ ॥
प्रभु बलु पाइ भालु कपि धाए । तरल तमकि संजुग महि आए ॥ ४ ॥

bhuja uṭhā'i raghupati kapi phērē. phirē ēka ēkanha taba ṭērē. 3.
prabhu balu pā'i bhālu kapi dhā'ē. tarala tamaki saṅjuga mahi ā'ē. 4.

Once the cause of fear was removed, i.e. after all illusionary forms of Ravana were eliminated and normalcy was restored on the ground, Lord Ram raised his arms and harked at all the monkeys and bears who had taken flight earlier, calling out to them to come back. Whoever first heard the Lord's call to return not only came back himself but called out to all others around him to follow suit, and in this way the good message was passed on from one to another down the rank and file of the fleeing warriors, and by-and-by everyone returned to where the Lord stood (waiting for their return). (3)

Encouraged by Lord Ram and feeling blessed by his grace, the monkey and bear warriors were infused with renewed vigour and zeal; they once again dashed to the battle-field enthusiastically, jumping with excitement and anger stoked with a desire for vengeance.

[To wit, these warriors lunged at Ravana wrathfully to exact retribution from him and punish him for causing them so much terror and misery.] (4)

अस्तुति करत देवतन्हि देखें । भयउँ एक मैं इन्ह के लेखें ॥ ५ ॥
सठहु सदा तुम्ह मोर मरायल । अस कहि कोपि गगन पर धायल ॥ ६ ॥

astuti karata dēvatanhi dēkhēm. bhaya'um' ēka mair̥ inha kē lēkhēm. 5.
saṭhahu sadā tumha mōra marāyala. asa kahi kōpi gagana para dhāyala. 6.

When Ravana observed that the gods were praying to Lord Ram (which he guessed they were surely doing while showering flowers upon Lord Ram, and there could be nothing else that they sought but to ask that the demon king be eliminated as soon as possible)¹, he became furious with anger and indignation.

He bethought to himself: 'These gods see (find) me all alone, and therefore they think that now it would be easy to vanquish me. [Woe to them, these cowardly

and selfish fellows. When they saw my countless forms, they had run like mad out of fear; but now when they find that I am all alone, they sheepishly returned to ask my enemy, Lord Ram, to do away with me as soon as possible. Look at their temerity; how durst they have the courage to shower flowers on my adversary right before my eyes? Wait ye all; now I shall teach the lot of you a good lesson that thou wilt never forget till doom overtakes the whole lot of you fellas.] (5)

[Filled thus with excess of contempt and resentment, Ravana shrieked and lunged wildly at the gods:-] Oh you wicked and dumb-witted fellows (saṭha). You all had always been thrashed by me since time immemorial, all along the long passage of time till now, and how then durst thou show such intolerable insolence by praying to my enemy against me? [Brace thyself now; I wilt show all of thee thine places in the larger scheme of things. Dost thee wot naught that I am the same Ravana who had sent the whole lot of thine race running helter-skelter for thine dear lives when I ran over heaven and ransacked it, not long ago? Hark ye cowards who art scared stiff to your bones by the mere sight of me; stand there whilst here comest the mighty and valorous Ravana to give thee thine due rewards. Dost thou wot what that reward wouldst be? Well, it shalt be one that none of thine race would ever forget till the time doom has the pleasure to overtake thee; and it shalt be the squeezing of thine necks and wringing the life out of thine crooked souls, ye wicked felas!]

Saying this, and with a countenance burning with furious vengeance, Ravana made a fierce dash for the gods who were standing in the sky (to wreak his wrathful might upon them). (6)

[Note—¹What made Ravana lose his cool and become so violent upon the gods, accusing them of praying to Lord Ram against him? Well, just a moment ago he had observed that they were showering flowers upon Lord Ram for eliminating the countless illusionary forms that Ravana had assumed, clearing the battle-field of all fictitious Ravana and restoring normalcy—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 herein above. Ravana's game-plan to instill terror in the rank and file of Lord Ram's army was thus check-mated, and this acted as a fuse that ignited his fury, which was further aggravated when he saw that his eternal enemies, the gods, were praising his adversary and honouring him by showering flowers.

Ravana's self-respect and honour were hurt when he found that the same gods whom he had vanquished and made to bow before himself recently are now become emboldened enough to openly insult him by showering flowers on his enemy in the battle-field. This was sufficient a provocation for Ravana, and he railed and raged wildly against the gods, determined to punish them for their audacity to praise Lord Ram.]

हाहाकार करत सुर भागे । खलहु जाहु कहँ मोरें आगे ॥ ७ ॥

देखि बिकल सुर अंगद धायो । कूदि चरन गहि भूमि गिरायो ॥ ८ ॥

hāhākāra karata sura bhāgē. khalahu jāhu kaham' mōrēm āgē. 7.

dēkhi bikala sura aṅgada dhāyō. kūdi carana gahi bhūmi girāyō. 8.

Finding Ravana coming to them, all the gods let out a terrified cry of pity and began to run from the place as fast as they could to escape Ravana's fury.

But Ravana chased them in hot pursuit, yelling and thundering behind them: ‘You rascals (khala); where do you think you will go away from me? How dare you insolent and irrelevant fellows run ahead of me?’ (7)

When Angad observed that the gods were terrified and running helter-skelter in the sky, he ran forward to intervene; he made a great leap and caught hold of Ravana with his legs, pulling him down to the ground. (8)

छं०. गहि भूमि पार्यो लात मार्यो बालिसुत प्रभु पहिं गयो । १ ।
संभारि उठि दसकंठ घोर कठोर रव गर्जत भयो ॥ २ ॥
करि दाप चाप चढ़ाइ दस संधानि सर बहु बरषई । २ ।
किए सकल भट घायल भयाकुल देखि निज बल हरषई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

gahi bhūmi pāryō lāta māryō bālisuta prabhu pahim gayō. 1.
sambhāri uṭhi dasakaṇṭha ghōra kaṭhōra rava garjata bhayō. 2.
kari dāpa cāpa caṛhā'i dasa sandhāni sara bahu baraṣa'ī. 3.
ki'ē sakala bhaṭa ghāyala bhayākula dēkhi nija bala haraṣa'ī. 4.

The son of Baali (“bālisuta”; Angad) pulled down Ravana to the ground, and then kicked him viciously; after that, he returned to Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 1)

Ravana, meanwhile, recovered himself and got up; then he roared and thundered violently (as his ego and self-respect were hurt, coupled by his frustration and indignation that were enhanced by his repeatedly suffering defeats and being pushed back on the back foot, something to which Ravana was not accustomed, for he had always been the victor and conqueror, and not someone who would be compelled to bite the dust and get kicked around like an impotent and imbecile creature). (Chanda line no. 2)

He (Ravana) angrily picked up and stringed all his ten bows (i.e. he raised his ten arms with one bow in each), and mounting fierce arrows on them he started raining a hail of sharp darts on the enemy forces (of Lord Ram). (Chanda line no. 3)

This fierce volley of arrows wounded and made affright countless warriors (monkeys and bears), and this sight gave a lot of satisfaction to Ravana who felt happy at the show of his might and a brilliant display of the strength of his arms and skills at archery. (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. तब रघुपति रावन के सीस भुजा सर चाप ।
काटे बहुत बड़े पुनि जिमि तीरथ कर पाप ॥ ९७ ॥

dōhā.

taba raghupati rāvana kē sīsa bhujā sara cāpa.
kāṭē bahuta baṛhē puni jimi tīratha kara pāpa. 97.

Then Lord Raghupati (i.e. Lord Ram) cut off Ravana's twenty arms along with the ten bows and countless arrows that they held¹.

But what a wonder it was that no sooner were the arms chopped off, newer ones immediately sprung up in their places², just like sins and evil deeds done in a holy place, such as a religious site, produce multiple negative effects that rebound and have a multiplying domino effect upon the doer of such deeds³. (Doha no. 97)

[Note—¹Ravana held ten bows in each of his ten arms of one side of his body, and in the other ten arms of the corresponding opposite side he held countless arrows which he mounted and shot from the bows in quick succession.

²We have read earlier too that the more Lord Ram cut off the heads and arms of Ravana, the more they grew on his body—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 92 along with Chaupai line nos. 10-14 that precede it.

³If a person commits some evil and sinful deed at a holy place then its negative result is manifold times more and greater than what it would have been at other places. One wrong deed pushes the doer of this deed in a vortex of sins, whereupon he continues to do more and more sinful deeds without realizing what he is doing, the gravity of his actions, and the mounting negative consequences of his mischief that keep on multiplying and adding weight to the bundle of punishments that would one day fall heavy upon his head with a deadly thud, crushing him underneath.

The idea here is that one should be extremely careful how he lives his life and what he does in a holy place, and be careful not to do any unrighteous thing which would defile the sanctity of the place and demean the purity of his own soul—because any reckless deed is unpardonable in a religious environment as it goes against the holiness and purity of the place.]

चौ०. सिर भुज बाढ़ि देखि रिपु केरी । भालु कपिन्ह रिस भई घनेरी ॥ १ ॥
मरत न मूढ़ कटेहुँ भुज सीसा । धाए कोपि भालु भट कीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sira bhuja bāḍhi dēkhi ripu kērī. bhālu kapinha risa bha'ī ghanērī. 1.
marata na mūrha kaṭēhum' bhuja sīsā. dhā'ē kōpi bhālu bhaṭa kīsā. 2.

When the monkeys and bears discovered that the more heads and arms of the enemy (Ravana) were being cut, the more they grew back with rapidity, all of them were furious with exasperation. (1)

'This rascal will not die by merely getting his heads and arms cut¹', saying this to each other, the angry monkey and bear warriors rushed with a vengeance towards Ravana. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 92—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

बालितनय मारुति नल नीला । बानरराज दुबिद बलसीला ॥ ३ ॥
बिटप महीधर करहिं प्रहारा । सोइ गिरि तरु गहि कपिन्ह सो मारा ॥ ३ ॥

bālitānaya māruti nala nīlā. bānararāja dubida balasīlā. 3.
biṭapa mahīdhara karahim prahārā. sō'i giri taru gahi kapinha sō mārā. 4.

The son of Baali (Angad), the son of the Wind God (Hanuman), Nala, Neela, the king of the monkeys (Sugriv), Dwivid—all of whom were very brave, courageous, valorous and gallant, --- (3)

--- began hitting Ravana with huge trees and mountain-like rocks and boulders. Ravana, meanwhile, grabbed these same trees and rocks, using them to strike back at his attackers with equal force. (4)

एक नखन्हि रिपु बपुष बिदारी । भागि चलहिं एक लातन्ह मारी ॥ ५ ॥
तब नल नील सिरन्हि चढ़ि गयऊ । नखन्हि लिलार बिदारत भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥

ēka nakhanhi ripu bapuṣa bidārī. bhāgi calahim ēka lātanha mārī. 5.
taba nala nīla siranhi caḍhi gaya'ū. nakhanhi lilāra bidārata bhaya'ū. 6.

Some of the attacking warriors (i.e. the monkeys) cut deep gashes on Ravana's body with their sharp pointed nails, while others kicked him viciously before they ran away. (5)

Then Nala and Neela leapt over Ravana's heads and began tearing at his foreheads (with their nails and teeth). (6)

रुधिर देखि बिषाद उर भारी । तिन्हहि धरन कहूँ भुजा पसारी ॥ ७ ॥
गहे न जाहिं करन्हि पर फिरहीं । जनु जुग मधुप कमल बन चरहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rudhira dēkhi biṣāda ura bhārī. tinhahi dharana kahum' bhuajā pasārī. 7.
gahē na jāhim karanhi para phirahim. janu juga madhupa kamala bana carahim. 8.

When Ravana took notice that blood was flowing down his heads and body (as a result of deep wounds made by the monkey warriors), he was aghast and terribly furious. He extended his hands to catch hold of the miscreants. (7)

They (Nala and Neela) moved around on his huge arms as if two bees were moving around fearlessly amongst a cluster of lotus flowers, as a result of which Ravana could not catch any of them¹. (8)

[Note—¹Ravana stretched his hands towards his heads and parts of his body from which blood was flowing out, and which hurt him the most; but he could not find anyone where he was searching for them because the clever monkeys had by this time climbed on the back of his hands. Ravana grappled and groped here and there all over his body in order to catch hold of his tormentors, but to his utter dismay he could not lay his fingers on any of the attackers, because they weren't there where he searched for them, but were perched on his arms themselves, clinging to the hairs or the skin of his forearms where he least expected them to be.]

कोपि कूदि द्वौ धरेसि बहोरी । महि पटकत भजे भुजा मरोरी ॥ ९ ॥

पुनि सकोप दस धनु कर लीन्हे । सरन्हि मारि घायल कपि कीन्हे ॥ १० ॥

kōpi kūdi dvau dharēsi bahōrī. mahi paṭakata bhajā bhujā marōrī. 9.
puni sakōpa dasa dhanu kara līnhē. saranhi māri ghāyala kapi kīnhē. 10.

Meanwhile, the two monkeys (Nala and Neela) were jumping merrily on his arms, which made Ravana aware of their whereabouts; he grabbed them instantly, but even as he prepared to dash them on the ground they twisted and turned his arms in order to wriggle out and free themselves from his grip, and succeeding in it, they ran away. (9)

Highly enraged and utterly embarrassed, Ravana once again lifted all his ten bows in his arms and shot a fresh volley of sharp arrows at the monkeys¹, wounding them. (10)

[Note—¹This is the third time that Ravana has used all his ten bows at the same time to shower arrows at his enemy. The other two occasions were as follows: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 92; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

हनुमदादि मुरुछित करि बंदर । पाइ प्रदोष हरष दसकंधर ॥ ११ ॥

मुरुछित देखि सकल कपि बीरा । जामवंत धायउ रनधीरा ॥ १२ ॥

hanumadādi muruchita kari bandara. pā'i pradōṣa haraṣa dasakandhara. 11.
muruchita dēkhi sakala kapi bīrā. jāmavanta dhāya'u ranadhīrā. 12.

Having felled unconscious Hanuman and many other valiant monkeys, Ravana felt exhilarated and satisfied at his success, feeling relieved when he observed that it was the end of the day and eventide when the war was to be paused till the dawn of the next day¹. (11)

When Jamvant, the chief of the bear warriors who was very valiant and steady in the battle-field (ranadhīrā), observed that Hanuman and virtually all other brave monkey warriors lay wounded and unconscious on the ground, he decided that it was his time

to take an initiative and proactively participate in the ongoing battle; so therefore he dashed forward to intervene². (12)

[Note—¹Those were the days when strict rules and regulations were followed even during wars and engaging the enemy on the battle-field. One such rule was that as soon as the sun sets, all activity in the war must pause. The two sides withdrew to their respective camps, the wounded were taken back for healing as best could be arranged during such times, and all hostilities ceased till the sun appeared the next day. There are clear instances when this age-old tradition was observed in the War of Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 55; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72.

Therefore, when Ravana observed that it was eventide and the time for ending the day's actions, he felt mightily relieved for a variety of reasons. For one, he would now have time to recuperate from his own wounds, take stock of the situation, and devise his next strategy, and two, even if the unwounded monkey and bear warriors, who were standing as reserve troops, did wish to launch a fresh wave of attacks on him, they would be restraint from doing it as it was sunset and the battle for the day was to come to an end. Not even Lord Ram or Laxman would strike him during these hours as he was dead sure that the two brothers, renowned for their righteousness and probity, would never ever take any reckless action that would undermine their noble lineage and fame, for breaking established traditions and laws of warfare was sure to give them a very bad name, which they would not welcome.

To wit, the sight of evening coming on was a great respite for Ravana as he was already so battered and frustrated by the continuous hammering to which he was subjected by the mighty warriors of Lord Ram's army that he was looking for a window to manage an honourable escape from the battle-field, even for a short time.

He was happy that when he returns to the fort, at least he could boast that he had left all his enemies lying wounded and unconscious on the ground as a severe retribution on them for making him return unconscious on his chariot at the end of the last day's battle—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 84.

Hence, today's victory was a saving grace for Ravana, and this thought made him feel glad and satisfied.

²Jamvant was old in age; he was a senior member of Lord Ram's advisory team. He had generally remained in the background like Vibhishan, the prince of Lanka and brother of Ravana who had joined Lord Ram, and Sugriv, the monkey king. Lord Ram had himself wished that these three chief commanders remain by his side and desist from active engagement in the war, as it was prudent and crucial to not only keep them out of harm's way but also to ensure that they would monitor the ground situation and give relevant orders to the troops. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 75.}

But when the occasion came, Jamvant proved himself and his mettle by actively participating in battle and trouncing his enemy; one such time was when the mighty Meghanad had trapped Lord Ram in a snare of serpents. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-9 that precede Doha no. 74.}

संग भालु भूधर तरु धारी । मारन लगे पचारि पचारी ॥ १३ ॥

भयउ क्रुद्ध रावन बलवाना । गहि पद महि पटकइ भट नाना ॥ १४ ॥
देखि भालुपति निज दल घाता । कोपि माझ उर मारेसि लाता ॥ १५ ॥

saṅga bhālu bhūdhara taru dhārī. mārana lagē pacāri pacārī. 13.
bhaya'u krud'dha rāvana balavānā. gahi pada mahi paṭaka'i bhaṭa nānā. 14.
dēkhi bhālupati nija dala ghātā. kōpi mājha ura mārēsi lātā. 15.

He (Jamvant) was accompanied by his valiant bear warriors who began pounding Ravana with trees and huge mountain-like rocks, repeatedly challenging him and dashing him viciously. (13)

Ravana was furious with rage; he began grabbing the bear warriors by their legs and smashing them violently to the ground. (14)

When the king of the bears (“bhālupati”; Jamvant) saw that his troops were being wounded and thrashed, he became wrathful, and furiously kicked Ravana in his chest¹. (15)

[Note—¹This was the rare occasion when only the bears were the attacking Ravana. At other times they had accompanied their monkey friends, but now since all of them were wounded, they led the assault themselves.]

छं०. उर लात घात प्रचंड लागत बिकल रथ ते महि परा । १ ।
गहि भालु बीसहुँ कर मनहुँ कमलन्हि बसे निसि मधुकरा ॥ २ ॥
मुरुछित बिलोकि बहोरि पद हति भालुपति प्रभु पहिँ गयो । ३ ।
निसि जानि स्यंदन घालि तेहि तब सूत जतनु करत भयो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ura lāta ghāta pracaṇḍa lāgata bikala ratha tē mahi parā. 1.
gahi bhālu bīsahum̐ kara manahum̐ kamalanhi basē nisi madhukarā. 2.
muruchita bilōki bahōri pada hati bhālupati prabhu pahim̐ gayō. 3.
nisi jāni syandana ghāli tēhi taba sūta jatanu karata bhayō. 4.

No sooner did the powerful kick land on his chest with a mighty thrust, then Ravana swooned and fell down on the ground. (Chanda line no. 1)

With countless bears caught up in his twenty fists as he fell down, it appeared that numerous bees were caught within the petals of the lotus flower as night fell¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

When the bear chief saw that Ravana was unconscious, he gave the latter another fierce blow with his legs², after which he (Jamvant) went back to Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 3)

Observing that it was nightfall, Ravana's charioteer put him back on the chariot, trying to revive him back to his senses. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, the bears are like the ‘bees’, and the clenched fists of Ravana are like the ‘closed petals of the lotus flowers’. The bees alight on the petals of the lotus flower during evening time, before the flower closes at nightfall, and then get caught inside it till the flower opens its petals again the next day with the advent of the sunlight.

Ravana grabbed as many bears as he could even as he fell down on the ground, clenching them in his closed fists.

²The trapped bears would be released when Ravana loses his senses completely upon being kicked violently by Jamvant once again as narrated in Chanda line no. 3 here, because the jerk would be so fierce that whatever traces of senses that still remained in Ravana after the first kick by Jamvant would finally give away, loosening his grip over the bears, and enabling them to wriggle out and scamper to safety.

Why did Jamvant kick Ravana twice? The answer is this: Jamvant observed that after Ravana fell down with his first kick, he had some senses still left in him as proved by the fact that he could maintain a firm grip on the bears he had already clenched in his fists. So in order to finish the task, to ensure that Ravana did not gain consciousness soon, and devise a device so the bear soldiers clenched in his fists could be freed, Jamvant decided to give Ravana another fierce blow which would completely knock out the demon king, which in turn would help to ease the grip on the bears who would then find it easy to somehow get out of his fingers and escape to safety.]

दो०. मुरुछा बिगत भालु कपि सब आए प्रभु पास ।
निसिचर सकल रावनहि घेरि रहे अति त्रास ॥ ९८ ॥

dōhā.

muruchā bigata bhālu kapi saba ā'ē prabhu pāsa.
niscara sakala rāvanahi ghēri rahē ati trāsa. 98.

When, by-and-by, the monkeys and bears finally recovered their senses once again, they came back to Lord Ram¹.

On the other side, meanwhile, when Ravana was brought back to Lanka by his charioteer, the demons surrounded him; they were all horrified and mortified with fear when they observed that the situation was extremely alarming (because Ravana was still unconscious)². (Doha no. 98)

[Note—¹This was the end of the 7th day of the war; both the armies withdrew to their respective camps for the day. On this side, Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and the Lord's chief advisors such as Vibhishan, Jamvant and Sugriv, surveyed their army to take stock of the situation and consult each other to devise the strategy for the next day's battle. The tide of the war was turning in their favour, for though they had suffered some sort of setback because Ravana had succeeded in thrashing and making unconscious some of their best warriors such as Hanuman, Angad, Dwivid, Nala and Neela, but they had not only regained their senses quickly but their enthusiasm was also on a high. Some injuries and casualties in a war of such magnitude were acceptable; and so the situation was not alarming.

On the whole, by this time, the morale and the spirit of the demon army had taken a severe beating; their enthusiasm and the will to fight were already at their lowest since the advent of the demon race, and whatever was still there was ebbing away rapidly. From all indications it appeared that the end of the demons, and their complete capitulation and decimation was not far away.

²On the other side in Lanka, the demons surrounded Ravana; all were in a grave and sombre mood, the reason being that their king was still unconscious when he was brought back by his charioteer, for we shall soon read that it was only around midnight that Ravana had regained his senses—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 100.

The prospects for the demon army, therefore, were gloomy and foreboding. Thus, a thick pall of dejection and depression prevailed over Lanka at the end of the 7th day of the war.]

[PAUSE 26 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. तेही निसि सीता पहिं जाई । त्रिजटा कहि सब कथा सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

सिर भुज बाढ़ि सुनत रिपु केरी । सीता उर भइ त्रास घनेरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhī nisi sītā pahim jā'ī. trijaṭā kahi saba kathā sunā'ī. 1.

sira bhuja bāḍhi sunata ripu kērī. sītā ura bha'i trāsa ghanērī. 2.

That night (i.e. the intervening night of the 7th and the 8th day of the war) Trijata went to Sita and informed her about all the developments (till the previous evening)¹. (1)

When Sita heard how Ravana's heads and arms continued to grow endlessly in spite of Lord Ram repeatedly severing them, she was very distressed in her heart². (2)

[Note—¹Trijata was an old demoness appointed by Ravana to look after Sita in the garden where she was confined—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Ravana, though decried and derided as being a savage monster, was, truly speaking, not what he has been cruelly depicted to be, for he was very careful in selecting this aged demoness named Trijata to guard Sita because he was in the know that she, like his own brother Vibhishan, was a devotee of Lord Ram, the manifestation of the Supreme Lord of the world, and therefore she would also be sympathetic to Sita. By appointing her to take care of Sita, instead of any other demon or demoness to guard her, Ravana effectively ensured that Sita would be in good and favourable company of someone who would be her friend and comforter during the testing time she would have to spend in his captivity. Trijata's presence would also ensure that no member of the demon race would ever have the courage to torment Sita as there was always the fear of Trijata reporting the matter to Ravana, which, if happened, would surely bring death to the individual who causes this nuisance.

We read that in practice it so transpired that in due course of time Trijata became Sita's close friend and confidante; Sita used to confide with her about all her worries, miseries and pains, even treating Trijata as she would treat her own mother (apropos: Chaupai line no. 4 herein below), and on her part Trijata always encouraged Sita to have patience and keep her hope of deliverance alive, because when the proper time comes all her miseries would come to an end, but for that good day to dawn when she would enjoy the light of freedom and happiness once again, it was necessary for her to keep herself and her hopes alive by having patience, as well as keep saying her prayers with faith and devotion, for it is rightly said that prayers that are said sincerely and from the deep recesses of the heart never go unheeded.

Trijata would keep Sita updated about the progress of the war. During this night, as usual, she told Sita about the developments of the previous day—that Lord Ram had cut-off Ravana's heads and arms multiple numbers of times, but yet the demon king survived. This filled Sita with gloom and distress, as she thought in despondency that it seems well nigh impossible that her tormentor Ravana would ever die during the war, and that she would ever be freed from her miseries. This dilemma of Sita is clear in the verses that follow herein below, as is the way how Trijata comforts her and encourages her to keep her hopes alive.

In the present verses we read the conversation between Trijata and Sita that took place during the night which proceeded the last day of the war when Ravana was finally killed.

²Sita was overcome with despondency and gloom at the prospect of Lord Ram not being able to eliminate her tormentor as was apparent by Ravana managing to survive even though his arms and heads were chopped off so many times. It was an unusual thing to happen, for under normal conditions if an individual's head is cut-off then he must surely die. Sita was confounded and perplexed; she could not visualize how, after all, Ravana would actually be killed when such conventional means have failed.]

मुख मलीन उपजी मन चिंता । त्रिजटा सन बोली तब सीता ॥ ३ ॥

होइहि कहा कहसि किन माता । केहि बिधि मरिहि बिस्व दुखदाता ॥ ४ ॥

mukha malīna upajī mana cintā. trijatā sana bōlī taba sītā. 3.

hō'ihī kahā kahasi kina mātā. kēhi bidhi marihi bisva dukhadātā. 4.

Sita's face became dark with gloom, and immense worries sprouted inside her heart. Filled with despondency and hopelessness, she said to Trijata, --- (3)

'Oh Mother (mātā)! Say, what shall happen now; how will this fellow, who is a tormentor of the world (bisva dukhadātā), die? (4)

रघुपति सर सिर कटेहुँ न मरई । बिधि बिपरीत चरित सब करई ॥ ५ ॥

मोर अभाग्य जिआवत ओही । जेहिं हौं हरि पद कमल बिछोही ॥ ६ ॥

जेहिं कृत कपट कनक मृग झूठा । अजहुँ सो दैव मोहि पर रूठा ॥ ७ ॥

जेहिं बिधि मोहि दुख दुसह सहाए । लछिमन कहूँ कटु बचन कहाए ॥ ८ ॥

raghupati sara sira kaṭēhum' na mara'ī. bidhi biparīta carita saba kara'ī. 5.
 mōra abhāgya ji'āvata ōhī. jēhim hauṁ hari pada kamala bichōhī. 6.
 jēhim kṛta kapaṭa kanaka mṛga jhūṭhā. ajahum' sō daiva mōhi para rūṭhā. 7.
 jēhim bidhi mōhi dukha dusaha sahā'ē. lachimana kahum' kaṭu bacana kahā'ē.
 8.

He does not die even when Lord Raghupati (“raghupati”; the Lord of Raghus; the Lord of Ayodhya; Lord Ram) has chopped-off his heads several times! It's unbelievable and stunning. The Creator seems to be opposed to me for he is doing everything that is odd and goes against me and my interests. (5)

Verily it seems that my misfortune and doomed fate is responsible to keep him (Ravana) alive, so that the misery and grief that has been my lot after being separated from Lord Hari's (i.e. Lord Ram's) lotus-like feet would continue unabated, unhindered and unchecked. (6)

That misfortune of mine had joined hands with an antagonized Creator to devise a device whereby I was misled to be attracted by a fictitious deer with a golden hide that formed the background of my separation from Lord Ram, and the chain of miseries and pains that followed in its wake¹—verily indeed it looks that they are yet not satisfied by my sufferings, and they continue to frown at me maliciously. (7)

There is no doubt that it is the same malicious Creator who had made me use harsh words for Laxman², who now undertakes to make me suffer endlessly in pain and agony, with no end in sight. (8)

[Note—¹This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 27; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 28; and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30.]

रघुपति बिरह सबिष सर भारी । तकि तकि मार बार बहु मारी ॥ ९ ॥
 ऐसेहुँ दुख जो राख मम प्राणा । सोइ बिधि ताहि जिआव न आना ॥ १० ॥

raghupati biraha sabiṣa sara bhārī. taki taki māra bāra bahu mārī. 9.
 aisēhum' dukha jō rākha mama prānā. sō'i bidhi tāhi ji'āva na ānā. 10.

The God of Love, known as Kaamdeo, has been deriving sadistic pleasure from my sufferings as he repeatedly aims and shoots his arrows at me, arrows that are tipped with the poison of grief and pain attending separation from Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram). (9)

In this miserable situation, surely it is the Creator, who is already opposed to me, that keeps me alive in spite of my horrifying grief, torment and misery, and definitely it is no one else¹. (10)

[Note—¹To wit, I am certain that it is this malicious Creator who is keeping me alive, and would not allow me to die inspite of the intolerable pains and miseries that I am subjected to by being hit by the arrows of this cruel Kaamdeo. It is so obvious that one becomes helpless against the will of the Creator, and is forced to surrender before the will of the Creator even against one's own free will.]

बहु बिधि कर बिलाप जानकी । करि करि सुरति कृपानिधान की ॥ ११ ॥
 कह त्रिजटा सुनु राजकुमारी । उर सर लागत मरइ सुरारी ॥ १२ ॥
 प्रभु ताते उर हतइ न तेही । एहि के हृदयँ बसति बैदेही ॥ १३ ॥

bahu bidhi kara bilāpa jānakī. kari kari surati kṛpānidhāna kī. 11.
 kaha trijaṭā sunu rājakumārī. ura sara lāgata mara'i surārī. 12.
 prabhu tāte ura hata'i na tēhī. ēhi kē hṛdayam̐ basati baidēhī. 13.

In this way, Sita (“jānakī”; the daughter of king Janak) lamented and grieved in many ways as she remembered her dear Lord Ram who was an embodiment of grace, mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhāna). [To wit, the more she remembered Lord Ram, the greater was her misery.] (11)

[Trijata comforted her by telling how Lord Ram would finally kill her tormentor Ravana and rescue her.]

Trijata said to Sita: ‘Oh Princess (rājakumārī), listen! The tormentor of gods (i.e. Ravana) would die when an arrow would pierce his heart.

[To wit, there is no way he can be killed by cutting-off his heads or arms, because he has a boon granted to him by Brahma and Shiva that he would not be short of heads and arms, no matter how many of them are severed from his body. As a result he continues to survive, though Lord Ram has repeatedly chopped them off.] (12)

[Now, Trijata gives the reason why Lord Ram has not aimed an arrow directly straight at Ravana's heart to get rid of him.]

The Lord (Sri Ram) has not slayed him (Ravana) by striking directly at his heart because he knows that Vaidehi (Sita) lives inside his heart¹. (13)

[Note—¹This is a very interesting observation. On the surface we find that Sita wishes Ravana's death and holds him responsible for all her miseries as is clear from the foregoing verses, and Ravana too treats her with apparent contempt, even going to the extent of asking his guards to keep troubling her so that she surrenders to his wishes. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

But at the same time it must not be forgotten that he had kidnapped Sita with the intention of using this means to compel Lord Ram, about whom he was certain that he was not a human being as he appears to be, but the Supreme Being himself in his form, to visit Lanka and give freedom to the soul of all sinful demons by killing

them, for otherwise their deliverance seemed impossible. {Apropos: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23; and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61; and Canto 6, verse nos. 30-32.}

To wit, Ravana was very clear in his mind that Lord Ram was no one else but the Supreme Being himself, and he had abducted Sita with a clear objective of attaining deliverance and emancipation for himself.

If he had any doubt in this regard, his queen Mandodari removed it when she pleaded with him to surrender before the Lord, telling him in clear terms that the Lord is a personified form of the Supreme Being. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15.}

A question arises that if it was true that Ravana was aware that Lord Ram was the Supreme Lord God of the world, and that Sita was the Lord's cosmic Shakti, known as the Mother Goddess, then why did he still fight the bloody war and get himself as well as all other demons killed?

It is because he knew that the members of his demon race had become so sinful that the only way for their souls to find peace was to get rid of the demon body, and it was not an easy task at it appears to be—because even the god of death, known as Kaal, was so scared stiff of Ravana that he would not dare to touch any of the demons out of fear of incurring Ravana's wrath. And Ravana, out of ego and self-pride, as well as to save his face and reputation, would not afford to allow Kaal to carry out his normal duties of making the demons die in accordance to the laws of creation where all those who are born must die too, thereby creating a piquant situation that unless some other means could be found to make the demons die, they would continue to live perpetually, which in turn would mean that their individual souls would never find deliverance and peace ever.

So therefore, when Ravana decided that the chance for deliverance has finally arrived, he would not listen to any other thing and to no body; he wouldn't budge from his decision, though this made him look stubborn and haughty. To do justice to him, this surely goes to his credit that inspite of facing all sorts of ignominy, ridicule and scorn, he still held to his belief and succeeded in attaining liberation and deliverance not only for his own self but for the rest of his clan and the demon race.

And why is it said that "Sita lived in Ravana's heart"? It implies that he had enshrined her inside the sanctum of his heart-like temple as its revered deity, because he was certain that it was she who would prove to be the deliverer of his race, for it was for her that Lord Ram would be compelled to come to his very doorstep in Lanka to grant him and all his companions deliverance right where they lived, and they would be spared the trouble of going elsewhere in search of this spiritual bonanza. It ought to be noted that Ravana had kept Sita in the garden known as Ashok Van with due respect that one would give to one's mother, and he took proper care that she is treated and protected like a mother would be—this fact is expressly stated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65.

With this background and understanding, it is impossible to even think or imagine that Ravana had any real malefic or pervert intentions regarding Sita, though of course he pretended outwardly to behave that way, but that was only to conceal his true objective of bringing Sita to Lanka to force Lord Ram to come there and grant the whole of the demon race with the benefit of a liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation right at its doorstep, for otherwise Lord Ram would have found it very difficult to find an excuse to kill the sinful demons en-masse, and with this purported 'killing' the Lord would be actually freeing their souls from the cage symbolized by

the sinful body of a demon, a body that was so hardened and thickened with layers and layers of accumulated sins encasing it that the soul would have remained trapped inside forever, being unable to escape on its own.

Trijata perhaps had one other objective of telling Sita that “Lord Ram is not shooting an arrow at the heart of Ravana because the Lord knows that Sita resides there”. Well, what could it be? Trijata wished to subtly hint to Sita that she must know the secret about Ravana, that after all he is not as cruel towards her as she thinks him to be; and therefore she ought not to curse him so vehemently as she is inclined to do at present.

What could have been Sita’s reaction to this disclosure by Trijata? For one, she must have frowned, as she could not come to terms with the notion that someone who had caused her so much grief and pain would actually admire her. Secondly, she loved only Lord Ram, and this love sprouted from the first day she saw him in the garden at Janakpur, her father’s place^{\$}; on the other hand she had despised Ravana from the moment she first saw him and came to know who he was at the time when he had gone to abduct her[#]. With what Trijata said it may be true that Ravana loved Sita, but it does not necessarily mean that his views were endorsed and accepted by her, or that she ever condoned his overtures even a wee whit. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, ^{\$}Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Doha no. 236; [#]Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 12-16 that precede Doha no. 28; and Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

Of course one can safely conclude that when Sita heard what Trijata had to tell her about what Ravana thought of her, she must have blushed and felt highly embarrassed. But that was all; she became very angry, and her annoyance was stoked further when she recollected the sort of ill treatment she was being subjected to by Ravana ever since he had brought her to Lanka, and the way he is trying his best to defeat her beloved husband Lord Ram in the war so that he could keep her forever against her wishes. This thought filled her heart with repugnance and hate for Ravana.]

छं०. एहि के हृदयँ बस जानकी जानकी उर मम बास है । १ ।
मम उदर भुअन अनेक लागत बान सब कर नास है ॥ २ ॥
सुनि बचन हरष बिषाद मन अति देखि पुनि त्रिजटाँ कहा । ३ ।
अब मरिहि रिपु एहि बिधि सुनहि सुंदरि तजहि संसय महा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ēhi kē hr̥dayam̐ basa jānakī jānakī ura mama bāsa hai. 1.
mama udara bhu'ana anēka lāgata bāna saba kara nāsa hai. 2.
suni bacana haraṣa biṣāda mana ati dēkhi puni trijaṭām̐ kahā. 3.
aba marihi ripu ēhi bidhi sunahi sundari tajahi sansaya mahā. 4.

Trijata told Sita: ‘The Lord (Sri Ram) realizes that Janki (Sita) resides in his (Ravana’s) heart, and also that the Lord himself lives in the heart of Janki.

[To wit, Lord Ram knows that Sita lives inside the heart of Ravana as he is always thinking of her, while the Lord himself lives in her heart as she is always thinking of him.] (Chanda line no. 1)

Lord Ram also knows that the whole universe, consisting of countless worlds, resides inside his own self (because the entire creation is said to exist within the cosmic body of Brahm, the Supreme Being; there is nothing beyond Brahm).

So therefore, if the Lord shoots an arrow at Ravana's heart, then the consequences would be disastrous for the whole creation—for then everything would be destroyed in a fraction of a moment¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Hearing these solemn words of Trijata, Sita was overcome with sadness and despondency (as she lost all hopes that any means could be devised for eliminating her tormentor).

When Trijata observed Sita's state of mind of abject despair and dejection, she comforted her by proposing a method which Lord Ram might employ to get rid of Ravana. So, Trijata said once again to assuage Sita's anxieties and discomfort: --- (Chanda line no. 3)

‘Oh charming lady (sundari)! Don't be so sad, hopeless and despondent; stop doubting and becoming so much perplexed about how Ravana would be eliminated. Listen to me; I shall tell you now how Lord Ram would ultimately kill his enemy (aba marihi ripu ēhi bidhi sunahi). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Put simply it means that if Lord Ram shoots an arrow at Ravana's heart in order to kill him, then it would mean a catastrophic development for the whole creation; everything would be ruined. The arrow will make no distinction between the good and the bad; it would not spare whom to spare and whom to kill. It would first kill Sita, and then pierce deeper to kill Lord Ram, and the result would be the slaying of the entire creation that the Supreme Being cradles in his bosom, a creation that he had himself so lovingly created, nourished and protected. The whole purpose of the Supreme Being taking the trouble of coming down in the form of Lord Ram, which was to eliminate the cruelty perpetrated by the demons so as to afford freedom from fear and restoration of happiness for the rest of his creation, would be defeated—because the Lord's arrow would kill one and all without distinction; the demons would be eliminated alright, but along with them the rest of the creation would also be eliminated, which the Lord surely does not intend to do.]

दो०. काटत सिर होइहि बिकल छुटि जाइहि तव ध्यान ।

तब रावनहि हृदय महुँ मरिहहि रामु सुजान ॥ ९९ ॥

dōhā.

kāṭata sira hō'ihi bikala chuṭi jā'ihi tava dhyāna.

taba rāvanahi hr̥daya mahum̐ marihahim̐ rāmu sujāna. 99.

When Ravana would become extremely bewildered, confused and disoriented at the time when Lord Ram would swiftly go on severing his heads with great rapidity, one after another in quick succession, he (Ravana) would feel so distracted and disturbed that for certain moments he would forget about you (i.e. he would cease to remember you as he would be more concerned about his own safety)—it would be then, during those crucial moments of his mental confusion and disorientation, that Lord Ram would hit him in his heart with a powerful arrow (to kill him)¹. (Doha no. 99)

[Note—¹This was Trijata's prediction concerning Ravana's death in order to comfort Sita and somehow sooth her. Did it actually happen as she had foretold? No, not at least according to Ram Charit Manas—for we shall read shortly that Lord Ram had shot 31 arrows at Ravana during the last moments of the war, out of which 20 arrows cut-off Ravana's twenty arms, 10 arrows severed his ten heads, and the last arrow, the 31st, struck at Ravana's navel and dried up the nectar of life that was stored there. This killed the demon king. Not a single arrow was aimed by Lord Ram at Ravana's heart. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 102 along with Chaupai line no. 4 that follows it.}

Since Lord Ram had not shot even a single arrow at Ravana's heart, Trijata's words—that Lord Ram desists from shooting at Ravana's heart because Sita lives there, and she would be gravely injured if the arrow was aimed at Ravana's heart—is upheld to be true. But the real reason as to why Lord Ram did not aim his arrow at Ravana's heart is quite different. So, what is it?

The answer is that Ravana's pure conscious 'self', known as the 'soul' or the 'Atma' that is eternally pure, holy and divine, lived in his heart, and the arrow would have killed that soul. Lord Ram's intention was to free the soul, to grant it liberation from the trap of a sinful demon body, and not to harm or kill it. The merciful and kind Lord wished to give deliverance to Ravana's soul instead of condemning it to suffer in hell. Hence, the Lord would not aim his arrow at Ravana's heart where his soul lived, and he contrived an alternative method to get rid of Ravana's sinful demonic body that trapped his holy soul inside, so that two problems could be solved simultaneously: one was to get rid of the sinful and evil body of a demon, and the other was to liberate the holy soul unharmed from the trap of this evil body. Therefore, the Lord devised a method of accomplishing both the objectives at one go, and it was to first sever Ravana's heads and arms, and then hit him in his navel in order to kill the demonic body, but spare his heart in order to protect his soul from any injury.

But was Trijata completely wrong in saying that Lord Ram would finally shoot an arrow at Ravana's heart to bring about his end? The strange thing is this: Trijata was not entirely wrong, though of course she appears to be so if we focus our reading only to Ram Charit Manas; for in another version of this marvellously wondrous Story of the Ramayan, that of the illustrious sage Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramayan', we learn that Lord Ram had indeed shot an arrow at Ravana's heart on the advice of Matli, the charioteer of Lord Ram's chariot that was sent by the gods to help in the battle against Ravana—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 61-72.

So, how do we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory versions? Clearly it means that Lord Ram had shot arrows simultaneously at Ravana's 'navel' as well as his 'heart' to ensure his death. They were done almost at the same time, so fast, so swiftly and in quick succession, that the two chroniclers of this legendary history—one being Veda Vyas who documented the progress of the war in his classic Adhyatma Ramayan, and the other being Goswami Tulsidas who narrated the same story in his classic Ram Charit Manas—pointed out the way Ravana was killed according to where his attention was focussed at that instant when Ravana was actually killed. Obviously, Veda Vyas's eyes and mind were focused on Ravana's heart, so he attributed his death to Lord Ram's arrow rupturing his heart, while that of Tulsidas were focused on his navel, which made him document that Ravana was slayed because Lord Ram's arrow hit him in the navel.

We can therefore safely say that both these two classics, viz. Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, and Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, must be read together to get a comprehensive picture of what may have actually transpired at that period of time long-long ago, for we discover that there seems to be some sort of subtle form of synergy between the two narratives, inasmuch as they compliment each other to fill in the dotted lines.

We conclude that though these two versions may give an impression of contradiction—such as in the present instance, because whereas in Adhyatma Ramayan it is said that Ravana was killed when Lord Ram hit him in his heart (Lanka Kand, Canto 11, verse no. 71), while Ram Charit Manas says he was killed by an arrow shot at his navel (Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103)—but on close examination it seems that both the things may have happened simultaneously: to wit, Lord Ram must have shot arrows aimed at Ravana's heart as well as his navel to ensure that all precautions are taken to make sure that Ravana is certainly slayed, for the Lord did not want to take any further risk of playing games with him as time was running out, and already all other methods had miserably failed to the demon's life.]

चौ०. अस कहि बहुत भाँति समुझाई । पुनि त्रिजटा निज भवन सिधाई ॥ १ ॥

राम सुभाउ सुमिरि बैदेही । उपजी बिरह बिथा अति तेही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi bahuta bhāmṭi samujhāī. puni trijaṭā nija bhavana sidhāī. 1.
rāma subhā'u sumiri baidēhī. upajī biraha bithā ati tēhī. 2.

Trijata used many such words (as narrated in the previous set of verses) to try her best to comfort Sita, encouraging her to have patience and faith; thereafter, she went home. (1)

Meanwhile, Sita's grief and the agony of separation from her beloved Lord Ram increased manifold times as she remembered the kind and gracious nature of the Lord¹. (2)

[Note—¹Trijata had just a while ago told Sita that she has a special place in the heart of Ravana, which put simply means that he adores her—apropos: Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 99. Sita knew that Lord Ram too adored her; so what then was the difference? Sita contemplated this aspect deep inside her own mind and heart, and came to the conclusion that Lord Ram was her true well-wisher and lover. There was a stark difference between Lord Ram and Ravana, though both of them enshrined Sita in their hearts. While Ravana had treated her roughly, given her nothing but pain and misery, and had forcibly taken her away from her husband, Lord Ram on the other hand had always taken care that Sita never found any cause for grief and feeling sad for any reason even during the troublesome time they had spent in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 141; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142.

The mutual sense of unbound love and profound affection between Lord Ram and Sita was deep-rooted and eternal, for it went back to long days ago when they first met in Janakpur, prior to their marriage; she had fervently prayed to gods and

goddesses so that she could marry the Lord^a, and at the time when Lord Ram was preparing to go to the forest she had voluntarily decided to accompany him, staking all her reputation, loyalty and devotion for it, as well as determinedly forgoing all concerns for her comfort and safety^b. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, ^aBaal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 228—to Sortha / Doha no. 236; (ii) Doha no. 248 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259; ^bAyodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 69.}

This was not at all the case with Ravana; Sita loathed him and cursed him as is evident on many occasions. First was at the time of her abduction by Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6, 24 that precede it.

The other such occasion was when Ravana tries to cajole Sita to surrender before his pervert wishes—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 9.

And Ravana had openly ordered the female demons who were appointed to guard her to torment her as much as they pleased—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 10 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede it.

To wit, it is obvious without doubt that Sita's pained heart longed ever so much for her beloved Lord Ram, and the more she remembered him the more her agony arising out of her separation from the Lord increased, and it further stoked the fire of her grief and misery.

During the long days of her captivity in Lanka, she had become very forlorn and reconciled to her doomed fate; her senses were dulled and rarely would she respond to anyone talking to her. But when Trijata came with the news of the battle, and how Lord Ram was so near yet so far from liberating her from captivity as all his efforts to kill Ravana, her tormentor, were failing, Sita sank in a pool of despair and despondency. She was once again reminded of Lord Ram, and this pleasant memory stoked her emotions afresh and made her extremely sentimental.

Even Ravana's own spy named Suk had acknowledged about Lord Ram's exceptionally gracious and kind nature when he had tried to persuade Ravana to end hostility with the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 57.

So, Sita was not alone to be overcome with emotions while remembering the most gracious and kind nature of Lord Ram, for besides Suk we read that even Vibhishan and Hanuman were also overwhelmed when they recalled the Lord's nature during their first meeting in Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

निसिहि ससिहि निंदति बहु भाँती । जुग सम भई सिराति न राती ॥ ३ ॥

करति बिलाप मनहिं मन भारी । राम बिरहँ जानकी दुखारी ॥ ४ ॥

nisihi sasihi nindati bahu bhāmṭī. juga sama bha'ī sirāti na rāṭī. 3.

karati bilāpa manahim mana bhārī. rāma biraham' jānakī dukhārī. 4.

She reproached the night¹ and the moon² in various ways, lamenting that the night seems to get longer and longer without end¹. (3)

Janki (Sita) wailed and lamented internally, quietly weeping and grieving silently in many ways, for she was overwhelmed with an intolerable agony of separation from Lord Ram. (4)

[Note—¹Trijata had told Sita that the war for her liberation was in its final leg, and that if all goes well then Lord Ram would succeed in slaying Ravana by shooting him in his heart—apropos: Doha no. 99 herein above. This made Sita so anxious and worried that an hour of the night seemed as an age for her.

²The ‘moon’ is said to aggravate the agony of separation between two lovers; when they look up at the moon the lovers sigh and wail intolerably. Even Lord Ram had been emotional under the light of the full moon when he had remembered Sita after their first meeting in the garden of Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 238.

Meanwhile, the presence of the ‘moon’ indicates that it was a moonlight night, and not a dark night.]

जब अति भयउ बिरह उर दाहू । फरकेउ बाम नयन अरु बाहू ॥ ५ ॥
सगुन बिचारि धरी मन धीरा । अब मिलिहहिं कृपाल रघुबीरा ॥ ६ ॥

jaba ati bhaya'u biraha ura dāhū. pharakē'u bāma nayana aru bāhū. 5.
saguna bicāri dharī mana dhīrā. aba milihahim̐ kṛpāla raghubīrā. 6.

When the pain and agony of separation from her beloved husband Lord Ram became too much for her to bear, burning her heart and tormenting her much, at that moment the left side of her body began to flutter voluntarily (which is considered a good sign, an auspicious omen for a woman¹). (5)

Taking note of this auspicious sign, Sita felt comforted and pleased inside her heart, concluding that surely now all her miseries would come to an end soon, and she will be able to meet the merciful Lord Raghubir (“kṛpāla raghubīrā”; Lord Ram). (60)

[Note—¹When the left side of a woman’s body flutters, it is regarded as a good sign, but in a male it is regarded as a bad omen. The reverse is also true: if the right side of a woman’s body flutters it is bad for her, but for a man it is a good omen.]

इहाँ अर्धनिसि रावनु जागा । निज सारथि सन खीझन लागा ॥ ७ ॥
सठ रनभूमि छड़ाइसि मोही । धिग धिग अधम मंदमति तोही ॥ ८ ॥
तेहिं पद गहि बहु बिधि समुझावा । भोरु भएँ रथ चढ़ि पुनि धावा ॥ ९ ॥

ihām̐ ardhanisi rāvanu jāgā. nija sārathi sana khījhana lāgā. 7.
saṭha ranabhūmi charā'isi mōhī. dhiga dhiga adhama mandamati tōhī. 8.
tēhim̐ pada gahi bahu bidhi samujhāvā. bhōru bha'ēm̐ ratha caḍhi puni dhāvā.

9.

Here meanwhile, Ravana regained his senses around midnight¹. As soon as he realized what had happened, he began to reproach his charioteer. (7)

Ravana scolded him: ‘Oh you fool; why did you make me leave the battle-field. Woe betide you, oh you contemptible and dumb-witted fellow (for you have given me a bad name for having escaped from the battle-field like a coward, for having succumbed to my enemy like a weakling, for having fallen down in battle while my enemy remained standing on his legs).²’ (8)

The charioteer fell down at Ravana’s feet to beg forgiveness, and explained in different ways the reason why he had done what he did³.

As soon as the day dawned⁴, Ravana made all haste to mount the chariot and dash to the battle ground. (9)

[Note—¹We will recall that Ravana had become unconscious and fell down when Jamvant, the bear chief, had kicked him hard in his chest. Ravana’s charioteer had thought it fit and prudent to bring him back to Lanka, especially as it was getting dark and the battle for the day was to come to an end, and there was neither any sense nor was it safe to remain in the battle-field any longer. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 15 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 98 herein above.}]

²It is regarded as a great dishonour and ignominy for a valiant warrior to fall down in the battle-field during a duel, and being carried away to safety by someone else. He would rather die than do this; he would prefer to walk on his two legs back to his camp inspite of being wounded, than being carried away like a sac by someone else.

Never in his long career had Ravana experienced this objectionable situation. So therefore, as soon as he regained his senses and came to know what had happened, he got angry with his charioteer.

³The charioteer explained to Ravana the circumstances under which he was left with no other choice but to bring him back inside the fort of Lanka. He was gravely wounded and lying as if dead; night was fast approaching and the day’s battle was to end nevertheless; and in the dark of the night it was very dangerous to remain lying unconscious in the middle of the battle-field, surrounded by enemies, for the majority of the demons were killed, and the few remaining had fled in terror as soon as they saw Ravana falling down. Besides this, the charioteer explained, he was merely doing his duty to bring his lord back to safety in the prevailing circumstances.

Ravana felt satisfied with this explanation, and he excused the charioteer.

⁴This was the 8th day of the war; Ravana would be killed on this day as would be clear from a careful analysis of the narration of the war as described in this book ‘Ram Charit Manas’. Each night’s break during the war has been clearly marked at different points in the narrative, but after the battle commenced on the 8th day there is no mention of any other break between this day’s battle and the commencement of the next day’s battle. We find that a continuity is maintained while describing the ferocity of the battle which commenced as soon as the sun rose on the 8th day of the war till the time of death of Ravana’s death, as narrated from this present Chaupai line no. 9

to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103. It simply implies that according to Ram Charit Manas, Ravana died on the 8th day of the war.]

सुनि आगवनु दसानन केरा । कपिदल खरभर भयउ घनेरा ॥ १० ॥
जहँ तहँ भूधर बिटप उपारी । धाए कटकटाइ भट भारी ॥ ११ ॥

sunī āgavanu dasānana kērā. kapidala kharabhara bhaya'u ghanērā. 10.
jaham̐ taham̐ bhūdhara biṭapa upārī. dhā'ē kaṭakaṭā'i bhaṭa bhārī. 11.

Hearing that Ravana had arrived on the battle-field, there was a great turmoil amongst the rank and file of the army of monkeys and bears¹. (10)

They immediately grabbed whatever huge rocks and trees they could lay their hands on, and gnashing and grinding their teeth, they dashed forward to meet (intercept) him. (11)

[Note—¹Why was there turmoil in the monkey army? The reason is this:

Last evening they had seen Ravana sinking down unconscious, as if dead, and then being carried away like a corpse by his charioteer. So they had deduced that either he was dead, and that would be the end of the war, or in case he survived then he was surely so gravely wounded that he will take some time to recover.

But they had least expected that Ravana would emerge so quickly on the battle-field so early in the morning that it seemed he had beaten the rays of the sun in the hurry to reach the ground; he was in his prime fighting mode, and looked most ferocious by his appearance, raging and ranting wildly with a determination for revenge. The monkeys and bears were therefore caught unawares; they scrambled for their weapons and dashed out to meet the challenge in order to intercept Ravana before he comes too close to their camp, as then it would be disastrous for all of them.]

छं०. धाए जो मर्कट बिकट भालु कराल कर भूधर धरा । १ ।
अति कोप करहिं प्रहार मारत भजि चले रजनीचरा ॥ २ ॥
बिचलाइ दल बलवंत कीसन्ह घेरि पुनि रावनु लियो । ३ ।
चहुँ दिसि चपेटन्ह मारि नखन्ह बिदारि तनु व्याकुल कियो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

dhā'ē jō markaṭa bikaṭa bhālu karāla kara bhūdhara dharā. 1.
ati kōpa karahiṁ prahāra mārata bhaji calē rajanīcarā. 2.
bicalā'i dala balavanta kīsanha ghēri puni rāvanu liyō. 3.
cahum̐ disi capēṭanhi mārī nakhanhi bidāri tanu byākula kiyō. 4.

The monkeys and bears who had dashed forward to intercept Ravana and his demon army, were most formidable by their demeanours and fierce in their attack; they had grabbed huge mountain-like rocks and boulders as they rushed to intercept the enemy. (Chanda line no. 1)

They attacked the enemy with vehement anger, hitting it hard and with such great violence that the demon warriors could not face the ferocity of the assault, and fled from the field in terror. (Chanda line no. 2)

After successfully scattering the demon warriors who accompanied Ravana, leaving him all to himself and unprotected, the strong and valorous monkeys and bears then surrounded him from all the sides. (Chanda line no. 3)

The monkey and bear army attacked Ravana from all sides; biting him, kicking him, cuffing, slapping, thrashing and pounding him so violently all at once, and in all possible ways they could devise, that the poor demon king felt cornered and helpless; he became extremely agitated, feeling perplexed and exasperated, as he could not understand how to respond to this sudden burst of violence that completely dazed him. (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. देखि महा मर्कट प्रबल रावन कीन्ह बिचार।
अंतरहित होइ निमिष महुँ कृत माया बिस्तार ॥ १०० ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi mahā markāṭa prabala rāvana kīnha bicāra.
antarahita hō'i nīmiṣa mahum' kṛta māyā bistāra. 100.

When Ravana found himself surrounded by a ferocious army of monkey and bears who were determined to tear him apart, he decided that the best course of action for him now was to use the magical tricks, known as 'Maya', he was expert in¹.

With that purpose in mind, he first quickly made himself invisible, and then he created an illusion of a vastly horrifying scene all over the battle-field which would scare off his attackers and completely confound them. (Doha no. 100)

[Note—¹This is the third time that Ravana has employed his Maya to deflect the ferocious attack of monkeys and bears. The other two occasions when Ravana had employed his magical tricks are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 88; Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 89; and again in (ii) Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 97.

During the first occasion, Ravana's Maya created an illusion that made the monkey and bear warriors see the demon army as consisting of countless numbers of Lord Ram and his brother Laxman, instead of the demon warriors. To wit, all the demons appeared to be images of the two brothers, a sight which would obviously confuse the monkeys and bears.

On the second occasion however, there appeared to be countless Ravana in the battle-field. That also was intended to utterly bewilder the monkeys and bears.

In both the cases we find that Ravana had employed his skills at creating an illusion when he found himself alone and surrounded by ferocious monkeys and bears who were attacking him from all the sides.

This is the third such occasion where Ravana once again uses his skills at Maya when he found himself besieged. On this occasion, he created a terrible sight of ghosts, phantoms, ogres, fiends, spirits and hobgoblins rampaging through the battle

ground, howling, roaring, screaming and dancing and stomping in a macabre and blood-curdling scenario of death and destruction, which was further magnified by appearance of fire everywhere. This hair-raising and horrific scene would naturally stun and terrify the army of Lord Ram, stopping it from attacking Ravana any further.]

छं०. जब कीन्ह तेहिं पाषंड । भए प्रगट जंतु प्रचंड ॥ १ ॥
 बेताल भूत पिसाच । कर धरें धनु नाराच ॥ २ ॥
 जोगिनि गहें करबाल । एक हाथ मनुज कपाल ॥ ३ ॥
 करि सद्य सोनित पान । नाचहिं करहिं बहु गान ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jaba kīṇha tēhiṃ pāṣaṇḍa. bha'e pragaṭa jantu pracaṇḍa. 1.
 bētāla bhūta pisāca. kara dharēm dhanu nārāca. 2.
 jōgini gahēm karabāla. ēka hātha manuja kapāla. 3.
 kari sadya sōnita pāna. nācahiṃ karahiṃ bahu gāna. 4.

When he (Ravana) spread his spell of delusions and deceit in the battle-field, a fantastic scene of illusions was created. Horrifying creatures with terrible countenances and demeanours were produced instantly. (Chanda line no. 1)

Phantoms, ghosts and hobgoblins of all sorts were created. They held bows and arrows in their hands, and danced the dance-of-death and destruction on the battle ground. (Chanda line no. 2)

Female ogres, holding a sword in one hand¹ and a hollowed out human skull in the other hand, danced and sang in merriment as they drank fresh warm blood collected in the upturned skulls². (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹The word “karabāla” in line no. 3 has two meanings: It may mean a ‘sword held in the hand’, and it may also mean ‘a child held in the hand’. The latter meaning would imply that these female ogres held their young-ones in one hand, while they held the hollow skull to collect blood in the other hand. Then, when blood was collected in this skull-like pot, they would let her child drink some of it, and drink the rest of it herself.

²It seemed that they had been cutting-off the heads of warriors with their swords from which blood dripped, and used the hollowed out skulls to collect the flowing blood which they drank. This made them so happy that they danced and sang in the battle-field, enjoying the feast and rejoicing at the prospect of an abundant supply of victuals in the form of fresh flesh to satisfy their hunger, and warm blood as drink to quench their thirst.

A similar abominable, abhorable, repulsive and macabre scene of rivers of blood and the horrible dance of death has been described earlier too in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

धरु मारु बोलहिं घोर । रहि पूरि धुनि चहुँ ओर ॥ ५ ॥
 मुख बाइ धावहिं खान । तब लगे कीस परान ॥ ६ ॥
 जहँ जाहिं मर्कट भागि । तहँ बरत देखहिं आगि ॥ ७ ॥
 भए बिकल बानर भालु । पुनि लाग बरषै बालु ॥ ८ ॥

dharu māru bōlahiṁ ghōra. rahi pūri dhuni cahum̐ ōra. 5.
 mukha bā'i dhāvahiṁ khāna. taba lagē kīsa parāna. 6.
 jaham̐ jāhiṁ markṭa bhāgi. taham̐ barata dēkhahiṁ āgi. 7.
 bha'ē bikala bānara bhālu. puni lāga baraṣai bālu. 8.

The abominable and fearful creatures that appeared all over the battle-field were shouting in a terrifying way, 'catch hold and kill'. Their howls and chilling cries resounded in all the directions¹. (Chanda line no. 5)

They opened their mouths wide and ran behind the monkeys and bears in order to grab and eat them alive, whereat the terrified fellows ran helter-skelter to save themselves². (Chanda line no. 6)

Wherever the monkeys and bears ran to escape and hide from the assault of the devilish fiends who rushed after them, they found themselves facing raging fire which blocked their way. (Chanda line no. 7)

The horrified monkeys and bears were agitated and utterly confounded. Their misery was compounded when sand suddenly began raining over them, thereby effectively blinding their sight³. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹The ugly ogres, phantoms, ghosts and goblins ran behind the terrified monkeys and bears in order to catch them and eat them up, either alive or dead. These fiends and devilish creatures had wide open mouths, were swinging swords from which blood dripped, had bows strung tight and arrows mounted on them, aiming at the fleeing warriors, and they were gesticulating wildly and shouting terribly as they lunged towards the mortified monkeys and bears.

Remember: It was an illusion created by Ravana, but it was so perfect in its form that everything seemed very real and true.

It is a replication of the scene described earlier in the war—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 53.

²When Kumbhakaran had entered the battle-field, a similar scene unfolded; he too had a most fearful body; he too had rushed forward madly with open mouth and hands extended to grab whoever he could lay his hands on, and then put the terrified victims in his cavernous mouth in order to devour them in hordes. The horrified monkeys and bears had scattered here and there as fast as they could run, trying to escape the colossus demon. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 67; and Doha no. 69.}

³Earlier too, when Meghanad had spread his Maya on the battle-field, he too had created this scenario of blood, flesh, bone-marrow, intestines and sand raining down

from the sky to terrify, blind and totally confound the monkey and bear warriors on the ground. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 67.}

जहँ तहँ थकित करि कीस । गर्जेउ बहुरि दससीस ॥ ९ ॥
 लछिमन कपीस समेत । भए सकल बीर अचेत ॥ १० ॥
 हा राम हा रघुनाथ । कहि सुभट मीजहिं हाथ ॥ ११ ॥
 एहि बिधि सकल बल तोरि । तेहिं कीन्ह कपट बहोरि ॥ १२ ॥

jaham̐ taham̐ thakita kari kīsa. garjē'u bahuri dasasīsa. 9.
 lachimana kapīsa samēta. bha'e sakala bīra acēta. 10.
 hā rāma hā raghunātha. kahi subhaṭa mījahim̐ hātha. 11.
 ēhi bidhi sakala bala tōri. tēhim̐ kīnha kapaṭa bahōri. 12.

Stupefying and wearing out the monkeys and bears so much that they stood utterly transfixed and dazed at the very place they found themselves in, being unable to move and unable to decide what to and what not to do, the ten-headed monster Ravana thundered derisively. (Chanda line no. 9)

Even Sugriv (the chief of the monkeys) and Laxman (the younger brother of Lord Ram) too became confounded and lost their bearings, alongside the rest of the monkey warriors. (Chanda line no. 10)

Crying out 'Oh Lord Ram; Oh Lord Raghubir' (to seek the Lord's help), the valiant warriors wrung their hands in abject frustration and despair. (Chanda line no. 11)

In this way, having first crushed the valour and morale of the mighty warriors and nullifying their superior strength, he (Ravana) unleashed a fresh round of delusory tricks that would further aggravate the confoundedness of his enemy. [And what did he do? We shall read it in the next set of verses below.] (Chanda line no. 12)

प्रगटेसि बिपुल हनुमान । धाए गहे पाषान ॥ १३ ॥
 तिन्ह रामु घेरे जाइ । चहुँ दिसि बरूथ बनाइ ॥ १४ ॥
 मारहु धरहु जनि जाइ । कटकटहिं पूँछ उठाइ ॥ १५ ॥
 दहँ दिसि लँगूर बिराज । तेहिं मध्य कोसलराज ॥ १६ ॥

pragaṭēsi bipula hanumāna. dhā'ē gahē pāṣāna. 13.
 tinha rāmu ghērē jā'i. cahum̐ disi barūtha banā'i. 14.
 mārāhu dharāhu jani jā'i. kaṭakatahim̐ pūm̐cha uṭhā'i. 15.
 daham̐ disi lam̐gūra birāja. tēhim̐ madhya kōsalarāja. 16.

He (Ravana) created an illusion of a large number of Hanumans who held huge mountain-like rocks and boulders in their hands. (Chanda line no. 13)

These false forms of Hanuman formed large groups and dashed towards Lord Ram to surround him from all sides. (Chanda line no. 14)

They raised their tails and swirled them in the air, gnashing their teeth and shrieking: 'Kill him (Lord Ram); go and catch hold of him so that he does not escape'. (Chanda line no. 15)

The effect of this illusion created by Ravana was that the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram) was surrounded on all the sides by these fictitious images of Hanuman waving their long tails, and seemingly baying for the Lord's blood¹. (Chanda line no. 16)

[Note—¹In a similar situation created by Meghanad earlier, Lord Ram had smiled and shot an arrow that ruptured this veil of delusions, clearing the ground of all fake forms—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 52.

In another scene reminiscent of what happened now, Ravana had created an illusion whereby numerous forms of his own self were mysteriously produced in the battle-field all of a sudden, and these fake Ravana's rushed angrily to catch and kill the monkeys and bears. At that time too, Lord Ram had shot an arrow to put an end to this deceit—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 96—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 97.

The only apparent difference between the instance cited above and the present scenario is that in the former case the false forms were of Ravana himself, and these fictitious Ravana's had lunged ferociously at the monkeys and bears to terrify them and make them flee, whilst in the present case the fictitious forms are that of Hanuman, Lord Ram's most trusted aide, and the worst is that Hanuman has begun attacking his own Lord.

Ravana was very clever in deciding to use 'Hanuman's fictitious form' to confuse Lord Ram. He knew how much the Lord trusted and loved Hanuman, and when he discovers that the same Hanuman is now attacking him from all sides, it is sure, so thought Ravana, that the Lord would be taken aback, being extremely shocked and stunned to see that even Hanuman had become his mortal enemy; and this would so much confound and perplex the Lord that for quite some time he would be rendered senseless and unable to decide what to do. The time Lord Ram remains indecisive and inactive because of this unexpected shocker would be a boon for Ravana as, for one, it would give the demon king the much needed breathing time during which he would collect his wits together and plan a new strategy for the attack, and two, it would demoralize and confuse the Lord's own army.

So, what will Lord Ram do now; how will he respond to this new threat created by Ravana? The answer is found herein below in Chanda line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 101.]

छं०. तेहिं मध्य कोसलराज सुंदर स्याम तन सोभा लही । १ ।
 जनु इंद्रधनुष अनेक की बर बारि तुंग तमालही ॥ २ ॥
 प्रभु देखि हरष बिषाद उर सुर बदत जय जय जय करी । ३ ।
 रघुबीर एक्हिं तीर कोपि निमेष मुहुं माया हरी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

tēhiṁ madhya kōsalarāja sundara syāma tana sōbhā lahī. 1.
 janu indradhanuṣa anēka kī bara bāri tuṅga tamālahī. 2.
 prabhu dēkhi haraṣa biṣāda ura sura badata jaya jaya jaya karī. 3.
 raghubīra ēkahim tīra kōpi nimēṣa mahum' māyā harī. 4.

The handsome and beauteous form of the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram), as he stood surrounded by images of Hanuman waving their long tails over him, gave the impression of a colourful panorama where a tall and dark-coloured catechu tree (tuṅga tamālahī) stands majestically in the midst of many colourful rainbows that form a bower or a parasol over it¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

This bewitching sight of the Lord filled the gods with a mixture of joy and sorrow² as they applauded the Lord in unison, saying repeatedly: 'Hail Lord Ram; Glory be to you; Victory to you.' (Chanda line no. 3)

Meanwhile, the brave Lord of the Raghus ("raghubīra"; Lord Ram) angrily shot one single arrow by which all the illusions and deceits created by Ravana were eliminated³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹In this imagery, Lord Ram is likened to the catechu tree because of his dark complexion; the many Hanumans that surrounded the Lord appeared like the tall hedge erected around this tree to protect it, and his long waving tails that covered the Lord appeared like the many rainbows that are formed in the sky in such a way that they form a canopy over this tree.

²Why were the gods happy as well as sorrowful at the same time? They marvelled at the beautiful sight that unfolded before them as described herein above; they were happy to see the beautiful form of Lord Ram, and they were sure that the Lord would soon remove this delusion as he had done on previous occasions. So therefore there was no cause of worry.

Even though they assured themselves that everything would be fine, yet they was an underlying cause of fear and uncertainty in their hearts, because of two primary reasons: one, it was a 'war', and in a war nothing could be predicted with certainty; and two, they knew the might of Ravana, that he was no ordinary adversary, and that he could do many unimaginable and nasty things about which no one can be certain about. Hence, this factor of uncertainty, coupled with Ravana's formidable reputation, made the gods a bit restless and anxious. The gods were sorry that their beloved Lord Ram had had to suffer so much for their sake.

³Earlier too, whenever magical spells of illusions and deceits were employed in the battle-field by the demon warriors Meghanad and Ravana, Lord Ram had shot a single arrow to cut through these veils of delusions created by them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52 (in case of Meghanad); and (ii) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 89; and Doha no. 96 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

माया बिगत कपि भालु हरषे बिटप गिरि गहि सब फिरे । ५ ।

सर निकर छाड़े राम रावन बाहु सिर पुनि महि गिरे ॥ ६ ॥
 श्रीराम रावन समर चरित अनेक कल्प जो गावहीं । ७ ।
 सत सेष सारद निगम कबि तेउ तदपि पार न पावहीं ॥ ८ ॥

māyā bigata kapi bhālu haraṣē biṭapa giri gahi saba phirē. 5.
 sara nikara chārē rāma rāvana bāhu sira puni mahi girē. 6.
 śrīrāma rāvana samara carita anēka kalpa jō gāvahīm. 7.
 sata sēṣa sārada nigama kabi tē'u tadapi pāra na pāvahīm. 8.

No sooner than this Maya created by Ravana was eliminated, the monkeys and bears felt exhilarated and rejuvenated. They grabbed huge rocks and trees with renewed enthusiasm, and returned to the frontline of the battle-field (from where they had fled a little while ago). (Chanda line no. 5)

In the mean time, Lord Ram shot a fresh volley of arrows which cut-off Ravana's heads and arms all over again, making them fall on the ground. (Chanda line no. 6)

The war that was fought between Lord Ram and Ravana, and the unbelievable actions that were taken and deeds done during its course, were so astounding, fascinating and astonishing that they can't be sufficiently narrated or described even if thousands of Seshnaths (celestial serpents with their thousands of tongues), goddesses Sharada (the goddess of speech and knowledge), the Vedas (ancient scriptures reputed for their skills in narrating in fine details even the most subtle of things), and a legend of renowned bards and poets would gather together and pool their skills to do it; none would be able to, either on their own or in a concert with each other, would ever be able to fathom its depth or its expanse¹. (Chanda line nos. 7-8)

[Note—¹To wit, the Epic War of Lanka, fought betwixt Lord Ram and Ravana, has been described by so many countless poets, bards and chroniclers down the ages, but none had been able to claim that his narration is exhaustive and comprehensive. Each narrator had done his best, but still the narration was incomplete.

The idea is that the narrative that we read at present is one of the many versions by which this legendary story has been described. The war was of an epic proportion, and the like of which never occurred in this world, either aforetime or ever after.]

दो०. ताके गुन गन कछु कहे जड़मति तुलसीदास ।
 जिमि निज बल अनुरूप ते माछी उड़इ अकास ॥ १०१ (क) ॥
 काटे सिर भुज बार बहु मरत न भट लंकेस ।
 प्रभु क्रीड़त सुर सिद्ध मुनि व्याकुल देखि कलेस ॥ १०१ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

tākē guna gana kachu kahē jaramati tulasīdāsa.
 jimi nija bala anurūpa tē māchī urā'i akāsa. 101 (a).
 kāṭē sira bhuja bāra bahu marata na bhaṭa laṅkēsa.

prabhu krīṛata sura sid'dha muni byākula dēkhi kalēsa. 101 (b).

That epic war has been narrated to some extent by Tulsidas (the poet who wrote this classic Book named ‘Ram Charit Manas’) according to his limited abilities, as he lacks the skills of a competent poet or narrator to do proper justice to this epic legendary Story.

Nevertheless, his attempt is just like a mosquito or an insect that tries to fly in the sky to reach a height according to its ability¹. (Doha no. 101-a)

Meanwhile, the valorous and invincible Lord of Lanka (“bhaṭa laṅkāsa”; Ravana) would not die even after his heads and arms were chopped-off repeatedly.

This was a play that Lord Ram was playing in the battle-field, but this play made the gods and mystics (who were watching the proceedings from their stations in the sky) worried and anxious². (Doha no. 101-b)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 91.

²The gods and the rest became worried and exasperated because it seemed that the war would drag endlessly on, without an end in sight. They were becoming anxious as Lord Ram had so far failed to kill their tormentor, the demon king Ravana. They were worried that in case the worst happens, that Ravana manages to evade death and Lord Ram too becomes weary of trying to kill him by-and-by, and he finally decides to end the war by making some kind of compromise, then all the planning and hopes of the gods of getting rid of Ravana would come shattering down like a house of cards.

They feared that in case Ravana somehow survived this war, he would not only become truly invincible, but would certainly also unleash his fiery revenge upon the gods and sages, with aggravated fury and viciousness, to punish them for teaming against him and asking Lord Vishnu to come down as Lord Ram to kill him.

This prospect sent shivers down their spines as they found that the war is dragging on endlessly, for they remembered how they were beaten and ill-treated by Ravana earlier, a precursor to a worse future to come.]

चौ०. काटत बढ़हिं सीस समुदाई । जिमि प्रति लाभ लोभ अधिकाई ॥ १ ॥

मरइ न रिपु श्रम भयउ बिसेषा । राम बिभीषन तन तब देखा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāṭata baṛhahiṁ sīsa samudāī. jimi prati lābha lōbha adhikāī. 1.
mara'i na ripu śrama bhaya'u bisēṣā. rāma bibhīṣana tana taba dēkhā. 2.

His (Ravana's) heads went on multiplying and replacing themselves rapidly the more they were cut-off (by Lord Ram) in the same way as greed and rapacity for gain and profit go on increasing exponentially with each success or each reward attained in one's endeavours towards fulfillment of his desires or objectives¹. (1)

The enemy couldn't be vanquished and got rid of in this conventional manner (of cutting of heads), and this prospect worried and confounded Lord Ram immensely, for by this time he was getting weary of repeatedly trying this method in vain².

Amazed and perplexed at this uncommon development, Lord Ram glanced at Vibhishan³. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the more a person gains something that he wants, the more his efforts bear fruits towards achieving his objectives, the more profits he makes by doing something, the more success he achieves in his enterprise, the more he would want to have it; for the endless sky seems to be the end for desires, yearnings and needs, and there is verily no end to greed and rapacity for they are never ever contented.

The idea is that Ravana's heads went on increasing exponentially in numbers the more they were cut by Lord Ram. There seemed to be no end to re-growth of newer heads on his body; for no sooner was one set chopped off than a new crop of heads sprang up on his shoulders.

²Lord Ram was tired of shooting arrows and chopping heads and arms of Ravana, for this strategy proved in vain. He thought to himself, bemused and perplexed: "It's so wondrous that Ravana's heads grow like mushrooms in the rainy season, as the more I cut them the more they grow, and as rapidly as they are cut. Hence, I have to devise some other device to eliminate Ravana, for it is a waste of time and effort trying to kill him by cutting off his heads repeatedly. What am I to do now?"

Then the Lord glanced at Vibhishan who was standing by his side, in the hope of any hint, any help from him.

³Why did Lord Ram look at Vibhishan? The Lord was out of his wits in trying to eliminate Ravana by trying all conventional methods that one would normally think of by which someone can be killed, which was to cut off Ravana's head; but unfortunately and mysteriously all such attempts had failed. So the Lord glanced at Vibhishan to explore the possibility of his confiding some secret way to circumvent this hurdle in eliminating Ravana, because the Lord rightly guessed, as will be seen shortly, that Vibhishan must be privy to some secret formula to help rid Ravana as he was his sibling, his younger brother, and so it could be correctly guessed that he might know certain things which others didn't.

Here, Lord Ram also wished to test Vibhishan's vows of loyalty and submission to him, for now if Vibhishan helped the Lord to kill his own brother it would certainly prove his allegiance and fidelity towards his new Master; otherwise a huge question mark would be there regarding his real intentions in coming to join Lord Ram's camp against his brother Ravana, which would put all his proclamations and assertions regarding his submission before the Lord under a dark cloud of doubt.

Remember: Lord Ram was no ordinary prince; he was an incarnation or a manifestation of the Supreme Being himself. This being the case, it is not possible that things were hidden from him, as the Lord is "all-knowing and omniscient (*sarabagya*)", a virtue that Vibhishan himself would acknowledge in verse no. 4 herein below. But the Lord did not kill Ravana even though he knew the way he should be killed, but waited till Vibhishan would disclose this method to him. Why? Because the Lord wanted to test Vibhishan's honesty and sincerity regarding his loud proclamations and vows of loyalty, allegiance, devotion, faith and submission towards the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 45.

Why did Lord Ram have cause for doubt in Vibhishan? Well, the answer is this: The war had been going on for so many days; repeated attempts by Lord Ram to slay Ravana by cutting off his head and hands have failed, and yet Vibhishan kept silent. Why didn't Vibhishan disclose the method by which Ravana could be slayed?

Did he actually not want him dead; was he playing some game with the Lord? Was his real and secret desire was to wear out Lord Ram so much that ultimately the Lord would wish to save his face by making a compromise deal of some sort with Ravana, which would ensure that Lord Ram got back his wife Sita, and the demon king too survived. Did Vibhishan not want his brother to be killed? In this scenario, what would be the fate of Vibhishan? He hoped that Lord Ram would stand by his words of accepting him unconditionally[#], and so he would take him back to his own kingdom of Ayodhya. {[#]Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44; and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 48.}

So therefore, Lord Ram wished to give Vibhishan the chance to prove himself, to show that he was honest when he had pledged his loyalty and faith in the Lord.

There is another spin to this episode: Lord Ram wished to give credit—or rather a ‘discredit’—for the slaying of Ravana to Vibhishan, for he would go down in history as a betrayer of his own clan, an ignominious appendage to someone’s character and a dark taint in reputation that would stick to him as long as he would live. Lord Ram had a subtle message for the world: that simply being, or claiming to be the Lord’s devotee, as Vibhishan surely did, would not absolve a person of the wrongs he had done.

This deep scar of betraying one’s family and brother, the guilt of treason and disloyalty towards one’s own country and race, the bad quality of selfishness that would lead Vibhishan to disclose the secret by which his own elder brother would be killed, for only when Ravana was out of the way would he get the throne of Lanka, stuck to him so fast down the ages that no one names a child born in the family by his name, as ‘Vibhishan’—though Lord Ram’s other devotees such as Hanuman, Angad etc. who had helped him in this epic war did lend their names to new-born babies down the path of history.

उमा काल मर जाकीं ईछा । सो प्रभु जन कर प्रीति परीछा ॥ ३ ॥

सुनु सरबग्य चराचर नायक । प्रनतपाल सुर मुनि सुखदायक ॥ ४ ॥

umā kāla mara jākīm īchā. sō prabhu jana kara prīti parīchā. 3.

sunu sarabagya carācara nāyaka. pranatapāla sura muni sukhadāyaka. 4.

[Lord Shiva said to his consort goddess Uma, who was listening to this fascinating story in rapt attention:-]

‘Oh Uma! The Lord whose mere wish can cause the end of Death itself, was testing the affection and vows of loyalty and allegiance that Vibhishan had proclaimed in his favour (when he had met Hanuman earlier, as well as at the time of seeking the Lord’s protection when he was kicked out by Ravana)¹. (3)

Vibhishan understood Lord Ram’s intention, and so he submitted: ‘Oh Lord who is all-knowing and omniscient (sarabagya), who is the Lord of both the animate as well as the inanimate aspects of this creation (carācara nāyaka), who is the protector of those who have surrendered before you (pranatapāla), and who is a bestower of happiness and joy to the gods and sages (sura muni sukhadāyaka). (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (a) Hanuman's meeting with Vibhishan: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 7; (b) Vibhishan being kicked out by Ravana: (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41; and (iii) Doha no. 45.

To wit, Lord Ram was testing whether or not Vibhishan was sincere and honest in his proclamations of allegiance and devotion to Lord Ram, or did he have some other secret agenda in his mind. It would be clear now. The Lord wanted to ascertain if Vibhishan was a pretender, or whether he was truthful.]

नाभिकुंड पियूष बस याकें । नाथ जिअत रावनु बल ताकें ॥ ५ ॥

सुनत बिभीषन बचन कृपाला । हरषि गहे कर बान कराला ॥ ६ ॥

nābhikuṇḍa piyūṣa basa yākēṁ. nātha ji'ata rāvanu bala tākēṁ. 5.
sunata bibhīṣana bacana kṛpālā. haraṣi gahē kara bāna karālā. 6.

The nectar or the elixir that bestows life to him (Ravana) is stored in his navel. Oh Lord; it is on its strength that Ravana has managed to live (survive) for so long¹. (5)

Upon hearing these words of Vibhishan, the Lord who is merciful, gracious and kind (kṛpālā)², felt glad³ and lifted a fierce arrow in his hand. (6)

[Note—¹According to Yoga philosophy, the region of the navel is the location of the “Nabhi Chakra”, a center of energy that forms the base of life inside the body of a creature. It is also called the “Manipur Chakra”; it is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun's solar energy that focuses on at this point.

Refer also to Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 53-54.

There are said to be five subtle energy centers in the body of a living being; they are called the ‘Chakras’, or circles of energy. Each of these Chakras is associated with one primary element of Nature, of which there are five in number, such as the earth, the water, the fire, the air and the sky elements, in ascending order of subtlety and descending order of grossness.

Now, let us briefly acquaint ourselves with these ‘Chakras’. (a) The lower part of the body has the ‘Muladhar Chakra’, or the root plexus where the ‘earth element’ is dominant. (b) Rising above, the next is the ‘Swadisthan Chakra’, or the sacrum region or the sacral plexus where water dominates. (c) The next is the ‘Nabhi Chakra’ located near the navel and the central part of the body; here the fire element plays a vital role. This Chakra, being the center of the fire element, is also called the solar plexus as it the sun which heats the world and keeps it alive by providing it with much needed energy. (d) The next higher energy center is called the ‘Hridaya Chakra’ or the heart plexus; it is here that the Atma lives. It represents the air element; it is so because the heart and the lungs are located in this region, and these organs help a creature to breathe and circulate air inside the body. (e) Going higher up we meet the ‘Vishudha Chakra’ or the throat plexus. Here the sound is produced as the upward moving wind rubs against the vocal cords. This represents the ether element, which is a subtler form of the air element itself. And finally, (f) we come to the Brahm-randhra

Chakra. It is located in at the top of the head, and is so-named because the cosmic Consciousness enters the body of a living being through a split here, and it is from here that it would finally escape at the time of death.

Now, coming to our point with respect to Ravana and the way he would be finally killed, the Nabhi Chakra in his body was the ‘center of the fire element’ that keeps the body warm, and its wind elements heated and active, which in turn makes the physical body perform all its deeds, externally as well as internally. It’s like the boiler of a steel plant or a steam engine; if the boiler cools down then no steam is produced and the working of the machinery would stop.

This is why Ravana kept on living while this Nabhi Chakra managed to keep his wind elements heated and active; it also enabled Ravana to perform miraculous deeds of dare-devilry.

When his heads were cut, they grew back instantly; it meant that the wind element, known as the ‘Pran’ that kept his body active, could not escape by that way. Growing of a new head the instant the earlier one was cut-off kind of hermetically sealed the rupture the very moment it was created.

We shall read below, in verse nos. 1 and 4 that precede Doha no. 103 that when Lord Ram shot a final arrow at Ravana’s navel, he had tottered and swooned violently before collapsing to the ground. This brought about his end—because while he was protected from death by cutting of heads as they would re-grow the moment they were cut, no such boon was available to him regarding the navel; there was no provision that any rupture made in his navel would be immediately sealed.

So therefore, while his Pran, the vital wind element that kept his body alive, could not leave through the path of the mouth as the head grew back instantly, it could leave his body through the ruptured navel when an arrow hit and pierced it, for there was no provision for sealing it instantaneously.

That understood, we come to the next vital point. Remember: The Nabhi Chakra is the center of the ‘fire element’ that heats the water and the wind elements present inside the body of a creature. The gases and the steam in the body of Ravana escaped with a violence blast when the seal of the navel was broken.

The ‘abdomen’, where the navel is located, is not hard like a boiler of an engine or the blast furnace of a steel mill, but rather it is softer, flexible and stretchable like a balloon filled with hot air. This is why we breathe; the muscles of the abdomen expand and contract to help us breathe.

Now visualize what would happen in practice if a hot air balloon is pricked by an arrow or any sharp instrument at one point on its side—as soon as a hole is made, the trapped hot air, which is already under intense pressure exerted on it from all the sides of the balloon as its rubber skin tries to shrink back to its original size after air is pumped inside it, would naturally escape out from the hole in the form of a jet of hot air; it would make a mighty hissing sound, or may escape with a fiery blast from this hole, depending upon the size of the aperture made.

Visualize another scene. What would happen if a hole is suddenly made in kettle full of boiling water or a cooker in which food is being cooked over an oven? Along with the jet of the escaping hot air, the contents of the kettle or the cooker would also escape.

And in which direction would this ‘jet of hot air and boiling things go’? It would go in the same direction in which the hole is made; it’s as simple and obvious as that. And anyone coming in the way, especially if he is not far away, would be struck violently with the blast of the hot air, and drenched with the hot liquid that is shot out along with it, leaving him scorched and dazed.

This is what exactly might have happened during the moments Ravana died. His 'Pran', i.e. his heated wind element that sustained life inside his body, suddenly escaped from the rupture made in his navel by the arrow shot by Lord Ram. It was exceptionally hot, because Ravana was agitated, angry and frantic, breathing heavily and engaged in violent muscular activity as a fierce war was underway; it was no leisure time when the internal winds are cooler.

So therefore, the blast of air escaping from his gigantic body made huge sound as the abdomen suddenly collapsed; and this air was so hot that it appeared like a flame of fire leaping out of Ravana's colossus body. It escaped out in a fiery jet in the direction of Lord Ram, for the simple reason that the hole was made in the navel while Ravana was facing the Lord, and it was the only exit point of the body through which the hot air escaped. Naturally it gushed out in the straight direction where the Lord was standing, opposite Ravana,

The scene was so astoundingly amazing and never heard of earlier that for a moment Lord Ram stood with an open mouth, in awe and wonder. And so what happened? This hot and flaming air was inhaled by him—which the poets and bards who chronicled this Story depicted by saying “a brilliant shaft of light and energy representing Ravana's soul escaped from his body and entered the body of Lord Ram”. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.}

Ravana had been all the while shrieking and yelling at Lord Ram, and then suddenly there was a mighty blast as his heated wind element escaped from his navel. It was a deafening sound; and then suddenly everything fell quiet. This eerie moment and its preceding chaos has been depicted by the same poets and bards by saying “Ravana roared violently: where is Lord Ram whom I wish to defeat in battle” before he collapsed and fell to the ground. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 103.}

A question now arises: From where did this 'Amrit', or the elixir of life, come to be stored in the navel of Ravana? The answer is this: Ravana used to practice Yoga, and was an expert in it. During his practice, he used to perform certain Aasans (postures) which helped to rejuvenate his body and stir the reservoir of subtle energy present inside his body. Since the Nabhi Chakra is the center of solar energy, it was used to heat his body from the inside; it was virtually like the 'power station' of his body. When Lord Ram's arrow struck it, it got short-circuited like any electricity grid would, and this short-circuit blew out the fuse that kept his body energized, charged and active; which meant simply that he died due to this outage in electric current that kept his body and its internal organs, such as his heart, alive and active.

According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, Vibhuti Paad, verse nos. 29-33, when one practices Yoga then Amrit drips from one's tongue, gets sucked up into the Brahm-randhra, the upper-most part of the skull, from where it travels downwards and gets sucked up and stored at the bottom of the body around the navel. The heat of the navel keeps this Amrit from freezing, and this warm subtle source of energy, which can be likened to 'honey' stored by honey bees, forms the basis of keeping the body alive.

This is what must have actually happened in the case of Ravana. Vibhishan knew that his brother used to do regular Yoga practice, and what kind of Aasans he did. So he was the best person to know the key by which Ravana's seemingly inexhaustible source of energy could be neutralized.

²It seems absurd and incongruous to call Lord Ram “merciful and kind” especially when he is determined to kill Ravana. But the fact is that what externally seems to be ‘killing of Ravana’ was actually ‘liberating and delivering his soul from the trap of a demon body in which it was caught’. By committing so many sins, Ravana had unwillingly and unwittingly and unintentionally and inadvertently, created such a hard shell around his soul—which is also known as the Atma that is inherently pure and holy, as well as consciousness that is the true self of all living beings, including Ravana—that it became impossible for this soul to break free from the hardened crust of sins symbolized by Ravana’s physical body in order to attain deliverance. Hence, in order to grant emancipation and salvation to this soul of Ravana, it became imperative to hit his body hard with such a forceful blow that it would rupture and enable the pure consciousness to escape from it. It was no easy task, because Ravana was no ordinary creature. Just like special diseases need specialized cure, Ravana too needed the Supreme Being to come and kill him so that his soul could be delivered.

To wit, Lord Ram was actually doing Ravana a favour by killing his gross mortal body covered by a thick crust of sins and evils so that his subtle Atma could be freed from this trap and find emancipation and salvation that would grant him eternal peace and beatitude. As the things turned out, this is actually what happened, for at the end Ravana’s glorious soul emerged from his body in a radiant shaft of light to merge with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram, which was effected when this brilliant light entered the body of the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

Surely then, it was a kind and merciful deed done by Lord Ram as it gave eternal peace and rest to Ravana’s soul, which would have otherwise continued to commit sins and suffer their consequences forever.

³So well; why did Lord Ram feel “glad”? The Lord felt happy that Vibhishan has stood true to his vows of loyalty and allegiance to him; that Vibhishan has reciprocated the Lord’s graciousness in accepting him unconditionally inspite of knowing that he was Ravana’s brother, and inspite of Sugriv, the king of the monkeys and the Lord’s chief advisor, advising the Lord not to accept him for he might be a spy. Say, what answer would the Lord have given to Sugriv and others who were against his accepting Vibhishan if the latter had not proved his integrity and loyalty at this crucial juncture of the war when his help was sought to vanquish Ravana? Surely it would have been embarrassing for the Lord if Vibhishan had double-crossed him now.]

असुभ होन लागे तब नाना । रोवहिं खर सृकाल बहु स्वाना ॥ ७ ॥

बोलहिं खग जग आरति हेतू । प्रगट भए नभ जहँ तहँ केतू ॥ ८ ॥

दस दिसि दाह होन अति लागा । भयउ परब बिनु रबि उपरागा ॥ ९ ॥

मंदोदरि उर कंपति भारी । प्रतिमा स्रवहिं नयन मग बारी ॥ १० ॥

asubha hōna lāgē taba nānā. rōvahiṁ khara sṛkāla bahu svānā. 7.

bōlahiṁ khaga jaga āraṭi hētū. pragaṭa bha'ē nabha jaham̐ taham̐ kētū. 8.

dasa disī dāha hōna ati lāgā. bhaya'u paraba binu rabi uparāgā. 9.

mandōdari ura kampati bhārī. pratimā sravahiṁ nayana maga bārī. 10.

All sorts of bad signs and ill omens began to appear then¹. Large numbers of jackals, donkeys and dogs began howling mournfully. (7)

Birds that are regarded as inauspicious (such as crow, owls, vultures etc.) made their own horrifying sounds portending doom. Comets (indicating bad omen) suddenly appeared and streaked past in the sky here and there. (8)

There was an unnatural deathly glow and intense heat in all the ten directions of the world². [To wit, the sky became red and the temperature rose everywhere as if there was an upcoming deadly heat wave that would roast everything alive.] (9)

Mandodari's (Ravana's wife) heart trembled with great fear (at the prospect of a calamity striking her husband). Statues began shedding a lot of tears. (10)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86.

²The ten directions are: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

छं०. प्रतिमा रुदहिं पबिपात नभ अति बात बह डोलति मही । १ ।
 वरषहिं बलाहक रुधिर कच रज असुभ अति सक को कही ॥ २ ॥
 उतपात अमित बिलोकि नभ सुर बिकल बोलहिं जय जए । ३ ।
 सुर सभय जानि कृपाल रघुपति चाप सर जोरत भए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

pratimā rudahiṃ pabipāta nabha ati bāta baha ḍōlati mahī. 1.
 baraṣahiṃ balāhaka rudhira kaca raja asubha ati saka kō kahī. 2.
 utapāta amita bilōki nabha sura bikala bōlahiṃ jaya ja'ē. 3.
 sura sabhaya jāni kṛpāla raghupati cāpa sara jōrata bha'ē. 4.

Statues wept; lightening struck and thunder covered the sky; a fierce storm began raging; the earth shook; (Chanda line no. 1)

The clouds rained down blood, hairs and sand. Verily, there were so many ill signs that no one can fully enumerate them. (Chanda line no. 2)

Indeed, countless bad signs and inauspicious signals indicative of a grave calamity and disaster descending on the world prevailed everywhere. Seeing them, however, the gods cried out in unison "Victory; victory"¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

When the merciful Lord Ram observed that the gods were horrified, he assembled an array of arrows on his bow². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The gods, though terrified at these horrible signs, yet shouted 'victory', because they judged that inspite of initial horrors created by these evil signs they indicate that the end of Ravana was near, and Lord Ram would finally attain victory.

Hence, they welcomed these ill omens as being a good sign. One would not fail to observe the ways of this selfish world: what is ruin for one is a boon for another! Ravana's ruin was a welcome gift for the gods.

²Lord Ram would shoot thirty-one arrows almost simultaneously; ten would cut-off Ravana's ten heads, twenty arrows would sever his twenty arms, and the thirty-first arrow would hit his navel and dry up its nectar-of-life which had kept Ravana alive—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103 herein below.]

दो०. खैंचि सरासन श्रवन लगि छाड़े सर एकतीस ।
रघुनायक सायक चले मानहुँ काल फनीस ॥ १०२ ॥

dōhā.

khain̄ci sarāsana śravana lagi chārē sara ēkatīsa.
raghunāyaka sāyaka calē mānahum̄ kāla phanīsa. 102.

Lord Ram pulled the string of his bow right back upto his ears, and shot thirty-one arrows rapidly.

The fierce arrows of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) darted towards their target as if so many deadly serpents were flying towards their prey. (Doha no. 102)

चौ०. सायक एक नाभि सर सोषा । अपर लगे भुज सिर करि रोषा ॥ १ ॥
लै सिर बाहु चले नाराचा । सिर भुज हीन रुंड महि नाचा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sāyaka ēka nābhi sara sōṣā. apara lagē bhuja sira kari rōṣā. 1.
lai sira bāhu calē nārācā. sira bhuja hīna ruṇḍa mahi nācā. 2.

One of the (thirty-one) arrows dried up the source of the life-giving elixir stored in Ravana's navel¹; and the rest of the thirty arrows swiftly severed his ten heads and twenty arms. (1)

The severed heads and arms got stuck to the arrows that had pierced through them, and were carried away by the arrows as they continued to fly speedily ahead in the sky by the virtue of their momentum.

Meanwhile, the trunk of Ravana's body, from which the heads and arms were ripped away, remained agitated and active in the battle-field for some more time as it lurched and reeled madly in every direction (stepping to the right and the left, to the front and the backwards) giving the impression that it was enacting the steps of the last dance of death. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 102, and a note appended to it.

It ought to be particularly noted here that Lord Ram had not shot any arrow at Ravana's heart. Why did the Lord avoid it? The answer to it is given by Trijata when she told Sita that the Lord desists from shooting an arrow at Ravana's heart as she is

present there—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 12-13 that precede Doha no. 99. I have elaborately explained this aspect as a note appended to these verses.

Besides what Trijata said, there is another aspect to it. The Lord did not hit the heart because Ravana's Atma, his pure conscious soul, lived there. Lord Ram had come to provide deliverance to this soul, which is a holy and pure entity as it is pure consciousness; this soul or Atma of Ravana was suffering intensely because it was trapped inside the gross body of a demon. Since the main objective of Lord Ram was to grant liberation and deliverance to Ravana's soul, to provide him with emancipation and salvation, he would not harm this soul by hitting it with an arrow.

Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince who was fighting his enemy to rescue his kidnapped wife; he was the Supreme Being who wished to grant rest and peace to the tormented soul of a sinful creature represented by Ravana. The Lord is forgiving and merciful; he is not vengeful and unkind. He had come to liberate Ravana's soul and deliver it from its sufferings, he had come to grant the unfortunate creature known as Ravana with the spiritual benefits of emancipation and salvation by killing his gross body to enable the trapped soul to make its escape and attain peace; the Lord had not come to send it to hell. This is a crucial factor which must always be kept in mind to judge and analyze all the events of the Story of the Ramayan.

So the Lord chose to avoid the heart and select an alternative method to kill Ravana—and it was by hitting his body in the navel to enable his Pran to escape. Once the Pran escaped, there was no question of Ravana surviving any longer in his physical form. But his 'soul' survived, because the soul is eternal and imperishable. Yet the Lord wished to make certain that the soul of Ravana gets its final rest, and it may not suffer any longer in the absence of a permanent place to rest, for if it is not given its final rest then it would enter any other body and take a rebirth to become a demon once again.

That is why Lord Ram would make it so happen that Ravana's soul emerged from his body and entered the body of Lord Ram: a remarkable development indeed. We shall read more about it in verse no. 9 herein below.

The way Ravana was finally killed has been narrated differently in "Ram Charit Manas" of Tulsidas, and "Adhyatma Ramayan" of Veda Vyas. We read in Adhyatma Ramayan that Matli—the charioteer of Lord Ram's chariot, who was sent by the gods to help the Lord in the war—had advised the Lord that Ravana would be killed only by shooting an arrow at his heart. On hearing this advice, the Lord had shot an arrow directly at Ravana's heart, bringing about his end. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 61-72.}

Though seemingly contradicting each other, the fact is that both the narratives are correct—for it is indeed possible that Lord Ram has shot arrows aimed at Ravana's heart as well as his navel to ensure that all precautions are taken to make sure that Ravana is certainly slayed, for the Lord did not want to take any further risk of playing games with him as time was running out, and already all other methods had miserably failed to the demon's life.

The apparent dichotomy in the actual way how Ravana was finally slayed appears to be caused due to the difference in the way the attention of the two chroniclers of the Story—i.e. Tulsidas and Veda Vyas—was focused. To wit, Tulsidas' attention was focused on what Vibhishan had advised, i.e. he documented about the arrow that hit Ravana in his navel, while Veda Vyas's attention was on Ravana's heart where Matli said Lord Ram ought to shoot the arrow, and consequently he attributed Ravana's death to this arrow.

The fact is a combination of both—Lord Ram shooting arrows simultaneously at Ravana’s heart and navel to ensure his death; for time was running out and the Lord did now wish to let any means escape to bring about Ravana’s end. This was because all other means had failed miserably, and when two different methods were advised for Ravana’s death—one by Vibhishan who said that the Lord ought to shoot an arrow at Ravana’s navel, and by Matli who said that the arrow ought to be aimed at Ravana’s heart—the Lord determined that it would be wise to do both at the same instant; which was to shoot arrows aimed both at Ravana’s heart as well as his navel simultaneously.

This was done almost at the same time, so quickly that it could not be separately judged which arrow caused the actual death of Ravana. To wit, from the practical point of view, both the versions of how Ravana was killed are true: the primary objective of bringing about the end of the demon king was achieved, and whether it was achieved by the arrow that hit his heart or by the one that hit his navel is only of secondary or peripheral importance.

This particular instance where we read about two apparently different ways as to how Ravana was finally slayed, and both the versions are from authentic sources, viz. *Adhyatma Ramayan* of the illustrious sage Veda Vyas, and *Ram Charit Manas* of the renowned saint-poet Tulsidas, both equally revered and equally authoritative, explains why I, the author of the present Book which my esteemed readers have now in their hands and are currently reading, chose to cite more than one version of this classic Story of Lord Ram, universally known as the ‘Ramayana’ but given a specific name by the narrator of a particular version, to pen my own narrative—as this approach helps one to get a comprehensive and a wide-angled understanding of the entire Story in general, and any given episode of it in particular.

This therefore is the reason why I have quoted in full two well-respected, authoritative and acclaimed versions of the Ramayana, viz. ‘*Ram Charit Manas*’ and ‘*Adhyatma Ramayan*’. Besides these two, I have also included, as the reader must have noticed by now, two other magnificent narratives of Tulsidas, viz. ‘*Geetawali Ramayan*’ and ‘*Kavitawali Ramayan*’. It is because these two latter classical Books describe selected episodes of the Story in fine detail, pausing every now and then to look at it from different angles in a slow-motion mode, as compared to the other two versions of the same Story (i.e. *Ram Charit Manas* and *Adhyatma Ramayan*) which are continuous in their narrative of the events in a chronological fashion, without pausing to focus attention on any given episode.]

धरनि धसइ धर धाव प्रचंडा । तब सर हति प्रभु कृत दुइ खंडा ॥ ३ ॥

गर्जेउ मरत घोर रव भारी । कहाँ रामु रन हतौं पचारी ॥ ४ ॥

dharani dhasa'i dhara dhāva pracaṇḍā. taba sara hati prabhu kṛta du'i khaṇḍā. 3.

garjē'u marata ghōra rava bhārī. kahām' rāmu rana hataurṁ pacārī. 4.

The earth started caving in with the force of the heavy steps with which his trunk stomped and tottered on the ground, moving in a bewildered state of confusion (before collapsing).

Lord Ram then shot another fierce arrow that slammed into the trunk and cut it into two halves¹. (3)

At the time of his death, he (Ravana) thundered with a terrible roar², ‘Where is Lord Ram that I may challenge and slay him in battle³.’ (4)

[Note—¹The death of Ravana reminds one of the way Kumbhakaran was killed and his colossal body collapsed in the battle-field, which was almost in the same way as it happened with Ravana. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71.}]

²A very remarkable thing has happened here. Remember that Ravana’s heads were already cut-off, so how come he ‘roared and thundered’ without his mouths its tongues?

Well, the answer is this: The head of any living being, along with its mouth and tongue, is like any other organ of the creature’s gross physical body, such as the hands and legs, the eye, the nose and the skin. These individual parts have no independent life of their own; they remain active and give the impression of being alive only as long as the creature lives and is conscious of his surroundings, for as soon as it ‘dies’ or becomes ‘senseless’, these same organs become ‘lifeless’ or ‘senseless’.

That means that there is some other factor that is called ‘life’ present inside the body of a living being, for surely it is not the gross organs of this body as they do not have any life of their own. This independent entity that infuses ‘life’ in the otherwise inane and lifeless gross body is called the “Pran”, the life-giving force present inside the body, which makes a body ‘living’ and differentiates it from a ‘dead body’. According to the Upanishads, this ‘Pran’ factor is an aspect of the Wind Element that drives the body, keeps it active, and helps it to carry out all its different functions, both externally and internally. When a creature dies, this Pran, that is present inside the gross body, escapes from it to merge with the open ‘air’ outside, to become one with it.

It is like the case of air present inside and outside of an earthen pitcher. As long as the pitcher is there, we artificially distinguish the air within and without it by using the body of the pitcher as the demarcation line. When the pitcher is broken, the air within merges with the air outside seamlessly, without any ado.

Now, take another example. Suppose there is an air-filled balloon. If its air is allowed to escape slowly it won’t make any sound, but if a hole is pricked in it with a needle, then what happens? It ‘bursts with a loud bang’, as the wind trapped inside suddenly meets the wind outside, and there is a clash of two opposite pressures.

This is what happened in the case of Ravana too. The life-giving wind element, called the Pran that was present inside his body, suddenly escaped when the arrow pierced his navel, like a pin pricking a hole in a balloon. This caused a snapping sound, but it was no ordinary sound and no ordinary wind. Ravana had a colossus body, so the quantity of wind must have been huge, and besides it the wind was agitated by the heat of war. So it must have escaped with a mighty sound, like a bomb exploding.

Then there is one other factor: There are two types of sounds, one which is heard by the ear, and the one which isn’t. The first type of sound is called ‘Baikhari’, and the other is called ‘Pashyanti’. For example, when we talk with each other, we use the ‘Baikhari’ form of sound as our ears can hear what we speak; but the sound that is transmitted by radio stations or mobile towers is called ‘Pashyanti’ as our ears can’t hear it directly. The Baikhari form of sound is grosser, while the Pashyanti form is

subtler by nature. Living beings such as us humans can hear the Baikhari words, while the gods can hear the Pashyanti words.

But, 'who' is that entity that actually 'speaks'? Is it the gross body or even its life-giving Pran? No, neither of them. The entity that actually speaks is the living being, and this living being is neither the body nor the Pran; it is an independent entity known as the 'self', which is its 'Atma'. What is this Atma? It is the 'pure consciousness' that lives inside the gross body of a creature; it is also known as the 'soul'. This Atma is a sublime, ethereal and a subtlest form of element that exists, and it is the entity that is the 'true self and the true identity' of any living being. If there is no Atma or consciousness present in the body, then the mere presence of the 'wind element' won't make a body alive. A balloon also has a wind inside it, it hops and moves around, it can fly and make a sound when rubbed, but not even a mad man would call it a 'living being'.

To wit, the Atma and the Pran, both of them invisible and subtle elements, act together in a tango to make what is known as a living being. The Pran is a manifestation of the dynamic energy of the Atma that makes a creature a living being; the 'Atma' is the Master that instructs the 'Pran', which in turn drives the 'body' towards the creature's desired destination.

In the case of Ravana, his Pran escaped first, and it made a loud sound while escaping from his gross body because it is a form of wind. After the Pran left the gross body, the Atma too left it. So then, what happened to this Atma? We shall read about it in verse no. 9 herein below.

³When Marich, the demon who had been forced by Ravana to assume the form of a golden deer so that Sita could be abducted, had died when hit by the arrow shot by Lord Ram, he too had called out aloud first the name of Laxman and then that of Lord Ram. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 27.}

Similarly, when Meghanad had died, he too had cried aloud the names of Laxman and Lord Ram. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 76 along with Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes it.}

डोली भूमि गिरत दसकंधर । छुभित सिंधु सरि दिग्गज भूधर ॥ ५ ॥
धरनि परेउ द्वौ खंड बड़ाई । चापि भालु मर्कट समुदाई ॥ ६ ॥

ḍōlī bhūmi girata dasakandhara. chubhita sindhu sari diggaja bhūdhara. 5.
dharani parē'u dvau khaṇḍa baṛhā'ī. cāpi bhālu markṭa samudā'ī. 6.

When Ravana, the one with ten shoulders (dasakandhara), finally fell down on the ground with a mighty thud, the earth shook, the ocean developed huge splashing waves, the rivers had violent currents, while the Diggas (the elephants who are supposed to support the earth from its corners) turned and shifted in their positions, and the mountains trembled too due to the excessive pressure and jolting vibrations caused by the falling of Ravana's huge body. (5)

The two halves of his colossus body collapsed on the ground, and while doing so it crushed underneath large numbers of monkeys and bears¹. (6)

[Note—¹This scene is reminiscent of Kumbhakaran dying as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 71.]

मंदोदरि आगें भुज सीसा । धरि सर चले जहाँ जगदीसा ॥ ७ ॥

प्रबिसे सब निषंग महु जाई । देखि सुरन्ह दुंदुभीं बजाई ॥ ८ ॥

mandōdari āgēr̥ṁ bhuja sīsā. dhari sara calē jahām̃ jagadīsā. 7.
prabisē saba niṣaṅga mahu jā'ī. dēkhi suranha dundubhīm̃ bajā'ī. 8.

The arrows put (or rather dropped) the severed heads and arms of Ravana at the place where Mandodari (his queen) was (i.e. inside Ravana's palace)¹; and then these arrows went back to Lord Ram, the Lord of the world (jagadīsā). (7)

These arrows returned and entered the Lord's quiver², seeing which the gods played their musical drums in the heaven³. (8)

[Note—¹When Kumbhakaran was killed, his head flew and fell down in the front of Ravana, though it is not clearly mentioned during the narration as to how it was carried there—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 71.

Lord Ram has been universally praised as being gracious and magnanimous. He wished to give Ravana an honourable death, and therefore would not cause anything to happen that would undermine the dignity and respect of Ravana's glorious soul, his stature as a great king of the demon race, as well as of being a valiant warrior the like of which the world had never seen heretofore, and would never see hereafter. If his heads would have fallen to the ground in the battle-field, there were chances that jackals, dogs, hyenas, vultures and other flesh eating birds and animals would pounce on them at once, which would be insulting to Ravana's memory. Lord Ram did not wish that to happen.

Remember: Lord Ram himself was a great king of a great kingdom of Ayodhya, and so he was aware of the sort of treatment that ought to be given to another king of great stature. A gallant warrior fights his adversary with all energy and fury, but once the latter falls or surrenders, the former would not do anything to cause insult to his dead body, or to the vanquished opponent, as the case may be.

²One would not fail to marvel at the weapon technology known during those days. The arrows were like reusable missiles; they hit their targets with precision and then came back to the shooter. A similar scene of the arrows coming back to Lord Ram is witnessed elsewhere in the war also: for instance, we read the same thing happening at the time when Kumbhakaran was slayed—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 68.

³The gods were now certain that Ravana was dead, because his body collapsed and no newer heads and arms grew again on it. So they celebrated.]

तासु तेज समान प्रभु आनन । हरषे देखि संभु चतुरानन ॥ ९ ॥

जय जय धुनि पूरी ब्रह्मंडा । जय रघुबीर प्रबल भुजदंडा ॥ १० ॥
 बरषहिं सुमन देव मुनि बृन्दा । जय कृपाल जय जयति मुकुन्दा ॥ ११ ॥

tāsu tēja samāna prabhu ānana. haraṣē dēkhi sambhu caturānana. 9.
 jaya jaya dhuni pūrī brahmaṇḍā. jaya raghubīra prabala bhujadaṇḍā. 10.
 baraṣahim̐ sumana dēva muni br̥ndā. jaya kṛpāla jaya jayati mukundā. 611.

His (Ravana's) 'Tej' (i.e. his pure consciousness, his true self, his energy of life) escaped from his gross body and emerged in the form of a brilliant shaft of light that went straight to Lord Ram and entered him (through the Lord's mouth or nostrils)¹.

When Lord Shiva and the four-headed Creator (Brahma) observed it, they felt very glad². (9)

A loud chorus of 'Victory, victory' resonated throughout the universe. Everyone applauded Lord Ram and proclaimed his glory by saying: 'Gory and Victory to Lord Ram, who has stupendous valour and astounding powers in his two arms.' (10)

The gods and the sages (who were watching the war from their respective stations in the sky) showered a rain of flowers, repeatedly praising Lord Ram: 'Glory to the merciful Lord; victory to him who grants liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul (mukundā)³' (11)

[Note—¹The Soul of a living being is pure consciousness. It is glorious and self-illuminated with the light of knowledge, called being enlightened. The individual creature's soul is an image of the supreme Soul of this creation; the former is called the 'Atma', while the latter is called the 'Parmatma'.

It is just like the case of a pot filled with water of the ocean. The water inside the pot is the Atma of an individual; the pot itself is like the gross body of that individual; the ocean is the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma as it consists of an endless source of water from which countless pots can be filled without exhausting its supply of water, which in this metaphor is the Supreme Atma, the primary Atma or the cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout this creation.

So therefore, when Ravana died, his own Atma emerged from his gross body to enter the body of Lord Ram who was the Supreme Being, the Parmatma, to merge and become one with the Supreme Atma present inside the body of Lord Ram just like the case when the water-pot breaks and its content (water) falls back into the ocean, to become one and inseparable with the latter.

This was truly a great honour that Lord Ram bestowed upon Ravana, for he had granted Ravana's soul permanent peace by accepting it within his own Self. That is why these two gods, Shiva and Brahma, rejoiced.

From the spiritual perspective, and in accordance with the philosophy as enunciated in and espoused by the Upanishads, the best destination for the Atma, or the soul of the individual creature, is its merger with the cosmic Atma, the Supreme Atma, or the cosmic Soul, as it grants the individual creature eternal rest and peace; it is the ultimate and the final destination of the Atma; it is that destiny that grants eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity. It is this destination that was granted to Ravana's Atma, for it left his gross body that was physically in the form of a demon, to enter the holy body of Lord Ram who was none but the Supreme Being himself, to become one with the latter.

By accepting Ravana's soul within his own self, Lord Ram clearly signaled to the world that he actually had no ill-will or anger against him, for whatever he did by way of waging a fierce war with the apparent objective of killing Ravana was merely a show, for the Lord's actual intention was to grant deliverance to Ravana and peace to his soul.

Heaven is not the ultimate destination for a soul, just like hell which does not mean eternal condemnation. These two, heaven or hell, are only transitory stations where the soul would reside for sometimes before it steps onto the next phase in its journey. It stays in heaven to enjoy the rewards of its meritorious deeds done in its previous life, and in hell to undergo punishment for its mischief. How long the soul stays in either heaven or hell depends upon the quantum of its reward or punishment respectively. So therefore, when the reward or the punishment is done with, the soul is bound to move on, either back to this mortal world to take a rebirth, or to move higher to attain Moksha, or the state of eternity, the state of permanent bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity. This is attained when the 'individual soul' loses its individuality and dissolves itself into the 'cosmic Soul' to become one with the latter.

Since the soul, or the Atma of an individual, is pure consciousness, it can be said that true Moksha is when the individual's consciousness merges with the cosmic Consciousness. In our present case, it is depicted in Ravana's soul merging with the cosmic Soul represented by Lord Ram.

Verily, the way Ravana died fulfilled his desire to attain eternal peace and beatitude for which he was so eager. For remember, he knew very well that there is no way he can attain this exalted destiny on his own account because of the quantum of sins that he had done throughout his life, not realizing what the consequences would be for him in the long run at the time when he was recklessly doing mischief; and by the time he realized what horrors he had created for his own self, it was too late. So he decided that the only way out for him was to continue with his way of life, for it was too late to make amends and change his habits, and patiently wait for the time when the merciful and compassionate Supreme Being, reading the innermost thoughts of his heart that yearned for deliverance and emancipation, would decide to fulfill his wishes by coming himself to free his Atma, and the only way it can be done was to break the hardened shell in which the Atma was trapped.

And what was this hardened shell that trapped Ravana's Atma? It was his demonic body which had become so thick and stiff with layers and layers of accumulated sins and evil deeds done over time that it only could be broken by someone skilled in it, and not by ordinary means. This is what had happened in reality in this war, and this is why Lord Ram has been praised as being 'merciful, compassionate, kind, gracious, magnanimous and benevolent' as he had granted a sinful creature the grand reward of spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation inspite of knowing that the creature, in this case Ravana, had been to most sinful and disgraceful fellow in his creation.

Come to think of it—Lord Ram was so gracious, magnanimous and forgiving that he granted deliverance to the souls of all the demon warriors, and not Ravana alone. But to honour Ravana and treat him with dignity befitting his stature as the king of the demon race, the Lord granted him a special seat alongside his own self by accepting his soul within himself. Even the gods had appreciated this fact that all the demons had been granted emancipation and salvation by Lord Ram, and that Ravana was shown a special privilege that even great sages would envy. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

We can therefore safely conclude that inspite of all the ignominy and infamy that Ravana got, after all his soul was as holy and pure as it should have been, and not sinful and evil as it was made out to be by the external actions and deeds that his demonic body was engaged in doing, for otherwise Lord Ram would never have honoured him by giving his soul a place within his own self—which is like a great king welcoming another great king and showing the latter great honour by making the guest king sit by his side on his own throne! What more can be said in favour of and in honour of Ravana?

²When Ravana's soul entered Lord Ram's body, Lords Brahma and Shiva felt happy. This is because Ravana had done tough Tapasya and got boons from Brahma, and he also was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Therefore they both felt happy that their devotee has been given Sayujya Moksha- ultimate Mukti by Lord Rama.

³The fact that Lord Ram granted deliverance and emancipation to Ravana's soul, instead of condemning him to hell for his sins, and inspite of knowing that he was the one who had kidnapped his wife Sita, was noted by all the assembled gods and sages, who blessed and praised the Lord for his gracious and merciful nature as well as for this glorious and noble deed of his.

Ravana—whom the world always took to be an embodiment of sins and evil—was indeed singularly fortunate and very blessed soul to have attained such an exalted death because the Supreme Being had himself come to his doorstep to grant him eternal liberation and deliverance, to bless him with emancipation and salvation.

The fact that Ravana's soul or Atma was accepted by Lord Ram and granted a place within himself proves how much the Lord respected the purity and holiness of his soul. Forsooth and without any gainsay, verily, Lord Ram realized that the Ravana whom the world so much loathed and reviled was actually his gross physical body, and not his Atma which was his 'true self', the Atma which was as holy and pure as it ought to be. And therefore, the just and kind and all-knowing Supreme Lord of the world, who judges each individual very minutely, by taking everything and every aspect into consideration before passing a judgment against or in favour of anyone, decided that Ravana does not deserve to be condemned to eternal hell to suffer.

The Lord determined that whatever Ravana he had done was done as a 'demon', and the word 'demon' refers to his gross physical body but not definitely to his Atma, and this physical body was made to give its due penalty by being sacrificed in the war, for it was mutilated and decapitated in the final hours of the war before being killed. This was a sufficient sacrifice for Ravana, and once it was offered his soul had the right to redemption.

The question arises: Why did Lord Ram accept Ravana's soul within his own self? The answer is this: (i) To show the world that the Lord was exceptionally forgiving, merciful, compassionate, gracious, kind, understanding, magnanimous and benevolent so much so that he is ready to go to any extent to welcome anyone who wishes to come to him, overlooking all other things that would normally hinder such warm welcome. (ii) To show the world that the Lord had no personal ill-will against Ravana, and was merely punishing him for his misdeeds. (iii) To tell the world that a wise, just and enlightened judge is one who applies intelligence and always looks deeper before passing a judgment for or against anyone, for oftentimes what meets the eye is very deceptive—as was clearly the case with Ravana, for the world treated him as a vile person, whereas his 'true self', his Atma, was as holy and pure as it ought to be, and it was for this reason that Lord Ram had no second thoughts in accepting

Ravana's Atma within his own self. (iv) To give a cue to the world as to why valiant warriors who prefer to die fighting their adversaries in the battle-field are said to go to heaven—because by dying they would have made the ultimate sacrifice, and once a self-sacrifice is made the soul has the rightful claim to deliverance and eternal peace, which must be granted to it.

There is another reason also—Ravana was so loathed and feared by the Gods that they would never give his soul permission to ascend to heaven; so going to the heaven was ruled out. As for going to hell for his sins, that was also not possible for Ravana because the lord of hell, i.e. Yam, too hated and feared him as much as his brethrens in the heaven. To wit, both the Gods in heaven and Yam in hell refused to accept Ravana. So Lord Ram thought: “Doesn't matter; I will grant Ravana a place where no one can object, for it is my own sanctuary. I have made him pay for his misdeeds, so now it is obligatory for me to give his soul a place to abide. If the Gods and Yam won't accept him, well and good; I myself would accept him! And no one can say anything as to this abode for Ravana's soul, because I have a right to grant admission to anyone in my personal chambers.” Say, how gracious and loving Lord Sri Ram, our Lord, is, indeed!]

छं०. जय कृपा कंद मुकुंद द्वंद हरन सरन सुखप्रद प्रभो । १ ।
 खल दल बिदारन परम कारन कारुणीक सदा बिभो ॥ २ ॥
 सुर सुमन बरषहिं हरष संकुल बाज दुंदुभि गहगही । ३ ।
 संग्राम अंगन राम अंग अनंग बहु सोभा लही ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jaya kṛpā kanda mukunda dvanda harana sarana sukhaprada prabhō. 1.
 khala dala bidārana parama kārana kārunīka sadā bibhō. 2.
 sura sumana baraṣahim haraṣa saṅkula bāja dundubhi gahagahī. 3.
 saṅgrāma aṅgana rāma aṅga anaṅga bahu sōbhā lahī. 4.

The gods and sages lavishly honoured and praised Lord Ram, praying as follows: ‘Glory to Lord Ram who is an embodiment of mercy, kindness and compassion (kṛpā kanda), who is a bestower of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of a creature (mukunda), who is a remover or dispeller of all confusions, doubts and perplexities (dvanda harana), who grants happiness and joy to those who seek refuge in his holy feet (sarana sukhaprada) --- (Chanda line no. 1)

---Who is an eliminator of hordes of wicked and evil creatures (khala dala bidārana), who is the primary cause of everything coming into being (“parama kārana kārunīka”, as he is Brahm, the Supreme Being who has created this world), who is eternal and absolute (sadā), and who is the almighty Lord of this creation (bibhō).’ (Chanda line no. 2)

Praising Lord Ram in this way, and overwhelmed with gratitude and joy, all the gods showered a rain of flowers upon him from the sky; they simultaneously played their kettle-drums to celebrate the occasion. (Chanda line no. 3)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram looked so handsome, beauteous and charming in the battle-field as if he was an embodiment of millions of Kamdeo, the god of beauty and charm. (Chanda line no. 4)

सिर जटा मुकुट प्रसून बिच बिच अति मनोहर राजहीं । ५ ।
 जनु नीलगिरि पर तड़ित पटल समेत उडुगन भ्राजहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 भुजदंड सर कोदंड फेरत रुधिर कन तन अति बने । ७ ।
 जनु रायमुनीं तमाल पर बैठीं बिपुल सुख आपने ॥ ८ ॥

sira jaṭā mukuṭa prasūna bica bica ati manōhara rājahīm. 5.
 janu nīlagiri para taḍita paṭala samēta uḍugana bhrājahīm. 6.
 bhujadaṇḍa sara kōdaṇḍa phērata rudhira kana tana ati banē. 7.
 janu rāyamunīm tamāla para baiṭhīm bipula sukha āpanē. 8.

[These verses describe the charming personality of Lord Ram.]

The Lord looked bewitchingly charming with a crown of matted hairs on his head (sira jaṭā mukuṭa) in which flowers were tucked here and there (prasūna bica bica)¹. (Chanda line no. 5)

The sight reminded one of the ‘Blue Mountain’ (nīlagiri) over which lightening dazzled in the sky (taḍita paṭala) along with the stars that twinkled here and there as soon as they could peep thorough the gap in the clouds (samēta uḍugana)². (Chanda line no. 6)

The Lord was moving his hands over his bow and arrows (bhujadaṇḍa sara kōdaṇḍa phērata)³. Drops of blood that were sprinkled over his body too added to the beauty of his form (rudhira kana tana ati banē)⁴. (Chanda line no. 7)

This fascinating sight was like so many birds of red colour sitting here and there on a dark catechu plant⁵. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹At the time of leaving for the battle-field, we have already read that Lord Ram had been so relaxed that he had spent some time to tuck in flowers in the lock of his hairs on his head—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 86.

²In this imagery, the crown of matted hairs on Lord Ram’s head is like the blue mountain because of his dark complexion, the ear rings that shine as he moves his head is the dazzle of lightening, and the flowers tucked in the layers of hairs are the many stars that are seen in the sky.

³This line can also be read as “Lord Ram was turning or moving the bow and arrows in his two hands.”

⁴It was a battle-field, and not a royal court. A warrior who has just a while ago vanquished his enemy in a bloody duel is bound to be splattered with blood, and not

sprinkled with scented water. Everything has its proper place where it finds its glory; while blood would be at odds in the ceremonial environment of pomp and pageantry of a royal court, it fits in perfectly well in the background of a battle-field.

⁵Here, the dark complexioned body of Lord Ram is compared to the catechu plant, and the drops of blood on his body to the bird with red feathers.]

दो०. कृपादृष्टि करि बृष्टि प्रभु अभय किए सुर बृंद ।
भालु कीस सब हरषे जय सुख धाम मुकुंद ॥ १०३ ॥

dōhā.

krpādr̥ṣṭi kari br̥ṣṭi prabhu abhaya ki'ē sura br̥nda.
bhālu kīsa saba haraṣē jaya sukha dhāma mukunda. 103.

Lord Ram glanced gracefully at the gods as if he was showering his blessing of fearlessness upon all of them.

All the monkeys and bears too felt exhilarated, applauding the Lord and saying: 'Glory to the Lord, Victory to you who is an embodiment of happiness, and a provider of joy and freedom from fears to others'.¹ (Doha no. 103)

[Note—¹This is the 8th day that marks the end of the Epic War of Lanka. Now let us quickly recapitulate the verses of Ram Charit Manas that help us to trace the progress of the war and count the number of days it lasted.

Chronology of the War of Lanka:--

1st day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48.

2nd day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 49—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 55.

3rd day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 72.

4th day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75. {Meghanad fights during the day and does a fire sacrifice in the night.}

5th day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 78. {Meghanad killed by Laxman.}

6th day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Doha no. 84. {Ravana enters the battle field; he performs a fire sacrifice in the evening.}

7th day of the war—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 85—to Doha no. 98.

The intervening night of the 7th and 8th day of the war—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 100.

8th day of the war (Ravana's death)—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 100—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103.

It is to be noted here that a careful analysis of Ram Charit Manas shows that Ravana was killed on the 8th day of the epic war, as is evident from the chronology of day-to-day battles as outlined herein above. But the traditional view is that he was killed on the 9th day of the war, and his cremation was done on the 10th day—apropos Ramayan according to Devi Puran Mahabhagwat, Canto 47, verse nos. 69-72.]

चौ०. पति सिर देखत मंदोदरी । मुरुछित बिकल धरनि खसि परी ॥ १ ॥

जुबति बृंद रोवत उठि धाई । तेहि उठाइ रावन पहि आई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pati sira dēkhata mandōdarī. muruchita bikala dharani khasi parī. 1.
jubati br̥nda rōvata uṭhi dhā'īm. tēhi uṭhā'i rāvana pahim ā'īm. 2.

No sooner had Mandodari seen her husband's head falling right before her¹, than she swooned and fell down unconscious on the ground. (1)

The women folk of the royal household (maids, servitors, guards and other royal attendants) too broke down, weeping and grieving along with Mandodari at the death of their lord (Ravana). They lifted Mandodari up from the ground, and brought her to the place (in the battle-field) where Ravana's body lay on the ground². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 103.

²They all came to the battle-field to see Ravana's dead body for the last time, and pay their last respects to him.

They also wanted to verify if Ravana was actually dead, for merely seeing his heads was no guarantee that he was really dead. During the course of the war, his heads were severed many times by Lord Ram, and all these heads had flown here and there in the sky, and after sometimes they must have landed somewhere. So therefore, the palace women could not be absolutely certain that Ravana was dead by merely seeing his severed heads. Hence, they wished to ascertain the facts by visiting the battle-ground and seeing for themselves that Ravana was indeed dead.]

पति गति देखि ते करहिं पुकारा । छूटे कच नहिं बपुष सँभारा ॥ ३ ॥

उर ताड़ना करहिं बिधि नाना । रोवत करहिं प्रताप बखाना ॥ ४ ॥

pati gati dēkhi tē karahim̐ pukārā. chūṭē kaca nahim̐ bapuṣa sam̐bhārā. 3.
ura tāṛana karahim̐ bidhi nānā. rōvata karahim̐ pratāpa bakhānā. 4.

When they (Mandodari as well as all other ladies who accompanied her) saw the condition of their lord (“pati”; i.e. Ravana)¹ (lying prostrate and motionless on the ground, with all his heads and limbs cut-off, and covered with a thick cake of dust mixed with dried blood), they wailed and lamented most woefully, crying in agony of grief, dismay and distress.

Their long tresses were disheveled and in complete disorder; they weren’t in control of themselves and their bodies. (3)

All of them woefully beat their chests and felt utterly miserable in their hearts while remembering their lord’s greatness and glories, which they, led by their grieving queen Mandodari, enumerated in laudable terms, praising him for his outstanding achievements for which he was so famed and acclaimed³. (4)

[Note—¹The word used in the text for Ravana is “pati”: it has a dual meaning: for Mandodari it meant her ‘husband’, and for the rest of the ladies it meant their ‘lord’.

²The ladies were in great grief and overcome with remorse. No matter how bad, evil and cruel Ravana may have been for the rest of the world, for them he was their caretaker who provided them their security, their needs and their comforts; and with his death they had lost their lord and master. They stared at a morbid, gloomy and uncertain future, for they did not know what was in store for them, and how the new ruler would treat them. They feared for the worse as they already had a very bitter experience of how an invading army behaves on several occasions during the war, but more specifically when recently the small detachment of monkeys, who were sent to stop Ravana’s fire sacrifice, had ill-treated and humiliated them by dragging them by their hairs and pulling them out from the inside of the palace. {Apropos: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 85; and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 24-32.}

They guessed that after this victory, Vibhishan would surely ascend the throne of Lanka, as he was the next in line of natural succession. With the memory of how roughly his brother Ravana had treated him in full court and then kicked him out of the kingdom very unceremoniously, there were fair chances of his squaring up the account of the insults that he had been subjected to by avenging his anger on Ravana’s ladies; if not physically ravishing them in the worst scenario, then at the best by treating them as his mistresses and concubines on-call, who would be expected to gratify his pleasures at his will, or else face punishment, thereby robbing them of their freedom, honour, dignity and self-respect that all of them had hitherto enjoyed under their lord Ravana.

³When a person is dead, it is a matter of courtesy and civility and good manners that only his goodness and achievements are recounted, and not his sins and evilness; this is the standard way obituaries are written. No one, not even those who had malice against him while he was alive, would say in public that the dead man was a vile person; for with his death his sins also die with his dead body. What survived Ravana was his soul, and this soul is eternally pure and holy, and hence without blemishes.

If outsiders refrain from criticizing a dead person, how can his kith and kin, his close family members such as his wife and brother, durst ever gather courage to

insinuate him, for in case they do so then they themselves become objects of scorn and ridicule in this world?

It is forsooth an undeniable fact that there was no greater warrior at that time than Ravana who had conquered the whole world with the formidable strength of his arms. He was not only invincible in the battle-field but also a great performer of sacrifices, as well as scholar in his own right. Even the almighty gods were vanquished by him; he had performed many a great sacrifices by the virtue of which Braham, the creator, and Lord Shiva, the concluder of this creation, had themselves been so pleased with him that they had granted him several boons; and as for scholarship, Ravana was well-versed in the scriptures and their Mantras, and his prayer, called “Shiva Tandava Stotra” in honour of Lord Shiva, who incidentally was his patron deity, has no match in Sanskrit literature. He also did severe penances, observed austerities, practiced meditation and contemplation, and taken all-in-all, he was a learned and wise soul.

As to the question “why did he do so many sins”, the answer is: it was not ‘he’, i.e. his true self known as his Atma (pure consciousness) that commit any sin, but it was his gross body of a demon that did it.

And further, if we examine the circumstances of his getting a demonic body, we find that it was not because of some grave sin or evil deed of his own doing, but because of a nasty scheme laid out by one of his enemies in his previous life that led to Brahmins falsely holding him guilty and cursing him to become a demon for a grave sin that he had not at all committed. We have already read this story earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 176.

So therefore, to be honest to Ravana, the real blame for all his sufferings was not his own misdeeds, but the over-jealous Brahmins who had misused their powers to curse him without finding out the truth.]

तव बल नाथ डोल नित धरनी । तेज हीन पावक ससि तरनी ॥ ५ ॥

सेष कमठ सहि सकहिं न भारा । सो तनु भूमि परेउ भरि छारा ॥ ६ ॥

tava bala nātha ḍōla nita dharanī. tēja hīna pāvaka sasi taranī. 5.
sēṣa kamaṭha sahi sakahim na bhārā. sō tanu bhūmi parē'u bhari chārā. 6.

Mandodari, who was all the more sad and remorseful at the loss of her dear husband, honoured her departed lord by lauding his achievements in the following words: ‘Oh Lord! The earth shook by the might of your valorous arms. The Fire God, the Moon and the Sun faded in comparison to your grand majesty and astounding glory. (3)

It is such an irony that you, who once were so mighty and great that the Tortoise and Seshnath (who are said to support the earth and the world on their back and hoods respectively) shook and shuddered when you walked majestically¹, now lie fallen on the ground covered with dust! (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 182; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 25.]

बरुन कुबेर सुरेस समीरा । रन सन्मुख धरि काहुँ न धीरा ॥ ७ ॥
 भुजबल जितेहु काल जम साई । आजु परेहु अनाथ की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

baruna kubēra surēsa samīrā. rana sanmukha dhari kāhum̐ na dhīrā. 7.
 bhujabala jitēhu kāla jama sā'īm. āju parēhu anātha kī nā'īm. 8.

Varun (the patron god of water), Kuber (the treasurer of gods), Suresh (the king of gods; Indra), and Samira (the wind god)¹—none of them dare to stand before you in the battle-field. (7)

Oh Lord; you had vanquished even Kaal, the god of death, by the force of your powerful arms².

Alas! It is so unfortunate that today you are lying helplessly on the ground as if you are without any support; as if your legendary valour, gallantry, strength and power have altogether abandoned you. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 8

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 96.]

जगत बिदित तुम्हारि प्रभुताई । सुत परिजन बल बरनि न जाई ॥ ९ ॥
 राम बिमुख अस हाल तुम्हारा । रहा न कोउ कुल रोवनिहारा ॥ १० ॥

jagata bidita tumhāri prabhutā'ī. suta parijana bala barani na jā'ī. 9.
 rāma bimukha asa hāla tumhārā. rahā na kō'u kula rōvanihārā. 10.

Your (Ravana's) majesty, greatness, achievements, gallantry and glories are famed throughout the world; the strength and valour of your kith and kin were so immense that they could not be sufficiently enumerated and praised by anyone. (9)

But alas, such a woeful has been your fate by being hostile towards and harbouring animosity with Lord Ram that no one is left in your race (and family) to at least weep for you on your demise¹. (10)

[Note—¹It is surely a biting and bitter taunt on Vibhishan—for everyone knows that he was Ravana's brother, and when the ladies said that “no one lives in Ravana's family to weep for him after he died”, a finger of scorn and contempt is pointed directly at his brother Vibhishan. Ravana's ladies blame Vibhishan for their lord's death, and for all practical purposes they indicate that they treat him as an outcaste from the demon race.

It was sure to pinch Vibhishan's conscience sorely, and he would understand that in the final analysis of history he would never be forgiven for his betrayal and for being an agent to bring about the ruin of his own family.]

तव बस बिधि प्रपंच सब नाथा । सभय दिसिप नित नावहिं माथा ॥ ११ ॥
 अब तव सिर भुज जंबुक खाहीं । राम बिमुख यह अनुचित नाहीं ॥ १२ ॥
 काल बिबस पति कहा न माना । अग जग नाथु मनुज करि जाना ॥ १३ ॥

tava basa bidhi prapañca saba nāthā. sabhaya disipa nita nāvahiṁ māthā. 11.
 aba tava sira bhuja jambuka khāhīm. rāma bimukha yaha anucita nāhīm. 12.
 kāla bibasa pati kahā na mānā. aga jaga nāthu manuja kari jānā. 13.

Oh Lord (nāthā)! The entire world, which the creator Brahma had created, was under your domain and command. The Lokpals (the gods who are appointed as custodians of the world) used to bow their heads before you daily to pay their respects to your majesty. (11)

What a paradox and an irony of fate it is that now your majesty's heads and arms are being eaten by jackals. [Why has this come to be?]

But there is no wonder that this has come to be your fate because it is not unexpected as a punishment for your being against Lord Ram. (12)

[Mandodari laments—] Oh my dear husband (pati)! You were under the influence of Kaal (death) because you had not paid heed to my advice that I had proffered to you repeatedly in this regard (that you were committing a grave folly by being hostile to Lord Ram, and that you must make peace with him at any cost)¹.

This Kaal had so much deluded your wisdom that inspite of my entreaties you had been so stubborn that you thought Lord Ram to be a human prince. (13)

[Note—¹There are several occasions when Mandodari had tried to persuade Ravana to end hostility with Lord Ram and make his peace with him, but he stubbornly refused.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede it; (b) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Doha no. 37.]

छं०. जान्यो मनुज करि दनुज कानन दहन पावक हरि स्वयं । १ ।
 जेहि नमत सिव ब्रह्मादि सुर पिय भजेहु नहिं करुनामयं ॥ २ ॥
 आजन्म ते परद्रोह रत पापौघमय तव तनु अयं । ३ ।
 तुम्हहू दियो निज धाम राम नमामि ब्रह्म निरामयं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jān'yō manuja kari danuja kānana dahana pāvaka hari svayaṁ. 1.
 jēhi namata siva brahmādi sura piya bhajēhu nahim karunāmayaṁ. 2.
 ājanma tē paradrōha rata pāpaughamaya tava tanu ayaṁ. 3.

tumhahū diyō nija dhāma rāma namāmi brahma nirāmayam. 4.

[Regretting her husband's stubborn attitude that he did not pay any attention to her entreaties to him to make peace with Lord Ram, which culminated in his death, Mandodari laments woefully—]

What an irony of fate it is that you had been so deluded as to have treated the great Lord God as an ordinary human being, for you did not realize (inspite of my warnings) that Lord Ram is no one else but Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being) himself in this form, and that he is like a great wild-fire that would reduce to ashes the huge forest symbolized by the great demon race. (Chanda line no. 1)

Oh my dear husband (piya)! It is so unfortunate and regrettable that you had failed to worship Lord Ram before whom all the gods, including Lords Shiva and Brahma (the two great gods of the Trinity), bow their heads in reverence. (Chanda line no. 2)

From the time of your birth you had always been hostile towards others, harbouring malice and ill-will for one and all. Indeed, your body was an embodiment of sins and evilness. (Chanda line no. 3)

But inspite of all these shortcomings of yours, it is such a mighty wonder and a great good fortune for you that Lord Ram had bestowed you with the boon of being able to live in his own place¹. [To wit, the merciful and compassionate Lord Ram has forgiven you for all your sins and misdeeds, and instead of condemning you to suffer eternally in hell, he has granted your soul eternal peace and beatitude. Verily and in all sooth, the gracious Lord has bestowed your soul with the reward of deliverance, emancipation and salvation that you could never have ever expected in your life.]

So therefore, I most sincerely, and with the greatest of honesty that I can command, pay my reverence to such a benevolent Lord Ram who is none but the eternal and faultless supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, himself personified². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that the Atma, or the soul, of Ravana had emerged from his body to go and enter directly in the holy body of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

This is why Mandodari says that “Lord Ram has given her husband a residence very close to the Lord himself”, because a person's heart is a place where those who are very close and dear to him find a place to dwell in a subtle way, in a symbolic manner.

How did Mandodari come to know of this development that took place in the battle-field, far away from the inner chambers of the royal palace where she was at that time? This bit of knowledge that she had shows that whatever transpired in the battle-field was instantly communicated to her inside the palace by a network of informers and spies. After all, wars can't be fought without having real time intelligence of the enemy's strategies, and so every king had his own way of gathering it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15 where Mandodari has told her husband Ravana exactly this thing—that Lord Ram is none but the Supreme Being himself.]

दो०. अहह नाथ रघुनाथ सम कृपासिंधु नहिं आन ।
जोगि बृंद दुर्लभ गति तोहि दीन्हि भगवान ॥ १०४ ॥

dōhā.

ahaha nātha raghunātha sama kṛpāsindhu nahim āna.
jōgi br̥nda durlabha gati tōhi dīnhi bhagavāna. 104.

[Expressing her regret and sadness that her lord, i.e. her husband Ravana, had not paid his attention to her, Mandodari praises Lord Ram for his graciousness and compassionate nature by saying—]

Ah indeed, there is no Lord in this world such as Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) who is an ocean (or an embodiment) of the virtues of mercy, compassion, kindness, grace, benevolence and magnanimity—for he has granted you a destiny that is even difficult for great sages, hermits and ascetics to attain¹.’ (Doha no. 104)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114 where the gods have said the same thing.

Presently, Mandodari explains why she praises Lord Ram. She was a wise and prudent woman, and so she obviously understood that she has to live under a changed situation. Her husband was dead; her brother-in-law, Vibhishan, will most certainly not have a kind view of her; and she was now surrounded by those who were hostile to her husband.

Even inside the city of Lanka, once Ravana was dead, all those who survived the war would side with the new sovereign, simply because it would serve them right to be in his good books. Some of Ravana’s trusted ministers, such as Malyawant# for example, had already expressed their resentment at Ravana’s behaviour openly {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49.}

So therefore, Mandodari thought it wise and prudent to express her praise for Lord Ram in public at this crucial juncture to erase all traces of remaining animosity and ill-will that may linger even after the war ended. After all, she had always held the view that Lord Ram was the Supreme Being, and that he was very kind and gracious, but till this point of time her views were known only to Ravana. So she thought that it was the right time now that she should come out publicly with her thoughts, as it would make her an instant favourite with Lord Ram and his army, as well as with the new sovereign whoso he might be.

This favourable view of hers for Lord Ram, and she hoped which would be graciously reciprocated by the Lord himself, would definitely ensure her peace under the new dispensation that would rule Lanka after the war.]

चौ०. मंदोदरी बचन सुनि काना । सुर मुनि सिद्ध सबन्हि सुख माना ॥ १ ॥
अज महेस नारद सनकादी । जे मुनिबर परमारथबादी ॥ २ ॥
भरि लोचन रघुपतिहि निहारी । प्रेम मगन सब भए सुखारी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

mandōdarī bacana suni kārā. sura muni sid'dha sabanhi sukha mānā. 1.
 aja mahēsa nārada sanakādī. jē munibara paramārathabādī. 2.
 bhari lōcana raghupatihi nihārī. prēma magana saba bha'ē sukhārī. 3.

Hearing these gratuitous words of Mandodari, all the gods, sages and mystics felt very happy¹. (1)

The creator Brahma (aja), Lord Shiva (mahēsa), the celestial sages Narad and Sankadi, as well as all other sages and ascetics who were learned, wise and enlightened --- (2),

--- All of them watched the glorious form of Lord Ram till their eyes were satisfied. The magnificent sight of the Lord (smiling and looking calm) made them feel exhilarant in their hearts so much that they became overwhelmed with emotions. (3)

[Note—¹They felt happy that since Mandodari was favourably inclined to Lord Ram, there was no chance of any resumption of hostility, for if she, being the queen of the demon race, decided against surrender, she could have led a fresh wave of revolt against the Lord by gathering all the remaining demon warriors—who had vowed their allegiance in favour of her husband, and who would now willingly side with her if she chose to lead them against the invading army, as well as against Vibhishan whom all of them held in contempt for being a traitor—to launch a second round of this destructive war.

A war that destroys everything is not liked by anyone; so when the gods, sages and mystics found Mandodari in favour of Lord Ram, that she harbours no ill-will against the Lord, they rejoiced that at last peace would reign on earth.]

रुदन करत देखीं सब नारी । गयउ बिभीषनु मन दुख भारी ॥ ४ ॥
 बंधु दसा बिलोकि दुख कीन्हा । तब प्रभु अनुजहि आयसु दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
 लछिमन तेहि बहू बिधि समुझायो । बहुरि बिभीषन प्रभु पहिं आयो ॥ ६ ॥

rudana karata dēkhīm saba nārī. gaya'u bibhīṣanu mana dukha bhārī. 4.
 bandhu dasā bilōki dukha kīnhā. taba prabhu anujahi āyasu dīnhā. 5.
 lachimana tēhi bahu bidhi samujhāyō. bahuri bibhīṣana prabhu pahim āyō. 6.

[Vibhishan at last was moved by remorse and guilt. Blood is said to be always thicker than water. So when he saw the ladies of his brother's family, who obviously were closely related to him as well, weeping and grieving for his elder brother Ravana, he became emotional.]

When Vibhishan saw the ladies of the royal household weeping, lamenting and grieving sorely (for his dead brother Ravana), he was moved emotionally, and felt very sad and sorry.

Then Vibhishan went there (“gaya'u bibhīṣanu”; i.e. Vibhishan went to the place near the dead body of his brother Ravana where these ladies had gathered to grieve for him)¹. (4)

So, seeing the condition and fate of his dead brother Ravana, Vibhishan expressed his grief and remorse.

At this juncture, Lord Ram called his younger brother (Laxman) and instructed him according to the prevailing situation. [To wit, Lord Ram asked Laxman to go and comfort Vibhishan.] (5)

Laxman went and comforted Vibhishan in many ways². Then he came back to the Lord, bringing Vibhishan along with him³. (6)

[Note—¹This means that till now Vibhishan was standing away from the spot where Ravana's body lay on the ground, for he was near Lord Ram.

The sight of the ladies weeping over the dead body of his elder brother Ravana at last made Vibhishan emotional as he was overcome with pangs of guilt and shame. He bethought to himself:

“If I do not express any sort of sorrow at this juncture, it will be a tremendous scandal, and it will make the whole world scorn at me for my rudeness and showing irreverence for a departed soul, which is a contemptible thing to do by all accounts. I have already achieved my objective of getting rid of my cruel brother who had tormented the world for so long, who had relentlessly been committing all sorts of sinful deeds, who had so impudently abducted Sita, who was like a thorn for the world, and who had insulted me in public when I was being sincere in my advice to him to abandon his hostile attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with him. But now he is dead, and in spite of all his drawbacks and shortcomings, after all, he was my elder brother who had sustained me all my life till that unfortunate moment when he kicked me out of the kingdom in a fit of rage. I must now forgive him; I must show my respects to him as my brother—this the world expects from me.

Lord Ram is closely watching me and my actions. Say, what would he think of me and my character if I do not show any remorse for my dead brother, if I do not pay my last respects to his soul? Surely, I would fall in his esteem; he will think that I am a selfish and a pervert demon in heart, no better than Ravana. Should this idea sprout in the Lord's heart against me, it would be disastrous for my own future.

So therefore it is prudent and advisable for me to show remorse and sadness for my dead brother, and at least make an external show of sympathy for the grieving ladies of our household.”

²Let us see what may have transpired between Laxman and Vibhishan. To begin with, Laxman went through the usual things one says while condoling someone who has been bereaved. He told Vibhishan: “My dear friend. Don't thou grieve for Ravana; for dost thou not know that Ravana's body was evil and sinful, and aren't thou well enough enlightened to know that the gross body of any living being in this world, no matter how great he is, is mortal, and this body has to perish by way of dying one or the other day in order to release the trapped soul. Being sinful, evil, vile and cruel, the body of Ravana was destined to suffer severe punishment in hell; so what thou seest of Ravana's gross physical body is what his body hadst deserved.

As for Ravana himself, aren't thou wise enough to know also that the gross body of any individual is not his 'true self'; for it is the Atma, the pure consciousness

also known as the soul, that is truly that individual's 'self'. And haven't thou seen thyself that Ravana's soul has attained eternal deliverance; haven't thou witnessed how the Atma of Ravana emerged from his sinful body to find an abiding rest in the holy body of Lord Ram who is none but the Supreme Being himself? Dost thou wot naught that? So why dost thou grieve; there is no reason for thee to doest that? The fact of the matter is that Ravana has been very fortunate that inspite of living a life of sensual pleasures, doing what he thought fit to gratify his senses, doing nothing worthy to be called meritorious that would entitle him for any spiritual reward, yet he foundest a destiny that is rare even for learned and illustrious sages, hermits and ascetics to attain.

Have thou not heard thyself that thine sister-in-law Mandodari has herself acknowledged that her husband has been exceptionally fortunate because his soul has been bestowed with an exalted and singularly rare destiny that even the greatest of sages and hermits yearn for? Why dost thou grieve for Ravana then, for he hast attained deliverance, he hast achieved eternal beatitude and felicity, which he wouldn't have ever attained if allowed to live a life of sin and cruelty to which he was accustomed? There is no need for thee even to pray for his soul, as people usually do when remembering and grieving for a dead person, for that destiny of the soul hast already been achieved by Ravana. Forsooth therefore, instead of grieving and lamenting and feeling remorseful, it wouldst be in fitness of things for thee to become calm, and make arrangements for his funeral."

After finishing this formal discourse to comfort Vibhishan, Laxman came to the main point for which Lord Ram had so hurriedly sent him to follow Vibhishan. Laxman instinctively and intuitively realized what was going on in Lord Ram's mind. He had an apprehension that there are fare chances of Vibhishan suddenly having a change of heart when he sees his family members sorely weeping and grieving for his dead brother, as also the fact that since 'blood is always thicker than water' he might think that after all the demons are related to him by blood, that he is 'one of them', whereas the 'others', Lord Ram and his companions, are outsiders; these 'outsiders' had invaded his kingdom, they have killed his brother, ruined his kingdom, and may be now their chief, i.e. Lord Ram, would appoint any trusted minister of his, say Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, as a governor of Lanka, and assign some secondary role to Vibhishan just to keep him happy. It was also possible that Vibhishan, with these and other such thoughts churning his mind, would be prone to become more sympathetic to his demons than the Lord could expect.

After all, with Ravana dead, Vibhishan's objective in joining Lord Ram's camp was fulfilled; there were chances of his thinking: "Well, after all I will be welcomed by my friends in Lanka if I explain to them the circumstances why I abandoned them earlier. Lord Ram is only concerned with retrieving his wife Sita, and that done he would go away to his own kingdom far away in the north, in the city of Ayodhya. I have to live here amongst these demons. So it will be wise and prudent for me to make quick amends with the demons who have survived this war and tell them that I am one like them, I am one of them; that I have more to do with them than the invaders."

This was an unsavoury scenario that Lord Ram wished to avoid at all costs. So therefore, Laxman called Vibhishan aside and whispered in his ears: "Look my dear friend. Thou wiltst be wise to come along with me to Lord Ram. See, the demon brothers of thine thinkest that Ravana was slayed by Lord Ram, ain't it? Well, suppose they are told the truth that it was thee who had divulged the secret of Ravana's death to Lord Ram—that he ought to shoot an arrow at Ravana's navel in

order to kill him. Dost thou thinkest that then thine dear demon friends wouldst welcome thee warmly? All bonhomie that thou hope wouldst be there for thee in Lanka shouldst thou decide to go back to Lanka with these grieving ladies of the royal household, then perish the thought if thou hast it. Bless thine self if the demons wouldst naught kill thee mercilessly instantly for thy being a traitor who hast betrayed thine own race.

Remember friend, thou art to be anointed as the next king of Lanka; Lord Ram hast already promised this reward to thee, and the Lord is singularly true to his words. Since Lord Ram has been victorious in this war, no one wouldst durst oppose thee if thou are appointed king by the Lord himself, under his auspices. On the contrary, imagine thine doomed fate if the demon race comest to know that it is thee who hast been actually responsible for Ravana's death by divulging the secret way to kill him. Thou wouldst be loathed by one and all; thou wouldst be neither here nor there, and left high and dry; thou wouldst have no face to show to Lord Ram then and seek his intervention on thine behalf. Hence, it's in thine own interests to come along with me to Lord Ram forthwith. Thy willst be absolutely safe that way and assured of gaining the crown of the kingdom of Lanka."

Obviously, Vibhishan was terrified at these prospects; if he had secretly harboured any thoughts of returning to Lanka at this point of time, such thoughts flew away fast from him as a dry leaf that is swept away in a gust of wind.

Meanwhile, the chronicler of this magnificent Story, the author of this Book, wishes to bring on record that the above narrative documents only the lighter part of what actually transpired between Laxman and Vibhishan at that point of time; for after this initial talk done in a lighter vein to dissuade Vibhishan from getting distracted by weeping ladies and his own heart that was overcome with remorse, Laxman became a little more serious and consoled Vibhishan by invoking metaphysical knowledge as expounded in the Upanishads, because this knowledge helps the grieving person to overcome the sadness of his heart and remove any guilt that his conscience may harbour.

What Laxman told Vibhishan next, according to Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 12, verse nos. 9-30, is this in brief: "My dear friend. Look, you are a wise soul, so I believe that you understand that the gross body of any living being is not his 'true self', that the 'true self' is his Atma, his soul, which is pure consciousness. You must know that the gross body has many faults and is perishable, while the Atma is eternal and pure. I am sure you must also be aware that the Atma has no relationships; all relationships that exist in this world are limited to the gross body. Tell me, for whom are you grieving? Is it for your brother Ravana? See for yourself how wrong you are. Your brother's real identity is his Atma, and this Atma knows no relationships. Further, this Atma of your brother Ravana hasn't died; on the contrary it has been freed from the cage of a sinful body of a demon in which it was trapped, to find liberation and deliverance.

Since the Atma is your brother Ravana's true self or true identity, since the Atma does not die as it is an eternal entity, and since the Atma is sublime, holy and divine because it is pure consciousness, where is the cause of your lamenting at the death of your brother? It's merely your imagination that Ravana has died; for the Atma never dies. You ought to rejoice instead of grieving because your brother's Atma has found deliverance, emancipation and salvation; because it has been freed from the cage of a demonic body in which it was trapped. The longer Ravana's Atma had lived in his body, the more it would have suffered, because his body was that of a 'demon' and so it would have continued to do what was normal for it to do, which means doing

sinful and evil deeds. Again, since every action has its result, it would be natural to expect that Ravana's Atma would have been burdened more and more by the sins he committed by his demon body.

So therefore, you must rather thank Lord Ram that he has blessed Ravana's Atma by providing it liberation from the quagmire of sins and their consequences by killing his body so that the Atma that was trapped inside it can find its freedom.

What's more glorious than anything else is that Ravana's Atma has found a destination that even exalted sages and ascetics find it difficult to attain; it has been accepted by the Supreme Being himself. Have you not witnessed that Ravana's Atma had exited from his sinful body in the form of a shaft of light to enter the holy body of Lord Ram, implying that the Lord has accepted Ravana's Atma and made it indistinguishable and inseparable from his own Atma (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103).

Vibhishan, just imagine how fortunate and blessed your brother Ravana is; he does not deserve weeping and grieving; rather he deserves a salute from you. You ought to be proud in calling yourself Ravana's brother, because remember that not everyone is fortunate to find a place inside Lord Ram's heart as your brother has found.

And as for Ravana's body, here it lies before you. It was sinful and evil. Tell me honestly, would any man in his right senses like to weep and lament at the loss of such a vile thing as was the body of Ravana? Its good riddance rather, ain't it? So therefore, feel comforted; stop lamenting and feeling remorseful like an ignorant person. Get up and do what you are now expected to do for Ravana whom you call your brother: perform his last rites and pay your obeisance to him. That is the proper thing for you to do under the present circumstance. Grieving, lamenting, feeling remorseful and guilty for something over which you have no control does not behove of a wise soul like you.

³Lord Ram closely observed Vibhishan's behaviour. So the Lord decided quickly to send Laxman to Vibhishan with two purposes in mind: The first reason was obviously to comfort Vibhishan like a true friend should do in times of distress. The second reason was more subtle. It was to ensure that Vibhishan should not suddenly have a change of heart once Ravana was dead, and turn against the Lord by joining the demons who were, after all, related to him by blood.

It is to be noted here that when Vibhishan went forward to join the royal ladies grieving by the side of the dead body of Ravana, he had not taken Lord Ram's permission. Vibhishan had gone there impulsively, for he was overcome with remorse and shame. This raised certain doubts in the Lord's mind about his intentions.

Lord Ram felt that he could not take chances; there was a certain degree of risk in leaving Vibhishan too long with the ladies of his dead brother so that they can have a conference. Perhaps Vibhishan would now suddenly have a change of heart—because Ravana, with whom he wanted to settle personal scores for the insult that the latter had inflicted upon him, was now dead, and with his death Vibhishan's mind was freed of all fears from his brother. So there were chances that he may turn his back on his protector and patron Lord Ram now, thinking: "Since my chief objective in joining the Lord's camp has been achieved, why should I now remain under his sovereignty. Now I am a king of Lanka, and the demons are related to me by blood. After all, Lord Ram and his army are invaders. They are enemies of Lanka and the demon race; how can they be my true friends? They needed me to help them against Ravana and the demon army as I could provide them with vital information and clues

as how to win the war, as much as I needed them to protect me against my inimical brother who was baying for my blood. We both have served our respective purposes. Enemies who have fought deadly wars can never be true friends in the long run, so goes the saying. I am a demon by birth, and no matter how much I try to prove my integrity and allegiance in favour of Lord Ram, to whom I truly feel obliged and submissive, yet I doubt that few in the monkey army would truly believe me and have faith in me, for they will always treat me as Ravana's brother.

And now that I have openly shown my remorse and grief at my brother's death, which was spontaneous and natural for me to do, the doubt about my integrity and loyalty for Lord Ram that anyone in the Lord's company has had for me would be reinforced and aggravated. What should I do now? Shall I excuse myself from Lord Ram and explain to him that I must return to the city of Lanka with these ladies in order to restore order there, as a void has been created with Ravana's death and the throne is empty. Or should I wait to see if Lord Ram fulfils his promise of making me the king of Lanka at the end of the war. But supposing the Lord changes his mind once his objective of vanquishing Ravana has been accomplished; suppose he decides to appoint someone else as Lanka's governor before returning to his own kingdom of Ayodhya? What would I do then? If I oppose, the monkeys would catch me and put me in shackles. So, should I join these ladies and accompany them back to the fort while there is still time for me? Surely, Lord Ram would not be as ungracious and in-courteous as to show any rudeness in the front of these ladies; which will provide me a safety net to escape. Say, what am I ought to do?"

Laxman was quickly by Vibhishan's side, leaving no time for him to enter into any consultation with either the grieving ladies or the remaining demon warriors who stood guarding the dead body of Ravana. After usual condolences and formalities for such occasions as noted herein above in note no. 2, Laxman diplomatically prevailed upon Vibhishan to bring him to Lord Ram.]

कृपादृष्टि प्रभु ताहि बिलोका । करहु क्रिया परिहरि सब सोका ॥ ७ ॥
कीन्हि क्रिया प्रभु आयसु मानी । बिधिवत देस काल जियँ जानी ॥ ८ ॥

krpādr̥ṣṭi prabhu tāhi bilōkā. karahu kriyā parihari saba sōkā. 7.
kīnhi kriyā prabhu āyasu mānī. bidhivata dēsa kāla jiyam̐ jānī. 8.

Lord Ram looked at Vibhishan very gracefully and courteously (to reassure him that the Lord has a great degree of respect for him, and that he should never doubt Lord Ram's abiding faith in him, as well as the Lord's promise of abiding friendship with him).

Then Lord Ram advised Vibhishan to discard all grief and do his duty of performing the last rites of Ravana¹. (7)

Whereat, Vibhishan obeyed the instructions of Lord Ram and performed the last rites of Ravana in accordance with the circumstances of place and time², and as prescribed by the scriptures. (8)

[Note—¹It is so praiseworthy and an honourable act for Lord Ram that he would take care that Ravana's mortal remains should be properly laid to rest. Rarely would any conqueror think in this righteous and laudable way that he would pay special attention

to those who have fallen dead during the war to ensure that the dead were given a proper funeral.

Vibhishan was Ravana's brother, and so being related with blood to the dead king, he was the right person to perform Ravana's last rites.

²The circumstances of place and time of Ravana's death were not ordinary. It was a battle-field; it was the country of demons who had their own system of dealing with their dead; it was almost the end of the day and time of eventide when the war finally ended; the whole ground was littered with dead warriors.

So therefore Ravana's last rites were performed by Vibhishan in the best manner he could under these circumstances. There couldn't be elaborate rituals befitting the funeral of a king; everything had to be done in brief. Nevertheless, all basics as prescribed by the scriptures were observed.

How did Vibhishan perform the last rites of Ravana? This question is answered in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Lanka Kand, Canto 12, verse nos. 36-37.

This is what is narrated there:

चित्यां निवेश्य विधिवत्पितृमेधविधानतः ।
 आहिताग्नेर्यथा कार्यं रावणस्य विभीषणः ॥ ३६॥
 तथैव सर्वमकरोद्बन्धुभिः सह मन्त्रिभिः ।
 ददौ च पावकं तस्य विधियुक्तं विभीषणः ॥ ३७॥
 स्नात्वा चैवार्द्रवस्त्रेण तिलान् दर्भाभिमिश्रितान् ।
 उदकेन च सम्मिश्रान् प्रदाय विधिपूर्वकम् ॥ ३८॥
 प्रदाय चोदकं तस्मै मुध्ना चैनं प्रणम्य च ।
 ताः स्त्रियोऽनुनयामास सान्त्वमुक्त्वा पुनः पुनः ॥ ३९॥

cityāṃ niveśya vidhivatpitrmedhavidhānataḥ ।
 āhitāgneryathā kāryaṃ rāvaṇasya vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 36॥
 tathaiva sarvamakarodbandhubhiḥ saha mantribhiḥ ।
 dadau ca pāvakaṃ tasya vidhiyuktaṃ vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 37॥
 snātvā caivārdravastreṇa tilān darbhābhimiśritān ।
 udakena ca sammiśrān pradāya vidhipūrvakam ॥ 38॥
 pradāya codakaṃ tasmai murchā cainaṃ praṇamya ca ।
 tāḥ striyo'nunayāmāsa sāntvamuktva punaḥ punaḥ ॥ 39॥

36-39. Vibhishan laid the corpse of Ravana on the funeral pyre by observing all the traditional regulations and rules that are prescribed for the cremation of a father¹. Then he duly consigned the body of Ravana to the flames by lighting the funeral pile in the prescribed manner (36).

In these rituals, he was accompanied by his surviving relatives and ministers of the demon kingdom. He also duly completed the 'offering of the fire' ritual (dadau ca pāvakaṃ tasya)² in a traditional and sanctified manner (37)#.

Then he (Vibhishan) took a purifying bath as part of the ritual of ablution, and with wet clothes still on his body, he offered a palm-full of water having some sesame

seeds and a few blades of grass in it to the departed soul as per established tradition for performing of last rites (38).

After offering his oblations in this way, he put his head to the ground as a token of respect and reverence to the departed soul, and then repeatedly condoled those grieving women (of Ravana's household) by using soothing words of consolation and condolence² (39).

{Note—¹To the credit of Vibhishan, he showed all respects to Ravana and performed his last rites like a son would do for his father. All past animosity and hatred was buried and burnt with the burning of the body of Ravana.

This verse is crucial in the sense that since Vibhishan had performed the last rites of his dead brother as a 'son would do for his father', he cleared for himself all obstacles that may have risen against him for his right to the throne of the kingdom of Lanka—because a son has the right to the crown after his father, the king, is dead.

²The 'offering of the fire' ritual is a last rite when the eldest son or nearest male relative of the deceased puts the fire to ignite the funeral pile. When the body is almost burnt, he punctures the skull with a wooden spike and puts a globule of fire into it so as to complete the cremation process. Often times, this fire is put in the mouth of the deceased. This is called "Agnidaan".

²Another point worth noting here is that no mention is made anywhere of whatever happened to the dead bodies of Kumbhakarn, Meghnad etc. It appears that their funeral rites were done quickly by Ravana himself as is usually done in war times. 'Quickly'—because there was no time for elaborate funeral rituals for a dead individual, and they were cremated along with the other casualties of the day in a mass funeral."}]

दो०. मंदोदरी आदि सब देइ तिलांजलि ताहि ।

भवन गई रघुपति गुन गन बरनत मन माहि ॥ १०५ ॥

dōhā.

mandōdarī ādi saba dē'i tilānjali tāhi.

bhavana ga'īrṁ raghupati guna gana baranata mana māhi. 105.

Mandodari and other ladies paid their last respects to Ravana by offering sesame seeds and water for the peace of the departed soul (as prescribed by the scriptures for such occasions)¹.

Thereafter, all of them went back to their palace, all the while recounting the glories and majesty of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram)². (Doha no. 105)

[Note—¹According to established tradition, a dead body is first cremated, and then those who are closely related to the dead person take a purifying bath, hold some water with sesame seeds in the hollow of the palm, and sprinkle it on the pyre while praying for peace of the departed soul. This last rite is called "tilānjali".

Valmiki's Ramayan says Vibhishan performed Ravana's last rites in this manner—refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 111, verse nos. 120-122.

But from a practical point of view this elaborate ritual seems difficult to have been actually observed, as Ravana had died in the middle of a battle-field, and though

a funeral pyre could be lit to cremate his body, but taking a purifying bath and finding sesame seeds, as well as a priest to preside over such rites, seems quite impossible there. This is why our chronicler, Goswami Tulsidas, whose book *Ram Charit Manas* we are presently reading, chose to say “Vibhishan did the last rites of Ravana in accordance with the circumstances of time and place”—*apropos*: *Chaupai* line no. 8 that precedes this *Doha*.

It means that Vibhishan did what could best be done under the given situation. He may have cremated the body of Ravana, bowed his head, raised his two hands before his chest while their palms touched each other, and stood silently for a while to say a quiet prayer for peace and rest of the departed soul of Ravana.

Then the ladies went back to the fort of Lanka, and Vibhishan came to Lord Ram.

²It is quite normal that after the last rites of a person are over, those who attend the funeral would go home while saying prayers and talking of God. Hence, the ladies were actually remembering the Lord God when they praised the glories of Lord Ram, for it was known to Mandodari that the Lord was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. This is what is implied here.]

चौ०. आइ बिभीषन पुनि सिरु नायो । कृपासिंधु तब अनुज बोलायो ॥ १ ॥
तुम्ह कपीस अंगद नल नीला । जामवंत मारुति नयसीला ॥ २ ॥
सब मिलि जाहु बिभीषन साथी । सारेहु तिलक कहेउ रघुनाथा ॥ ३ ॥
पिता बचन में नगर न आवउँ । आपु सरिस कपि अनुज पठावउँ ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ā'i bibhīṣana puni siru nāyō. kṛpāsindhu taba anuja bōlāyō. 1.
tumha kapīsa aṅgada nala nīlā. jāmavanta māruti nayasīlā. 2.
saba mili jāhu bibhīṣana sāthā. sārēhu tilaka kahē'u raghunāthā. 3.
pitā bacana maiṁ nagara na āva'um̃. āpu sarisa kapi anuja paṭhāva'um̃. 4.

Vibhishan came back to Lord Ram and bowed his head. Then, the gracious Lord called his younger brother Laxman (1) ---

---And instructed him: ‘You, as well as the king of the monkeys Sugriv, Angad, Nala, Neela, Jamvant (the king of bears), Marut (Hanuman; the son of the wind-god)—all of whom are wise, sagacious and intelligent (2) ---

---All of you go with Vibhishan and anoint him on the throne of Lanka as its next King¹. (3)

[Addressing the group, Lord Ram said—] I refrain from going personally as I have to honour the words I gave to my father whereby I am not supposed to visit a city till the time of my forest exile is over².

So therefore, I am sending my younger brother on my behalf; he will represent me in the ceremony of Vibhishan’s appointment as the King of Lanka. (4)

[Note—¹A similar thing had happened when Sugriv was appointed on the throne of Kishkindha, the kingdom of monkeys. At that time too Lord Ram had deputed Laxman to anoint Sugriv on his behalf. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.

²Lord Ram had given a word of honour to king Dasrath, his father, that he would live in forest for a period of 14 years as demanded from him by Kaikeyi, the Lord's step-mother—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.

Some time was still left before this period ended; and so Lord Ram did not wish to do anything which would violate this oath.]

तुरत चले कपि सुनि प्रभु बचना । कीन्ही जाइ तिलक की रचना ॥ ५ ॥
सादर सिंहासन बैठारी । तिलक सारि अस्तुति अनुसारी ॥ ६ ॥

turata calē kapi suni prabhu bacanā. kīnhī jā'i tilaka kī racanā. 5.
sādara simhāsana baiṭhārī. tilaka sārī astuti anusārī. 6.

As soon as the Kapis (i.e. Sugriv, Angad, Nala, Neela, Hanuman, as well as Jamvant) heard the words (instructions) of Lord Ram (to accompany Laxman and go with Vibhishan to anoint him on the throne of Lanka as its next king), they set off immediately to carry out the Lord's instructions. They went and made all arrangements for the ceremony to appoint Vibhishan as the King of Lanka. (5)

They respectfully made Vibhishan sit on the royal throne and anointed him by making a Tilak Mark on his forehead. After that, they praised him and recited some verses to laud and glorify him¹. (6)

[Note—¹When a new king is installed on the throne of a kingdom, all nobles of the realm assemble and put a ceremonial mark, called a 'Tilak Mark', on his forehead as a token of their acceptance of him as their king. In the case of Vibhishan, however, there was a difference: He had gone into exile after Ravana, the late king of Lanka and his elder brother, had disinherited him by kicking him out of the city. So under normal circumstances, Vibhishan had forfeited his right to the throne of Lanka; and had there been no war, the nobles of the demon race would have called a conference to decide who would be the next king. But that would have been the case if Ravana had died a natural death, or the throne had fallen vacant for some other reason.

However, the situation here was different; there had been a war in which the demons had lost, and in this circumstance it is the king or the general of conquering army who decides whom to make a king of the conquered kingdom or country; for the vanquished, as the tradition is, lose their right to decide on this matter.

Therefore, it was at Lord Ram's discretion to decide whom to make the next king of Lanka. The Lord had already promised Vibhishan that the latter would be the next king after Ravana was vanquished—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.

So now Lord Ram keeps his words by sending his representatives to appoint Vibhishan as the King of Lanka in a formal ceremony. Since Vibhishan was appointed by the conquering general (Lord Ram in this case), no one in Lanka dared

to resist or oppose him, even if they did not fully support him, for fear of severe reprisal under the changed circumstances wherein a new dispensation has been put in place in the wake of defeat of their erstwhile king Ravana. Hence, all demons accepted Vibhishan as their new King, willingly or grudgingly, but nevertheless vowing their allegiance to him.

Once formally declared a 'King of Lanka', Vibhishan had to be shown all respects and dignities behooving of a king. Now he was not an ordinary member of the demon race; now he was not an ordinary companion of the monkeys and bears with whom they can show common friendliness: for now he was a 'King' of a great and renowned kingdom of Lanka, and hence he commanded due respect and reverence. Now he could not be addressed simply as 'my dear Vibhishan; or my dear friend', but must be addressed as 'Your Majesty; Your Royal Highness' etc. Now if anyone comes to him, even his former friends in Lord Ram's army, they must respect his stature; they just can't walk in and put their arms around his shoulder, saying 'Oh chum; how art thou?' They would have to seek permission to present themselves before his majesty; and once ushered in they were expected to bow and pay their respect before saying any word.

So therefore, once Vibhishan was duly appointed as the King of Lanka, the ambassadors of Lord Ram paid their due respects to him as befitting a King.]

जोरि पानि सबहीं सिर नाए । सहित बिभीषन प्रभु पहिं आए ॥ ७ ॥

तब रघुबीर बोलि कपि लीन्हे । कहि प्रिय बचन सुखी सब कीन्हे ॥ ८ ॥

jōri pāni sabahīm sira nā'ē. sahita bibhīṣana prabhu pahim ā'ē. 7.

taba raghubīra bōli kapi līnhē. kahi priya bacana sukhī saba kīnhē. 8.

All of them (Lord Ram's ambassadors) joined their palms and bowed their heads before him (Vibhishan) to pay their respects to him.

After these formalities were over, all of them, including Vibhishan, came back to Lord Ram. (7)

Then, Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) called all the Kapis (monkeys and bears) near him and said words that pleased them all. [What did the Lord say? We shall read about it in the next set of verses.] (8)

छं०. किए सुखी कहि बानी सुधा सम बल तुम्हारे रिपु हयो । १ ।

पायो बिभीषन राज तिहुँ पुर जसु तुम्हारो नित नयो ॥ २ ॥

मोहि सहित सुभ कीरति तुम्हारी परम प्रीति जो गाड़हैं । ३ ।

संसार सिंधु अपार पार प्रयास बिनु नर पाड़हैं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ki'ē sukhī kahi bānī sudhā sama bala tumhārēm ripu hayō. 1.

pāyō bibhīṣana rāja tihum̐ pura jasu tumhārō nita nayō. 2.

mōhi sahita subha kīrati tumhārī parama prīti jō gā'ihaim. 3.

sansāra sindhu apāra pāra prayāsa binu nara pā'ihaiṁ. 4.

Lord Ram spoke sweet words which seemed to be like nectar; and these words mightily pleased all those who listened to them.

[Lord Ram expresses his profound sense of thankfulness and gratitude for the service every individual did to him. He said he was very grateful to them in the following words:-]

‘It is by your strength, full help and unquestioned support that the enemy has been vanquished. (Chanda line no. 1)

Vibhishan had got the throne of the kingdom of Lanka.

Verily indeed, in all sooth, and without gainsay, these achievements have made your glory eternal, and have immortalized your fame in all the three divisions of the world (i.e. in the heaven, on the earth and in the nether world). (Chanda line no. 2)

Those who would sing (remember and tell others about) the good and honourable deeds that you have done along with those of mine, with due respect and faith in their remembrance of these events (instead of scoffing at them, treating them with scorn, or attempting to find unnecessary faults with them) --- (Chanda line no. 3)

--- Such persons would verily be able to easily cross (i.e. find deliverance from) this mundane mortal world which is like a huge ocean².’ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram means that people must not read this history as a war launched by one prince to get back his wife who was abducted by some villain. It has to read in the correct context, with the right mind, and proper perspective. It is the history of how the merciful Supreme Being showed his grace upon unfortunate creatures who had committed grave sins in their lives, but who nevertheless yearned for deliverance for their souls. The Lord came down to earth to provide liberation to the souls of these poor creatures by killing their sinful bodies.

It is also the history that teaches one to have courage and resilience in times of adversity; of what great things can be achieved by strength of will and firmness of resolution; of what selfless service and true friendship consists of; of how evil never succeeding in the long run; of the universal truth that no matter how powerful and mighty one may become at a point of time, yet a day comes when everything becomes a naught; of how oftentimes even the humblest of individuals can perform stupendous feats (as exemplified by Hanuman’s glorious achievements), and how such individuals can provide help when needed by someone much superior in the social and evolutionary hierarchy to them (as was the case of the monkeys and bears helping Lord Ram to defeat the mighty forces of Ravana whom even the almighty gods feared like the plague), implying that no one should be judged by his appearances.

²To wit, by singing Lord Ram’s glories and remembering that the Lord God is always willing to come to the help of his devotees, a person would never feel alone, hapless and helpless in this world even if he is surrounded by seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

This stanza also assures the devotee that even if he has committed any sins and errors in his life, there is still hope for him for getting redemption; he must have courage and purity of intentions, he must have faith and trust in the Lord God, for if he prays to the Lord for his deliverance, if he is sincere and honest in his prayers, then

the Lord would fulfill his wishes as he had done for Ravana and the rest of the demons, all of whom were granted the fruit of emancipation and salvation inspite of their being sinful and evil—for the Lord is very merciful and forgiving.

Reading this enchanting Story that beguiles the heart and evokes wonder in the mind, reading it with the right perspective and thinking, will bring out its subtle goodness and the auspicious messages of exemplary spiritual and secular value that are incorporated in it.]

दो०. प्रभु के बचन श्रवन सुनि नहिं अघाहिं कपि पुंज ।
बार बार सिर नावहिं गहहिं सकल पद कंज ॥ १०६ ॥

dōhā.

prabhu kē bacana śravana suni nahim aghāhim kapi puñja.
bāra bāra sira nāvahim gahahim sakala pada kanja. 106.

Hearing such nice and gracious words from Lord Ram, the monkeys and bears were overwhelmed with emotions of gratitude towards the Lord.

All of them bowed their heads repeatedly before the Lord and touched his feet to express their joy and thankfulness to him¹ for being so kind, gracious and obliging as to publicly praise them and acknowledge their services. (Doha no.106)

[Note—¹Later on in the Story of the Ramayan, we read that once the citizens of Ayodhya were also so filled with joy and gratitude towards Lord Ram that they too had bowed their heads and touched the Lord's feet to express their happiness at the Lord's kind nature and gracious attitude—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precedes Doha no. 47.

Again, when Garud felt extremely glad upon hearing the Story of Lord Ram as narrated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund, he too had expressed his joy by bowing his head repeatedly before the latter—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 125.]

चौ०. पुनि प्रभु बोलि लियउ हनुमाना । लंका जाहु कहेउ भगवाना ॥ १ ॥
समाचार जानकिहि सुनावहु । तासु कुसल लै तुम्ह चलि आवहु ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni prabhu bōli liya'u hanumānā. laṅkā jāhu kahē'u bhagavānā. 1.
samācāra jānakihi sunāvahu. tāsu kusala lai tumha cali āvahu. 2.

After that, the Lord called Hanuman and instructed him thus: 'You go to Lanka [1] and convey to Janki (Sita) all that has happened¹. Then come back immediately with the news of her own welfare. [2]' (1-2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram instructed Hanuman to convey the good news to Sita that the Lord has been victorious in the war, that Ravana was dead, that Vibhishan had been appointed as the new King of Lanka, and that the time has finally arrived for her re-

union with Lord Ram, a moment for which she had been longing and waiting for so long.

Why did Lord Ram choose Hanuman as his messenger to Sita? It is because Hanuman had been to Lanka earlier too and had personally met Sita#; so she would immediately recognize him, which she indeed does as we shall read in verse no. 5 herein below. {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17.}

It must be remembered that when Hanuman had met her earlier, he had urged her to stop worrying, for sooner rather than later Lord Ram would come with a mighty army of monkeys and bears to free her*. His prophesy has now come true, and so he deserves, and has the right, to receive any blessings and gifts that Sita would like to bestow upon him. {*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 15—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16.}

And we shall soon see in the verses that follow herein below that he was indeed profusely blessed by Mother Sita for bringing the good news to her.]

तब हनुमंत नगर महुँ आए । सुनि निसिचरी निसाचर धाए ॥ ३ ॥

बहु प्रकार तिन्ह पूजा कीन्ही । जनकसुता देखाइ पुनि दीन्ही ॥ ४ ॥

taba hanumanta nagara mahum̐ ā'ē. suni nisicarī nisācara dhā'ē. 3.
bahu prakāra tinha pūjā kīnhī. janakasutā dēkhā'i puni dīnhī. 4.

Then Hanuman went to the city of Lanka. No sooner the male and female demon residents of the city came to know that he has come, than all of them rushed forward [3] to welcome him and show their respects to him by worshipping and paying their obeisance to him¹. Then they quickly showed him the place where Sita was confined². [4] (3-4)

[Note—¹Hanuman was now visiting the city as a representative of a conqueror. He went in Lanka with a head raised in pride, with a broad smile on his face, with the demeanours and the stride of a victorious warrior. The situation had now completely changed since his last visit when he was an enemy's spy, an intruder, a trespasser. At that time he was put in shackles, and the citizens had poked fun at him, kicked and punched him, and made merry at his discomfiture. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 25.}

But now all of them went out of their way, and literally went over backwards to welcome Hanuman and be in his good looks. This is the way how people change colours like chameleons to suit their own interests. These same demons had earlier been praising and paying their respects to Ravana, and now all of a sudden they forgot all that he had done for them, and instead of feeling any remorse for their great king Ravana, and showing any contempt for Hanuman, they collected in large numbers to bow their heads before the latter, knowing fully well that a few days ago Hanuman was one of their most hated and despised enemy, for let us not forget the havoc that Hanuman and Angad had unleashed on Lanka during the initial phases of the war. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 42; Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44.}

²Sita was confined in the royal garden of Lanka, known as the ‘Ashok Van’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

दूरिहि ते प्रनाम कपि कीन्हा । रघुपति दूत जानकीं चीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
कहहु तात प्रभु कृपानिकेता । कुसल अनुज कपि सेन समेता ॥ ६ ॥

dūrihi tē pranāma kapi kīnhā. raghupati dūta jānakīm cīnhā. 5.
kahahu tāta prabhu kṛpānikētā. kusala anuja kapi sēna samētā. 6.

The Kapi (i.e. Hanuman) bowed his head to Sita from a distance¹. She immediately recognized him as a messenger of Lord Ram (because she had already met him and conversed with him)². (5)

She asked: ‘Say my dear son (tāta)³; how is the Lord who is an embodiment of mercy and compassion (prabhu kṛpānikētā)? Tell me about his own welfare, as well as that of his younger brother (Laxman) and the army of monkeys that accompanies him⁴.’ (6)

[Note—¹When Hanuman had met Sita for the first time during his mission of reconnaissance to Lanka to find where she was held captive, he had gone quite near to her. Sita was jolted with fright and was so sore affright at seeing him, as she had least expected a stranger of the form of Hanuman creeping up to her so secretly, that she withdrew herself as much as she could and turned her back to him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13.

So therefore, Hanuman wished to take precautions now; he did not wish to alarm her by his sudden presence. Hence, he stood at a reasonable distance and bowed his head before her.

Another reason of his standing at a distance now instead of going closer is this: During his previous visit he had to maintain secrecy and speak as softly as possible, so that his conversation with Sita remained out of earshot of the demon guards. But now that was not needed; he could stand at a distance and announce himself loudly—and this is what he did.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

³During his last visit to Sita, she had affectionately addressed Hanuman many times with this title “tāta”, which with reference to Hanuman means someone who is very dear to her like her own son—for example, we have the following verses in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16; Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 17; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 27.

⁴Hanuman had himself told Sita during that visit that Lord Ram had befriended the monkey race and was all poised to come with their army to free her. So Sita was in the knowing that the Lord had monkeys as his companions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 16.]

सब बिधि कुसल कोसलाधीसा । मातु समर जीत्यो दससीसा ॥ ७ ॥
अबिचल राजु बिभीषन पायो । सुनि कपि बचन हरष उर छायो ॥ ८ ॥

saba bidhi kusala kōsalādhīsā. mātu samara jītyō dasasīsā. 7.
abicala rāju bibhīṣana pāyō. suni kapi bacana haraṣa ura chāyō. 8.

Hanuman replied cheerfully: ‘The Lord of Kaushal (“kōsalādhīsā”; i.e. Lord Ram, the Lord of Ayodhya, the great kingdom which was also known as ‘Kaushal’) is fine and happy in all possible ways¹. Mother², he has vanquished the ten-headed Ravana in the war. (7)

Vibhishan has been crowned as a King of Lanka; he has attained everlasting sovereignty over his kingdom.³

Hearing these pleasant words of the Kapi (Hanuman), exhilaration and joy overwhelmed the heart of Sita. (8)

[Note—¹This answers Sita’s question: ‘How is Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and the army of monkeys that accompanies them?’ Hanuman sums up by saying ‘everything is fine with the Lord’.

²We can recall here that during his first visit to Sita, Hanuman had also addressed her as ‘mother’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 13; Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 15; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27.

³We have read earlier that the old demoness named Trijata, who was appointed by Ravana to guard Sita, had become very friendly to her. She used to update Sita about the development in the war. So it is quite natural that as soon as Ravana was slayed, and a little while later Vibhishan was made the king of Lanka, Trijata must have hurried to give the good tidings to Sita. But Sita was suspicious of everything; she doubted when Trijata told her of Lord Ram’s victory etc., for she feared that it was some new trick by her tormentors to tease her.

When Hanuman told her of the Lord’s victory as well as of Vibhishan’s appointment as the new king, then only was Sita convinced of the veracity of the news.]

छं०. अति हरष मन तन पुलक लोचन सजल कह पुनि पुनि रमा । १ ।
का देउँ तोहि त्रैलोक महँ कपि किमपि नहिं बानी समा ॥ २ ॥
सुनु मातु मैं पायो अखिल जग राजु आजु न संसयं । ३ ।
रन जीति रिपुदल बंधु जुत पस्यामि राममनामयं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ati haraṣa mana tana pulaka lōcana sajala kaha puni puni ramā. 1.
kā dē'um' tōhi trailōka mahum' kapi kimapi nahim bānī samā. 2.

sunu mātu mairṁ pāyō akhila jaga rāju āju na sansayaṁ. 3.
rana jīti ripudala bandhu juta pasyāmi rāmamanāmayam. 4.

With great exhilaration in her heart, with her body thrilled with joy, and with tears of happiness filling her eyes, Rama¹ (“ramā”; i.e. Sita) said repeatedly --- (Chanda line no. 1)

‘Oh Kapi! For me, there is nothing in the three divisions of the world which is as sweet and pleasant to hear as the words you have spoken. [To wit, the news that you brought to me is the sweetest thing I had ever heard of.]’ (Chanda line no. 2)

Hanuman replied: ‘Oh Mother, listen! I am very fortunate and feel singularly privileged today, for I have had the good fortune of being symbolically granted the sovereignty of the whole world; there is no doubt about it. [To wit, since you are the Mother Goddess, being so affectionately blessed by you makes me exceptionally happy and delighted as if I have been made the king of the whole world.]’ (Chanda line no. 3)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, it’s an honour and a great blessing for me that I am a witness of Lord Ram’s victory over the enemy and his army, and I see the Lord and his brother safe and sound after the ordeal of a horrifying war.’ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The word “ramā” is used for goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu. Since Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, it follows that Sita was a manifestation of goddess Laxmi.

दो०. सुनु सुत सदगुन सकल तव हृदयं बसहुँ हनुमंत ।
सानुकूल कोसलपति रहहुँ समेत अनंत ॥ १०७ ॥

dōhā.

sunu suta sadaguna sakala tava hr̥dayam̐ basahum̐ hanumanta.
sānukūla kōsalapati rahahum̐ samēta ananta. 107.

Sita blessed Hanuman as follows: ‘Listen my son Hanuman (sunu suta -- hanumanta)! Let all the good virtues and auspicious qualities dwell in your heart.

Let Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal, and Laxman (Anant) be ever pleased with you, and have eternal affection for you.’ (Doha no. 107)

चौ०. अब सोइ जतन करहु तुम्ह ताता । देखौं नयन स्याम मृदु गाता ॥ १ ॥
तब हनुमान राम पहिं जाई । जनकसुता कै कुसल सुनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aba sō'i jatana karahu tumha tātā. dēkhaum̐ nayana syāma mṛdu gātā. 1.
taba hanumāna rāma pahim̐ jāī. janakasutā kai kusala sunāī. 2.

[Sita continued—] ‘My dear son (tātā)! Now make haste to devise a method by which I can see with my own eyes¹ the pleasant dark-complexioned form of the Lord (Sri Ram).’ (1)

Then Hanuman immediately went back to Lord Ram and told him about the welfare of Sita, the daughter of king Janak (janakasutā). (2)

[Note—¹Sita meant that though it is absolutely true she had all this while been remembering Lord Ram and keeping his divine form before her mental eyes constantly, never forgetting him for a single moment of her existence in captivity in Lanka*, but it is also true that she had always been longing to see the Lord’s form physically, with her physical eyes#.

{*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14.}]

सुनि संदेसु भानुकुलभूषन । बोलि लिए जुबराज बिभीषन ॥ ३ ॥

मारुतसुत के संग सिधावहु । सादर जनकसुतहि लै आवहु ॥ ४ ॥

sunī sandēsu bhānukulabhūṣana. bōli li’ē jubarāja bibhīṣana. 3.
mārutasuta kē saṅga sidhāvahu. sādara janakasutahi lai āvahu. 4.

When Lord Ram, who was like an adornment of the Solar race (bhānukulabhūṣana)¹, heard the message of Sita (that she was longing to see him), he summoned Angad, the prince of the monkey race (jubarāja), and Vibhishan (the newly appointed king of Lanka). (3)

The Lord instructed them: ‘Both of you immediately go with Hanuman, the son of the wind god, and bring Sita, the daughter of Janak, here most honourably, by showing great respect to her, and ensuring that all manners of royal protocol and dignity are observed for her.’² (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was a descendant in the line of illustrious kings belonging to the Solar Race of Ayodhya. The epithet “adornment of the Solar race” means simply that Lord Ram was the most renowned and the most glorious King of this race.

²Lord Ram implied that Sita ought to be brought to him in a ceremonial and dignified way that suits her majestic stature. Put simply, the Lord wished that Sita should come to him like a noble lady who has been freed from her captivity; she should be properly escorted by female demon guards to show her the way to Lord Ram’s camp.

The Lord was very careful when he gave this instruction, for he guessed that it was quite possible that his messengers, Hanuman, Angad and Vibhishan, would not know, and therefore unable to decide as to how to bring her to the Lord under the present circumstances where his camp was situated on the other side of the battle-field, far away from the main city of Lanka. They might wonder as to what the Lord wants to be done to her, and what would please him: whether he wishes that Sita be brought to him in a palanquin, or in some other way they were used to transporting

their own noble women, or simply like any lady released from prison and being restored to her husband. Was she to be taken to the Lord in the way she had actually lived as a captive in Lanka, or was she to be given royal treatment, dressed and adorned with ornaments like a queen, and then led to Lord Ram in a regal procession, with all the pomp and pageantry that accompanies such occasions?

Lord Ram's instructions were brief, and it was to bring Sita with due respect, honour and dignity being shown to her, though it was not clearly mentioned by him as to what he meant by what he said.

In their zeal and enthusiasm to please the Lord and celebrate this happy moment, his messengers over-reacted; they thought that the Lord means that Sita was to be brought to him with due observance of royal protocol and dignity reserved for queens and noble ladies—which implied that Sita must first be bathed and sprayed with perfumes, then she must be attired like a queen and adorned in regal paraphernalia, and then she must be taken out in a royal procession in a decorated palanquin carried aloft by royal demon guards dressed in full regal regalia, with royal escorts and guards leading the way for the procession, accompanied by all the royal pomp and pageantry that are reserved for such occasions.

And this was how Sita was actually brought to Lord Ram by his messengers—she was first made to take a bath, adorn herself with fresh clothes and ornaments befitting a queen, and then carried to the Lord in a palanquin in ceremonial procession escorted by royal guards and heralds of the demon kingdom. We shall read about it in the verses which follow herein below. {Apropos: Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede Doha no. 108.}

Perhaps Hanuman, Angad and Vibhishan had, in their enthusiasm, overdone their preparations of bringing Sita to Lord Ram—because the first impression of Sita that Lord Ram got as she approached him from a distance was that of a well decked-up queen, fully decorated in regal regalia and smiling cheerfully with happiness, as if she had not undergone any suffering or pain at all; the Lord observed that she was being carried in a decorated carriage aloft the shoulders of royal guards and soldiers of the demon kingdom as if she was a 'queen of the demon kingdom going to meet some honoured guest', rather than 'a lady who had been long suffering from pain and misery at separation from her beloved husband, a lady who had become weak and emaciated by the mental torture and agony incurred during the long time she had been forcibly kept in captivity by a cruel abductor, who being finally freed, forgets about everything else as she rushes to meet her dear husband with quick and eager steps, and with tears of joy gushing out from her eyes'.

The watchful Lord observed that Sita showed no such signs. He also observed that all his companions in the army, the monkeys and bears, were fixedly looking in the direction from where the royal procession carrying Sita was coming towards them, and even the minutest detail wouldn't escape their scrutiny—apropos: Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 108 herein below.

These monkey and bear warriors were seeing Sita for the first time, and they would surely wonder at this incredulous sight of hers coming majestically like a queen attired in the finest of royal regalia, very happy and cheerful, showing no signs of pain and suffering. Surely, this would be an unexpected sight for all of them; it was totally incompatible with and at complete odds with the mental image they must have had of Sita based on the description given by Hanuman to Lord Ram after his return from the reconnaissance mission to Lanka earlier: as a sad, miserable, forlorn and despondent lady who had undergone long time of suffering and grief while living away from her dear husband, in the captivity of a cruel demon; who was supposed to

be under great stress and pain inflicted upon her for a long time since she was separated from her husband, and was not sure if she would ever be free again; who was not eating properly, thereby becoming thin and weak; who spent her time weeping and lamenting and grieving at her doomed fate. In brief, the sight of Sita coming bedecked in fine royal attire and accompanied by pomp and show did not at all fit-in with the miserable picture of hers that was given by Hanuman to Lord Ram#. {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.}

The Lord was not happy that Sita should be brought to him in a royal procession like a queen, because it gave a very wrong impression of her amongst his army chiefs and warriors—and it would be clear below when he expressly asked his messengers, whom he affectionately called his ‘friends’, to make her come on foot. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 108 herein below.}

This is also one of the primary reasons why Lord Ram would be compelled to put Sita through the ‘fire test’ to clear her of any imaginary doubt regarding her integrity, honour, self-respect, dignity and loyalty to Lord Ram, a doubt that may taint her immaculate character for all times to come, that might crop up in the mind of anyone observing her demeanours, her clothes and her external form, about which we shall read soon. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 108—to Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 109.}

It is clear that though the Lord had ordered that Sita be brought to him with due respect, he had not actually meant that she be brought to him like a queen being carried in a palanquin in a royal procession; he had meant that she be brought with dignity and honour behooving of a noble lady, in a simple and dignified manner. A simple procession would be alright, but a procession of pomp and show was odd for the moment. Lord Ram had not expected that his messengers would overreact in their enthusiasm to please him, or misunderstand him, by bringing Sita in such a royal procession, with Sita fully decorated in royal regalia, and coming to with all pomp and ceremony. Her sight did not go down well with Lord Ram at all—markedly because he and his companions, i.e. his wife Sita and his brother Laxman, were to dress and live like a ‘hermit’ during the time that they lived in forest for 14 years to fulfill the words the Lord had given to his father Dasrath at the time of his departure to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 79.

In this background, Sita coming in a royal procession like a queen bedecked in all regal finery and wearing glittering ornaments was incongruous and completely out of order. Hence, instead of being pleased, the Lord took offence at it. He was also silently angry with Sita for being so careless as to allow herself being so decorated; had she forgotten her vows to live like her husband would in the forest; had she forgotten that the time of the forest exile was not yet over and her Lord was still dressed like a hermit. How could she then allow herself to be so finely decorated? The Lord decided that after undergoing so much hardship for so long a period of 14 years just to uphold the dignity and honour of his words, Sita’s single act of indiscretion undid all. The Lord felt very sad and unhappy. He had not expected Sita to be so careless and imprudent. So he decided she must be punished for her impertinent and careless behaviour.

Glory to Lord Ram who was so strict an adherent to, and an upholder of, the principles of Dharma, the laws that govern right conduct, right thought, probity, propriety, ethics and righteousness—wherein not a single error and transgression was

acceptable by the Lord. So therefore, the Lord decided to punish Sita by putting her to the 'fire test'.]

तुरतहिं सकल गए जहँ सीता । सेवहिं सब निसिचरीं बिनीता ॥ ५ ॥
 बेगि बिभीषन तिन्हहि सिखायो । तिन्ह बहु बिधि मज्जन करवायो ॥ ६ ॥
 बहु प्रकार भूषन पहिराए । सिबिका रुचिर साजि पुनि ल्याए ॥ ७ ॥
 ता पर हरषि चढ़ी बैदेही । सुमिरि राम सुखधाम सनेही ॥ ८ ॥
 बेतपानि रच्छक चहुँ पासा । चले सकल मन परम हुलासा ॥ ९ ॥

turatahiṁ sakala ga'e jaham̃ sītā. sēvahiṁ saba nisicarīṁ binītā. 5.
 bēgi bibhīṣana tinhaḥi sikhāyō. tinha bahu bidhi majjana karavāyō. 6.
 bahu prakāra bhūṣana pahirā'ē. sibikā rucira sāji puni lyā'ē. 7.
 tā para haraṣi caṛhī baidēhī. sumiri rāma sukhadhāma sanēhī. 8.
 bētapāni racchaka cahum̃ pāsā. calē sakala mana parama hulāsā. 9.

They (Hanuman, Angad and Vibhishan) immediately went to meet Sita who was now being served very politely and obediently by her female guards¹. (5)

Vibhishan gave them quick instructions, advising them as to how to treat Sita with great dignity, and prepare her for being taken to Lord Ram with due honour.

Thereafter, the female demon guards made Sita take a bath and clean herself in various ways (using soap and perfumes etc.). (6)

Then they adorned her with different kinds of ornaments. After that, a decorated palanquin was brought in for her to board it. (7)

Vaidehi (Sita, the daughter of king Videha, another name of her father king Janak; "baidēhī") then boarded it (the decorated palanquin) after remembering and paying her mental obeisance to Lord Ram who was an embodiment of (and a bestower of) bliss, joy and happiness². (8)

Holding batons in their hands, countless demon guards surrounded the palanquin and escorted it as it moved forward. All of them were very cheerfully and felt privileged to have gotten the chance to be the escorts of Sita. (9)

[Note—¹These were the same female guards who had been terrorizing Sita earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 10.

²To wit, Sita thanked Lord Ram for finally ending her misery and giving her peace, by invoking the merciful Lord's virtue of granting bliss, joy and happiness to all those who remember him.]

देखन भालु कीस सब आए । रच्छक कोपि निवारन धाए ॥ १० ॥
 कह रघुबीर कहा मम मानहु । सीतहि सखा पयादें आनहु ॥ ११ ॥

देखहुँ कपि जननी की नाई । बिहसि कहा रघुनाथ गोसाई ॥ १२ ॥

dēkhana bhālu kīsa saba ā'ē. racchaka kōpi nivārana dhā'ē. 10.

kaha raghubīra kahā mama mānahu. sītahi sakhā payādēm ānahu. 11.

dēkhahum' kapi janani kī nā'īm. bihasi kahā raghunātha gōsā'īm. 12.

The monkeys and bears rushed forward to have a glimpse of Sita. There was a huge crowd of onlookers, jostling and pushing forward, compelling the guards who were escorting her to angrily push them back. (10)

Lord Ram ("raghubīra"; literally the brave warrior of the Raghu line of kings) called out to his messengers and said affectionately: 'My friends (sakhā); please pay heed to what I say; bring Sita on foot¹.' (11)

Turning to all the monkey and bear warriors who were eagerly craning their necks to have a glance of Sita, the wise Lord smiled in amusement (bihasi)² and instructed them as follows: 'Oh Kapis! Look at her as if she was your mother; perceive her to be like your own mother.³' (12)

[Note—¹Lord Ram chided his messengers for misunderstanding his instruction of bringing Sita to him with due respect, in a dignified and modest way, by showing unwarranted zeal and enthusiasm in bringing her astride a palanquin like a queen. It is immodest and impudent for her to be brought to the Lord in such a manner of pomp and pageantry—as it violates outright the vows they had taken at the time of leaving their kingdom fourteen years ago, that they will live an austere life in the forest like that of a hermit. The sight of Sita coming to him in a regal state procession accompanied by royal paraphernalia, with its attendant pomp and show, annoyed and upset the Lord very much.

So he politely admonished his messengers and said: "My friends, listen. Let Sita walk to me instead of riding in a carriage. We have taken a vow to live like hermits during the fourteen years of our forest sojourn. It is highly immodest and uncivil for her to come to me astride a palanquin while I stand on foot, and it violates the sanctity of the vow that we had made at the time of leaving our kingdom of Ayodhya that we would live the life of a forest-dwelling hermit for fourteen years. I have diligently followed this injunction all through this time, but unfortunately Sita has fallen prey to temptations and fallen astray by violating the vows of an austere life by conceding to ride on a carriage, a palanquin in this case, which all of you would agree is not what is expected from the loyal, obedient, faithful and diligent wife of a hermit. Anyhow, the damage has been done, but let us now rectify it as best as we can. So therefore, let Sita step out of the palanquin and walk the remaining distance to me on foot like a wife of a hermit. There is no cause of shame in it, and there is no reason why she would be reluctant in walking now—for hadn't she traveled all the way on foot from Ayodhya, thousands of miles away, walking through the villages and hamlets that fell on the way, through the lonely and fearful forest, visiting many hermitages of sages on the way? So, what is odd in it if she walks a few meters now?

Besides this, these monkey and bear friends of mine are so eager to have a glimpse of her; don't you see that they are craning their heads and shoving each other to get closer to the carriage? Well, let them have a chance to see their mother directly. There should be no hindrance in it. Let them see how miserable she has become

during her captivity in Lanka. Being a ‘mother’, let her see how her children are so eager to welcome her back, how glad and joyous they are to see her; let her bless them all with her benevolent and gracious smile, and let her glance at them to bless them all with her grace like the soothing spray of rainwater that falls on everyone equally, without making any distinction.

See, these warriors have left their homes and hearths in Kishkindha for my sake, and so it is obligatory for me to respect to them by honouring their wishes and treat them all as my family. And since every child has a right to see his mother, especially after she had suffered so much for so long, and these children had exerted themselves so strenuously to liberate her from her miseries, there should be no formalities now; there ought to be aught naught between these warriors and their mother Sita.

Hence, let Sita step out of the carriage onto the ground, and let her show modesty, prudence, wisdom and decency of behaviour by adhering to the vows that we had taken earlier that we will live an austere life of a forest-dwelling hermit for fourteen years, by walking to me on foot rather than riding on a palanquin.”

Now, let us examine the reasons why Lord Ram preferred that Sita should walk to him instead of riding a palanquin to come to him from the place where she was held captive in the garden in Lanka.

First, this would remove the danger of the palanquin toppling over in the chaos.

Second, it would forestall chances of a fight between the demon guards protecting Sita and the surging crowd of monkeys and bears trying to get close and look at her.

Third, it would give the eager friends of the Lord an easy chance to see Sita as she walks on foot as compared to her sitting in the palanquin with small windows with curtains drawn.

Fourth, by making her walk on foot, the terms of his forest exile, whereby he and his companions, Sita and Laxman, were to live as a hermit who travels on foot and not on a carriage, would be fulfilled.

Fifth, the Lord wished to remind Sita that she had done a wrong thing by allowing herself to be so finely decorated and riding in a palanquin, for did she forget that she was supposed to live like the wife of a hermit? It was inexcusable, and she must be strongly chided and adequately punished for her impertinent behaviour.

Sixth, the Lord owed enough gratitude to his monkey and bear friends to let them have the privilege of feeling like the Lord’s own family members, and like children eager to meet their mother ought naught to be barred from this privilege, joy and pleasure, these monkeys and bears too had the right to see Sita openly and without any restrictions, albeit as their mother and not as a novelty.

But then, there was a simultaneous risk to her safety if she left the security of the palanquin and walked on foot, for there was a huge crowd anxious to see her, pushing and shoving closer, and they might rough-handle her in their eagerness and enthusiasm. So therefore, the Lord devised a clever and wise device to get over this risk—by asking all the monkeys and bears to look upon Sita as their ‘mother’! This indeed pre-empted any imprudent behaviour on their part, and imposed a sense of self-discipline and restraint in them.

²Why did Lord Ram ‘laugh’ or ‘smile’ (bihasi) when he saw the approaching carriage bearing Sita and the huge crowd milling around it? When he saw the way the

monkeys and bears were jostling and pushing and elbowing each other just to have a glimpse of Sita, he was amused as well as alarmed. The impression that the unruly crowd gave was that they were looking at something novel and wished to be the one who would claim later to have had the first chance to cast his eye on this novelty; that they wished to see who this lady was for whom such a violent war was raged; that they broke all protocol and good manners of keeping a dignified distance while approaching Sita and the palanquin she was in; that there was the risk of a chaos and a riot as the demon guards tried to push back the eager monkeys and bears by use of force, and at certain point of time there were chances that these monkeys and bears would lose their control and a fight would ensue. It was a dangerous prospect; but Lord Ram smiled as this itself was a novel and interesting sight to behold, a sight that was sufficiently funny as to amuse the Lord.

³When he observed that the things were going out of hand, he decided to intervene by asking the monkeys and bears to observe self-restraint and good manners by treating Sita as a “mother”, which meant two things simultaneously—one, that she must not be treated as a trophy of war or a novelty, but regarded with full honour and respect that one would reserve for one’s mother; and two, that since a son inherently enjoys a certain degree of freedom while approaching his mother, so it would be alright for the monkeys and bears to come close to Sita to a limit, but they are expected to maintain a dignified and respectful distance from her.]

सुनि प्रभु बचन भालु कपि हरषे । नभ ते सुरन्ह सुमन बहु बरषे ॥ १३ ॥
सीता प्रथम अनल महुँ राखी । प्रगट कीन्हि चह अंतर साखी ॥ १४ ॥

sunī prabhu bacana bhālu kapi haraṣē. nabha tē suranha sumana bahu baraṣē. 13.

sītā prathama anala mahum̐ rākhī. pragaṭa kīnhi caha antara sākhī. 14.

Hearing the words of the Lord, the bears and the monkeys felt very glad¹; and the gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven)². (13)

Lord Ram had kept Sita in the safe custody of the fire god on an earlier occasion³. Now it was time to retrieve Sita’s original form that was presently invisible and subtle, so that she could be physically present, in flesh and blood, by the side of the Lord in a tangible form⁴. (14)

[Note—¹Why were the bears and monkeys happy? Till now Sita was sitting inside the palanquin, making it difficult for the Lord’s companions to have a glimpse of her. Now that the Lord ordered her to come on foot, she stepped out of the carriage. This enabled everyone to see her directly. They always had had the greatest of respects for Lord Ram, and so now they felt so fortunate that they were finally able to have a divine sight of Sita, the Lord’s consort. With Sita stepping out of the palanquin and walking on foot to Lord Ram, the need for jostling and pushing ended.

²Not only the monkeys and bears, this also gave the gods an opportunity to pay their respects to Sita; they too felt exhilarated and expressed their joy by showering flowers upon her.

³Prior to Sita's abduction by Ravana, Lord Ram had put her in the safe custody of the fire god to preserve her purity and secure her safety—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 24.

After Sita's original form vanished from sight when she entered the fire element, the patron deity of which was the 'fire god', what was left behind was a 'shadow'. Now it was time to bring her back from her safe haven; to retrieve her from the subtle existence in which she had lived during this period, and make her reveal her physical gross form that the world knows as 'Sita'.

So it was necessary to reverse the process by which she had been put into the safe custody of the fire god. What could that process be? It was to light a fire and burn the shadow in it, while at the same time inviting the original Sita, who lived in an invisible-subtle form till now, to emerge from behind the curtain formed by the brilliant light of the burning fire, and step out into the physical-visible world. Surely it was a fantastic development and a magical feat so astounding in proportion that our mind, with its limited abilities to comprehend certain mystical happenings that occur at the transcendental level of existence, fails to fully understand as to how it actually must have happened.

In order to do this, Lord Ram had to devise a clever device which would serve a dual purpose: first, it should bring the original Sita back to the physical world, and second, it should ensure that no taint would ever be cast by anyone on her immaculacy and purity of character. What this device was, we shall read about it in the following Doha no. 108.]

दो०. तेहि कारन करुनानिधि कहे कछुक दुर्बाद ।
सुनत जातुधानीं सब लागीं करै बिषाद ॥ १०८ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi kārana karunānidhi kahē kachuka durbāda.
sunata jātudhānīm saba lāgīm karai biṣāda. 108.

That is why Lord Ram, who was like an ocean of mercy and compassion (karunānidhi), said some harsh words (against Sita, or for Sita)¹.

The female demons (jātudhānīm) who had accompanied Sita felt very sad and sorry when they heard the Lord's words, and began lamenting². (Doha no. 108)**

[Note—¹The epithet "karunānidhi" has been used to qualify Lord Ram to emphasize that he is indeed very kind, compassionate, merciful and gracious by nature though what he was constrained to do now seems to be a very harsh form of treatment imposed upon Sita by him, especially after her long suffering and her being sinless and innocent of any crime.

Sita was made to undertake the 'fire test of purity'. This was obviously a harsh measure; it painted Lord Ram in a negative colour of being heartless and cruel upon his poor wife who was immaculate, chaste, pure, faithful, and loyal to him.

So, lest the world should form a negative opinion of Lord Ram as being heartless, merciless, cruel and over zealous for using harsh words for Sita and forcing her to undertake the fire test of purity, it is said here that it would be wrong to make

such a erroneous surmise about him—for in reality the Lord was not harsh as he was forced by the circumstances to appear to be, but on the contrary he was very soft-spoken, gracious, tender in heart, merciful, compassionate, benevolent and kind.

What could have Lord Ram said about Sita, either directly to her or indirectly by implication, that could be deemed as being harsh and seemingly unwarranted? Well, let us see.

Lord Ram addressed Sita with a heavy heart; he said: “Listen honourable lady! If thou art pure, holy, untouched by evil and loyal to thine husband as thee profess to be, and as I expect and hope thee to be, then prove it to be so. Prove thy self by the sacred fire god as a witness; invoke the fire god to bear witness of thine inviolable virtues and untarnished character; prove that thou art above and beyond reproach and scandals. In the good interest of both of us, it is prudent and wise to settle this matter once and for all since you have been living in a polluted environment for quite a while, and it necessitates that you ought to be sanitized first before being accepted by me, for I do not wish a even a whiff of a scandal to tarnish either my name and reputation or that of yours.”

“Sita”, further admonished the Lord with a sad heart, “You have committed a serious error. Are you the one whom I call ‘my beloved Sita’? I don’t think so from your appearances; you don’t seem to be the ‘Sita’ for whom I suffered so much, and for whose sake I took so much trouble myself and put my friends here into equal trouble. The ‘Sita’ I know was dressed like the wife of a hermit, modestly and in a most austere way#1. The ‘Sita’ I know is the one whose sorrowful, pitiful and sad picture Hanuman had given me after his return from Lanka where he had met her as a captive of the demon king #2. The ‘Sita’ I know had walked hundreds of miles in the forest with me, never once hinting that she needed a carriage to carry her onwards on her journey.

{#1apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 79 along with Chaupai line nos. 2 and 8 that precede it; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; and Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 94.

#2apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.}

But I don’t see any of these signs in you. You are decked up in regal finery; you come in a royal procession with pomp and pageantry, astride a carriage carried on the shoulders of demon guards; your countenance is cheerful and quite the opposite of what I had expected it to be, and not only me but even my dear monkey and bear friends too had expected, based on Hanuman’s account of the Sita he saw in Lanka. So all those who are present here, tell me: how can I trust this lady that she is the same ‘Sita’ I loved and adored so much, and for whom I have called upon my monkey and bear friends to look up as their mother? With what face would I accept her as my loyal, faithful and chaste wife, and what face would I show in Ayodhya when I return there with a lady so regally attired as if she was a queen of the demon race, and not the honourable wife of a recluse Ram who had gone to the forest to live an austere life like a hermit for fourteen long years? I’ll make an utter fool of myself; I’ll subject myself to ridicule and scorn; and therefore it’s better for me to return to my capital city of Ayodhya without Sita than to carry this incredulously ridiculous and a glamorous shadow by my side as my wife.

Woe to you Sita; what have thy done? How durst thou even thinkest of adorning thyself in this ostentatious manner? Woes betide you and me if I ever accept thee in the manner thou hast presented thine self before mine horrified and unbelieving eyes.

Tell me, how can I be sure of the sincerity of your love for me; how can I ascertain that you had suffered in silence in my memory when it appears from all appearances that thou hast lived a life of luxury. How imprudent and impertinent and irreverent thou hast been for allowing thy self to break the vows of austere living by allowing thee to be decorated in royal regalia and carried on a palanquin, whilst your husband stands on foot dressed like a hermit? Shame should bear heavily upon thine head and make thee bow it low. Thy behaviour is completely unacceptable for me.

Nevertheless, I still wish to give thee a chance for repentance and offer penitence, for remember everyone who is present here, that I am the most forgiving and compassionate Lord the world has ever had and would ever know in the future. But to become eligible for forgiveness and acceptance, first it is expected that thee should prove thine integrity and purity and faithfulness by undertaking a test; and it has to be an acid test, for I don't want scurrilous scandals and wagging tongues dogging me for the rest of my life.

So therefore, be prepared to prove thine honesty and integrity by the 'fire test' as it would leave no scope for the smallest of doubts and existence of loopholes that might allow wrong impressions and ideas to flourish, that may eventually tarnish my own character and integrity, as well as that of my chaste wife Sita whom I indeed adore and love so much, to ever wiggle in and sour my reputation."

Lord Ram further chastised Sita by saying: "Thy honourable Lady! Do thee not remember that thou hadst cast aspersions on my beloved brother Laxman's character and intentions when he tried to dissuade thee from forcing him to leave thee alone in my hermitage in Panchvati and come to me while I was away chasing that golden deer which thy rapacity hadst forced me to go and capture for thy pleasure? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 28.}

Well now, repent for it; I pay thee back with the same coin by casting aspersions on thine character and integrity. Feel the pain and agony that Laxman may have suffered at that time due to thy uncontrollable tongue; now taste the same bitter pill that Laxman had had to swallow."

²The demonesses, i.e. the female demon guards who had kept vigil on Sita during her captivity in Lanka, and who had escorted Sita from the fort of Lanka to the battle-field where she would meet Lord Ram, felt astonished and extremely sad by what Lord Ram had said about Sita; they were stunned at the Lord's doubting Sita and using some unwarranted statements against her that were harsh and insinuating even by the standards of the demons who were accustomed to such things. It is because they had been first-hand witnesses of how Sita had suffered during the period of her captivity, and of her immaculate character. They had seen how she rebuffed all provocative gestures of Ravana, who had even threatened her with death if she did not relent and agree to surrender herself to his evil designs, and the harsh treatment she was subjected to. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

These demonesses had guarded Sita all the while when she was a captive in Lanka, and they were witnesses and could vouchsafe for her chastity, integrity, inviolability, and purity of character. So they were stunned and rendered speechless when Lord Ram, of anyone else, should say certain things that were best unsaid. They felt extremely distressed and sad themselves, and they empathized with Sita and shared her pain and grief when they saw the colour of her face change from that of

happiness at the chance of her reunion with her beloved husband, to that of utter sadness, grief, shame and dismay.

****Laxman felt flabbergasted and extremely sad. He had never imagined that Lord Ram would be so harsh with Sita; it was incompatible with the Lord's inherent nature and merciful character. So this unexpected behaviour of Lord Ram much perplexed Laxman.**

Laxman was unaware that the main reason for Lord Ram undertaking such a hazardous enterprise as ridiculing Sita's character in public and compelling her to go through the rigours of the "fire test" was this: That the 'real Sita' had been kept in the safe custody of the fire god, that Ravana had abducted only a false form of Sita, i.e. merely her shadow, and that, with the objective of eliminating the cruel demons having been finally achieved, it was necessary for Lord Ram now to retrieve the 'original Sita' from the custody of the fire god, and burn her dark shadow which was a 'false form of Sita'. This event of keeping Sita in the safe custody of the fire god was done so secretly by Lord Ram that Laxman had no idea of it; and so Laxman can't be faulted if he did not know the actual cause of Lord Ram subjecting Sita to the 'fire test' in order to burn her false form and retrieve her true form. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

The drama that unfolded on the battle-field of Lanka whereby Lord Ram casts doubts about the character and integrity of Sita, whom he and everyone else knew very well to be absolutely chaste, immaculate, pure and faithful to the Lord, reminds me, the author of this fascinating Story, of an episode in the classic tale of "Don Quixote" by the celebrated author Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, which is narrated in its Book IV, Chapter VI, titled 'The Novel of the Curious Impertinent'. In this tale it is narrated that there were two fast and close friends named Anselmo and Lothario. Anselmo had a beautiful wife named Camilla. She was a perfect lady in beauty and character. But somehow, unfortunately, Anselmo got into his head to doubt her character. He prevailed upon his friend Lothario to become an instrument in testing his wife's integrity and loyalty. Lothario tried his best to show Anselmo the futility of this foolish enterprise and point out his folly; but Anselmo was so stubborn in his mind that he wouldn't listen to his dear friend's entreaties, for he had become determined to carry on with his hazardous venture even if it culminates in his ruin.

Now imagining how Lothario did his best to dissuade his friend Anselmo to abandon this stupid idea of testing his wife Camilla's integrity and loyalty to him, for it would prove ruinous for all, for himself, for his friend and for his wife, let us visualize in our minds how Laxman could have himself reacted at Lord Ram's suggestions regarding Sita, and how he could have tried to persuade the Lord to abandon this idea of testing Sita by the 'fire test', and what he might have said to the Lord in this connection as described below.

"Laxman drew closer to Lord Ram and spoke to him softly and politely:

'My dear Lord and most respected Brother. I prithee to please pay attention to what I have to say to you before you decide to do what you wish to do. I beg that I don't agree with you. What you intend to do is a folly out of proportions. Remember this: a wife is the other half of her husband; so by casting aspersions on her character the husband is ruining his own reputation; and to rob a man of his reputation is akin to death for him. Why don't you see the ridiculous nature of what you propose to do: by casting doubts on Sita's character you would kill her, for to live a life of infamy is worse than death; and therefore by ruining Sita's reputation you are voluntarily trying

to kill her, and by corollary trying to kill your own self. Your desire is so strange and foreign to all manner of reasoning that it defies comprehension and logic.

My dear brother. If I didn't love you as I do, I would have left you to pursue your matter as you wish, but I know it would lead to certain ruin, to which I resist.

When a woman was given to man in marriage, heaven ordered that they were made and pronounced as one flesh with two forms. To wit, the husband is a piece of his wife, and vice versa. Whatever affects her affects him too, because he is a part of her as much as she is of him. For in all sooth, the whole body suffers the pain of any one part, and the head feels the pain of the foot. So the husband is touched by his wife's infamy because she is a part of him.

Say my brother; do you wot naught that Sita is so immensely honourable, immaculate, pure, chaste and faithful to you? And if you know that your wife is possessed of these noble characters and auspicious qualifications, what have you more to inquire after her by putting her to such great embarrassment, by subjecting her to this harassment? And believe me, she is impregnable; the fire would do her no harm whatsoever. But nevertheless, the very act of doubting her is a taint in itself, and though she would definitely emerge unscathed from the fire, what will the world say about you; have you considered it? What face would you then show Sita once she is proved true by the fire test; wouldn't it put you in the dock and shame you for having doubted her?

What gain will you get, I don't understand. What I fear the most is that unwillingly I would be forced to be an accomplice in this absurd affair, for being the next of kin to you it is but natural that I would be the one who is asked to carry out your orders to light the fire and walk Sita to it. What will Sita think of me? How will she ever excuse me? How will I ever explain to her my innocence? She has always loved me like her son, but what am I doing to her to repay her affection—helping her to step on her own funeral pyre? How will I ever convince her that I was not at fault; that I had no choice, for if I refused I would have disobeyed my Lord, that is you, and it would have been a sin of disobedience in its own right?

Come to think of it my dear and respected brother: All three of us are losers in this venture. Sita would ever remain emotionally affected by this humiliation though on the other hand it would clear her of all taints; You would never be able to excuse yourself for this harshness inflicted upon her innocence self, and this guilt would dog you for the rest of your life; and as for myself, I would be the worst loser who would be forced to roast in shame and guilt for all times to come, for if I refuse to carry out your orders I am offending you, and if I accept your orders I would be offending Sita.

You call me your dear brother whom you love like a son, and yet you would rob me of my honour; nay, you stop not there, for you oblige me to destroy yours too along with mine. It's such a ridiculous situation that defies all comprehension.

Suppose my dear brother, you had a brilliant piece of diamond that was priceless and rare, and the purity, quality and value of which was vouchsafed and guaranteed by the best of gem-testers and jewelers. Would you not be satisfied by their opinion; would it be wise of you to try its hardness by putting it on the anvil and using a hammer to hit it? You must own that should it be survive your blows, it would not be one jot more valuable and hard than really it was prior to your foolish trials and rashness. But consider this: should it break, or otherwise develop some scratch-mark due to the severity of your blows, the jewel would be entirely lost, and so would be the reputation of its owner, who would be so much the poorer for his impudent and silly act.

Sita is this rarest diamond; she ought to be held in the highest esteem of all, and that includes you. I don't understand, by any fanciful flight of my imagination, that why then should you imprudently put her in the danger of falling, for in all sooth, your trial will add no greater value to her than she already has? But, god forbid, if she should succumb to the harshness of the trial that you propose for her because of her frail and weak frame, reflect with yourself on the danger you put your own self in, the life-long infamy and gloom that would descend on you like an all-engulfing shadow of doom. Nay, not only this, but you would never be absolved of the sin of causing Sita's doom too, not to mention my own. What sense does it make?

Consider this: A woman's best asset is her reputation that is held high in the opinion of the world. Sita's reputation is matchless; her immaculacy and honour are undisputed and unquestioned. Why say then would you, of all others, and with no purpose served, question her righteousness and auspiciousness yourself, by calling the reality of these virtues in question?

Take another example. The virtues and reputation of an honourable woman is like a mirror of crystal. A mirror has the risk of being cracked if one uses a hammer against it, and it would be dimmed and stained by breathing too much upon it. Sita must be treated like a reliquary of saints, which ought to be adored and worshipped but not touched and tainted.

My most respected and beloved elder brother, in conclusion I can only say this much that it is highly impertinent for you who are so exceptionally compassionate, merciful, gracious, kind, forgiving, magnanimous, charitable, and noble in heart and mind by your very nature to question Sita's integrity, virtuousness, honour and righteousness by casting aspersions on her character by first using harsh words for her, and then adding salt to her wounds by insinuating her to prove her by the fire-test as if this test would establish something that is not already well known and vouchsafed with regard to her.

So therefore my Lord I beg of you to abandon this uncalled for and totally incredulous way you propose to prosecute the innocent Sita for some imaginary misdemeanours which she is falsely and erroneously being accused and held guilty of, something which thee wish to set right even at the tremendous cost that thou would incur for thine own honour and reputation, because I have already told thee that a wife is an equal part of her husband, and if any half of a body suffers then the whole of it suffers.

I know you love me more than anyone in this world, and I am aware how you lamented and grieved woefully for me when I had lain wounded on the battle-field after being shot by Meghanad's shaft (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 61). How come I know it? Well, one of our close friends here told me everything that happened during those moments. This unbound love betwixt us had given me the courage to speak up before you, for I am sure you will not take offence at me for questioning your wisdom and prudence in asking Sita to prove her innocence and integrity after her painful ordeal of separation from you when she suffered immense torment and grief. Why do you wish to compound her pain?

I and you share a unique bond of mutual trust, faith, love and affection, like no one else does. You have always treated me more like a dear friend than a younger brother, for you have confided with me your most private of thoughts that one would easily share with a friend but rarely with a brother, such as those related to your charm for Sita prior to her marriage with you (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal

Kand, Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 239).

On my part, I was up in arms whenever I perceived any threat to your reputation, honour and safety, as was the case first when Parashuram came angrily to punish you for breaking Lord Shiva's bow as a condition for marrying Sita^{#1}, and second when Bharat had come with his army to take you back from the forest, but I had misconstrued his intentions and thought he had come to fight and kill you so that he can usurp the crown of the kingdom^{#2}.

{^{#1}-- Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 280.

^{#2} -- Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 230.}

This bond and trust betwixt us had encouraged me to tell thee what I thought, which no one else would durst have done. With this, I bring to a close my humble submission before thee. I will carry out whatever thine orders art for me now that I am satisfied that I have done my duty to express my reservations about what thou propose to do, and after thee has lent a patient hearing to me which ensures that thou would weigh all the pros and cons before arriving at a final decision.

My beloved brother; I once again pray to you to calmly consider your decision before proceeding ahead. I have nothing more to say.'

At this honest and sincere expression of his thoughts by Laxman, Lord Ram smiled; he put his reassuring hands on Laxman's shoulder, patted it most affectionately, and with love and warmth in his voice the Lord told Laxman:

'Laxman, I am exceptionally happy today. I have realised how much you love me. I listened to your submission with all attention, and every part of what you have said convinces me of your unbound and unrestricted love for me, and the greatness of your heart and wisdom. I thank you from the core of my heart for the honesty and love and consideration you have shown to me and Sita. I am fortunate to have you as my brother, for you are no less than the diamond you have cited for me. My dearest Laxman, rest assured that what I propose to do is in the best interests of all of us. There are certain things that have many facets and also have far reaching consequences, and a king has to consider all such aspects and weigh all the pros and cons of a given situation, as you have yourself advised me to do, before arriving at a decision, which may at times seem cruel, or incredulous and irrational to a lay observer, but for a king his decision has some definite purpose, it is taken by him with some far reaching consequences in mind, and it has a value that off-sets immediate criticism that a particular decision of his may evoke.

Brother, there are many things I have to keep in mind. I am a responsible person, and I have a reputation to maintain as you yourself say. Do you think that I am an irresponsible person who would act rashly, without thinking about the rationale and consequences of my actions? Perish the thought; there is no one wiser than me.

There are many things you aren't aware of, and it is better not to insist in knowing about them (such as the fact that the 'Sita' you see is not the real Sita, but a shadow of hers, for the 'real Sita' is in safe custody of the fire god, and I have to retrieve her).

Sita had insulted you and harmed your reputation by doubting your intentions and integrity at the time she forced you to leave her alone in the hermitage in Panchvati in defiance of my instructions not to do so. I could feel your distress and agony when I chided you for disobeying me and leaving Sita alone, at which you had expressed your helplessness because she had forced you to come to me by saying

things she oughtn't have uttered. Being a neutral judge of everyone, how can you expect me to excuse her for this insinuation? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 28; and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30.}

See, she has violated the terms of our forest-living, where we three are expected to live an austere life of a hermit. She has come to me bedecked in royal finery, like a queen, and to add insult to injury she had the temerity to ride a palanquin while I and you are standing on the ground attired like hermits. Tell me, is this excusable; do you want me to condone it? If the world begins to criticize me for not punishing Sita for all these misdemeanours just because she happens to be my wife, what right would I have to sit in fair judgment over similar and related wrong-doings of the subjects of the kingdom when I ascend the throne upon our return to Ayodhya and assume the role of its King?

My dear Laxman; I have an immaculate reputation to uphold; I am looked upon by the world as a bearer of the flag of Dharma (principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct and thought, ethics and morality etc.), and I have to be extra cautious in my actions and behaviour. I must not set a wrong precedent; I must ensure that no scandalous story is weaved later on about Sita and my own self at a time when I would not be able to change or rectify the events that would have become history by that time, though I would then regret I should have acted more prudently and wisely while there was yet time for it.

Remember: Gold is never tainted or dulled by putting it in fire; rather the fire purifies it further and removes all doubts about its quality. So is the case with Sita. Once she emerges unscathed from the 'fire test', her virtues of purity, holiness and divinity would be all the more shiny and radiant with glory, not any wee whit dulled as you might fear. I don't want a doubtful, shadowy character by my side.

So don't worry at all. Everything would be fine and end on a happy note. Be rest assured and trust me. Now, that said, I expect you to do obediently what I plan to do, like a faithful companion and a loving brother for whom his elder brother's wishes are paramount and sacrosanct, especially when that elder brother treats him as his own son.

As to your worry that you will fall in Sita's opinion for being instrumental in carrying out my instruction of putting her through the rigours of the fire test, nothing of the sort will happen as I myself would explain to her the circumstances of what had happened. Tell me: Do you wish somebody else should touch Sita and carry out my wishes of putting her through the fire test while you stand mutely by my side? Would it not in itself be a scandal that you had refused my orders?

My loving brother and son Laxman; don't worry at all. Have faith in me, that I shall do nothing that would injure either you or Sita in the least. But at the same time, I have to pretend to be harsh to ride over the wave of criticisms and scandals that would lash our shores in the future time. Remember and consider this: Sita had lived for too long a time in a tainted territory, a place infested with demons. They were flesh eaters; they were lascivious and rapaciously passionate; they were embodiments of all the vices and all manners of evil characters that one can imagine. So it is easy for anyone to say: 'How can Sita have remained untouched by and immune to such vices when she lived surrounded by them all the time for so long, just like the case of a person's clothes invariably catching the smell of the scent that has been sprayed in the room where he had tarried for some time, or of tobacco that has been smoked by others in a crowded room though he had not smoked anything himself?'

Well, I have to prevent such things at all costs. So be at ease with your self and relax your conscience. Everything would be alright soon.”

Lord Ram paused for a while and glanced at Laxman most affectionately. The Lord patted and gently pressed his remorseful brother's shoulders reassuringly once again, and continued:

‘My dear son, I have a special commission for you, like I had for Hanuman and Angad earlier. And like Hanuman and Angad gaining eternal happiness and glory for being my ambassador, you too would realize that you are not an instrument of any ruin for anybody, but the one who brings the tidings that would grant excess of cheer and joy to them. Now pay attention to what I have to say.

When you draw closer to Sita, which you must in order to arrange the pile and light it for the fire test that is proposed for her, and then escort her to it and help her step on it, whisper my message in her ear. Tell her that I wish to remind her, in case she has forgotten it due to her long exposure to hardship, sufferance and grief of separation from me, of that private conversation that I have had with her in our hermitage in Panchavati, just prior to the appearance of Marich who came disguised as the golden deer at the behest of Ravana so that she could be abducted by the demon king. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

While you convey my message, keep your eyes fixed on her face. You will observe that the countenance and colours of her face would change from sadness, distress and gloom to that of extreme joy, happiness and exhilaration. This metamorphosis would in its self be sufficient to convince you that you are not an instrument that exacerbates her sorrows, but a herald of her happiness and good fortune. To wit, instead of cursing you or being angry at you for becoming a tool of aggravation of her sufferings or humiliation, she would rather bless you profusely like you never can imagine.

Don't worry at all; I shall never do anything that would bring pain either to you or to Sita. You will soon realise it.’ ”

This mysterious commission and the assurance of joy from Lord Ram, who never speaks a lie and is true to his words, helped to overcome Laxman's inhibitions and any reluctance that he has had. So, Laxman obediently bowed his head before the Lord in silence, though his eyes welled-up with tears, even as contradictory emotions of sadness and joy, of helplessness and hope, of reluctance to carry out his orders and the courage to obey them irrespective of their merit, wafted through his distressed heart like a train of waves lapping on the shore of an ocean.]

चौ०. प्रभु के बचन सीस धरि सीता । बोली मन क्रम बचन पुनीता ॥ १ ॥

लछिमन होहु धरम के नेगी । पावक प्रगट करहु तुम्ह बेगी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu kē bacana sīsa dhari sītā. bōlī mana krama bacana punītā. 1.

lachimana hōhu dharama kē nēgī. pāvaka pragaṭa karahu tumha bēgī. 2.

When Sita heard the Lord's words (i.e. when she learnt what the Lord wished her to do; when she came to know his instructions for her)¹, she respectfully accepted them with a bowed head, and spoke with purity and calmness in her mind, heart, demeanours and speech². (1)

[She addressed Laxman and exhorted him to follow the path of Dharma (i.e. that which is righteous and proper to do), and help her prove her innocence.]

‘Laxman’, said Sita, ‘please follow the path of Dharma³ by assuming the role of a priest who presides over a fire sacrifice. Light a fire quickly (so that I can prove my innocence and integrity, and you shall be blessed for being a priest and a witness in this purification rite)’⁴.

[It is clear here that it was Sita herself who proposed that she be put through the Fire Test, and that Lord Ram had not asked for it in express terms.] (2)

[Note—¹We will observe that what has been said earlier in the notes appended to Doha no. 108 and verses that precede it, fit in perfectly well here and explain things in a logical, plausible, and coherent way.

We have read in our notes earlier that Lord had briefed Laxman with what he expects from him and what he was supposed to do. Hence, it was on the Lord’s instructions that Laxman quietly approached Sita and told her in a whisper what Lord Ram had asked him to convey to her. It is how Sita came to know “what the Lord wished her to do, and what was the reason for this request”.

On careful analysis of the verses of the Text we can easily see that Lord Ram has nowhere publicly asked Sita to prove herself by the fire test; he had only said some harsh and pinching words for her, but not anything about the ‘fire test’. So, how did Sita get this idea of conducting the ‘fire test’ on her self, and that too by making Laxman an instrument for it, if Lord Ram remained silent on this matter and not said anything of the sort in public?

The answer is crystal clear when the reader would carefully read the notes appended by this author to the verses earlier. Obviously Sita came to know of Lord Ram’s wish of putting her through the ‘fire test’ because Laxman had conveyed the Lord’s wish to her as his messenger. So she immediately agreed.

²The Lord’s message also reminded her of the private conversation he had with her prior to the episode of the golden deer and her abduction by Ravana. Laxman was unaware what Lord Ram meant because he was not present on the occasion. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.}

Nevertheless, Sita got the hint; she immediately realized that the Lord wished to retrieve her from the custody of the fire god where he had kept her for her own security and safety, because the time had come to eliminate the cruel demons as the Lord had promised the gods and mother earth on an earlier occasion, and to redeem this promise it was necessary to use Sita as a bait. This was surely a most hazardous and risky job, and the Lord wished to protect Sita at all costs. So he decided to lodge her in the custody of the fire god, for it was the safest and most secure place anywhere in the world for her to stay temporarily while Lord Ram carried out his mission of eliminating the demons. That mission having been finally accomplished, it was necessary now to invite the fire god to bring Sita back, in flesh and blood, to Lord Ram, and at the same time burn her shadowy form that she had left behind at the time when the Lord had put her in the safe custody of the fire god. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

It is very interesting why Lord Ram chose the ‘fire god’ to act as a custodian for Sita. The ‘fire’ is an element that can never be tainted or tarnished; it burns all impurities and leaves things pure and immaculate; it is so fierce and ferocious that it

scorches and reduces to ash anyone or anything trying to play fools and act smart with it. If one is required to prove one's innocence, the fire is the only element out of the five primary elements of creation that is invoked to stand witness to it. {The other elements are sky, air, water and earth. They can by mischance be polluted, but not the fire element.}

Lord Ram was a descendent of the 'Solar Race', and everyone knows how fiery the 'sun' is; no one would dare to go near this celestial oven if he wishes to remain alive. So therefore, Sita was safe and secure with the 'fire god'.

Further, Lord Ram himself had the fire god as his de jure ancestor. How come this happened? Well, if we carefully read the Story of the Ramayana, we will observe that his father, king Dasrath, had performed a 'fire sacrifice' to beget a son, and from sacred fire pit emerged the 'fire god' in a personified form. The fire god gave a cup of pudding to Dasrath that he was to give to his queens to partake, and it was from this sacred pudding that they conceived and Lord Ram and his three brothers were born. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 190.}

By manifesting himself from the 'fire' as his source, Lord Ram wished to convey to the world that no one should ever question the purity of his ancestry and origin. So when he had put Sita in the custody of the fire god, the Lord had actually placed her in the safest place he could think of, in the safe hands of his own ancestor who was very competent, powerful, strong and able to carry out his mandate to protect his daughter-in-law Sita while his son Lord Ram was out on a divine mission.

And since the 'fire god' was Lord Ram's deemed ancestor and Sita's guardian at the same time, so assuredly there was no fear for her to step into the portal of the fire god's visible form, which is the 'lighted fire' as we see it.

This is why Sita became calm and relaxed while asking Laxman to light the fire for her.

³By asking Laxman to follow the path of Dharma and become a flag-bearer of this stellar virtue, and never think of relinquishing his duties in this regard, Sita exhorted him to stop lamenting and regretting about what is destined for him to do. She meant that by helping her to undertake the Fire Test, Laxman would be serving many noble causes at the same time, and glory would be his.

One, he would be obeying Lord Ram who besides being his elder brother was also the commander of the army, and refusal to carry out the Lord's orders, or wishes, would be tantamount to disobedience and violation of the principles of discipline.

Two, he would be helping Sita to obey the Lord's command, and fulfilling her obligation as a loyal, faithful and honourable wife for whom the fulfillment of her husband's wish is the paramount law.

Three, he will be an instrument of redemption of her honour, respect and glory, and a witness of her acquittal of any wrong-doing or misdemeanour for all times to come.

Four, he will help her maintain her honour and dignity by preventing anyone else from carrying out the Fire Test on behalf of Lord Ram, because were he to refuse then it is certain that the Lord would be compelled to appoint someone else from the monkey army to carry out this Test for him, which event would be most scandalous and demeaning for her honour by every count.

Five, by doing what he is called upon to do by Lord Ram, he will obey his own mother Sumitra's commands to him that he ought to do aught naught that would displease Lord Ram and cause uneasiness for him#, which will be the case if he

refuses to carry out the Lord's instructions to put Sita through the Fire Test. {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 75.}

So therefore, it can be said that 'Laxman was also being tested along with Sita' during this episode of the 'Fire Test'. Both were being tested to see if they stand tall and with their heads held high in the unsparing judicious court of Dharma which favours none, and is neither prejudiced nor biased against anyone.

⁴By asking Laxman to act as a priest of the sacrificial fire lit to prove Sita's honesty and integrity and purity, he was absolved of any sin that he imagined accrued to him in this exercise. A priest is a holy man; the fire rite he presides over is also a holy exercise; and the offering to this fire too becomes sanctified as it is meant for the fire god. So therefore, Laxman and Sita were both deemed to be holy for participating in this holy exercise, Laxman as a presiding priest, and Sita's shadow as the offering.

Just as the offering is burnt when it is put into the fire pit, Sita's shadow too burnt when she entered the lighted fire. And just as fire sacrifice is expected to produce some auspicious reward for the person, the patron, on whose behalf it is done, in the present case the reward is in the form of the 'original, untainted Sita' that is produced for Lord Ram on whose instructions and behalf this ritual was carried out.

Indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, what a fantastic coordination of auspicious things, all conjured up and occurring at the same time!]

सुनि लछिमन सीता कै बानी । बिरह बिबेक धरम निति सानी ॥ ३ ॥

लोचन सजल जोरि कर दोऊ । प्रभु सन कछु कहि सकत न ओऊ ॥ ४ ॥

देखि राम रुख लछिमन धाए । पावक प्रगटि काठ बहु लाए ॥ ५ ॥

sunī lachimāna sītā kai bānī. biraha bibēka dharama niti sānī. 3.

lōcana sajala jōri kara dō'ū. prabhu sana kachu kahi sakata na ō'ū. 4.

dēkhi rāma rukha lachimāna dhā'ē. pāvaka pragaṭi kāṭha bahu lā'ē. 5.

Laxman heard Sita's words which were imbued with a combination of diverse emotions: they were remorseful and full of sorrows, they were soaked in grief of separation from the Lord, and they were in accordance with the requirements of the principles of Dharma and laws of proper conduct¹. (3)

Laxman's eyes were filled with tears; he joined his palms and stood remorsefully; but he could not muster courage to say anything to Lord Ram². (4)

Realising that Lord Ram indeed wished him to carry out what Sita had asked him to do (which was to light a fire so that she could prove herself innocent and pure), Laxman had no choice left for him. So he immediately went ahead to collect firewood to light the desired fire. (5)

[Note—¹Sita felt remorseful and sad that after enduring all the hardships she was now being questioned and subjected to more suffering.

She feared that should anything go wrong by some remote mischance of fate, then she would be permanently separated from Lord Ram.

But she had no choice before her as she had to adhere to the laws of Dharma and the principles of noble conduct and probity, irrespective of the consequences that might befall on her, if she was to be accepted by Lord Ram.

²Laxman had already had a discourse with Lord Ram in this matter as we have noted in the previous verses. There was nothing more to be said and discussed. His orders and expectations were clear. So therefore, after hesitating for some moments, when Laxman realised that Lord Ram has given his tacit approval to what Sita asked him to do, he went ahead with the task at hand, albeit reluctantly, which was to make the fire ready and let Sita step into it.]

पावक प्रबल देखि बैदेही । हृदयं हरष नहिं भय कछु तेही ॥ ६ ॥

जौं मन बच क्रम मम उर माहीं । तजि रघुबीर आन गति नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥

तौ कृसानु सब कै गति जाना । मो कहूँ होउ श्रीखंड समाना ॥ ८ ॥

pāvaka prabala dēkhi baidēhī. hrdayam̐ haraṣa nahim̐ bhaya kachu tēhī. 6. jaum̐ mana baca krama mama ura māhīm̐. taji raghubīra āna gati nāhīm̐. 7. tau kṛsānu saba kai gati jānā. mō kahum̐ hō'u śrīkhaṇḍa samānā. 8.

When Vaideh¹ (Sita) saw the fire burning fiercely and brightly, she had no trace of fear or joy in her heart (because she was calm and poised for this test; because she wished to look dignified and in control of herself; because she did not wish to create an impression on the onlookers that she was scared of the fire as she doubted her own self; that any sign of being forced into the fire against her will would boomerang on her beloved husband Lord Ram, because the world would accuse him of being cruel to her; and because she knew that the fire would do her no harm as its patron god, the ‘fire god’, was himself her guardian and protector). (6)

As she stepped into the fire, she declared on oath: ‘If in my heart and mind, in my spoken words and silent thoughts, and my actions and deeds, I have not considered or remembered anyone else but Lord Ram, if I have no destination or destiny other than Lord Ram, --- (7)

--- Then let the fire element and its patron god, who, being omniscient and all-pervading, is able to know the inner thoughts and the working of the mind of all living beings, become as cool as the paste of sandal-wood for me!

[To wit, let me step into the fire as if it was a cool pond of sandal-wood paste. Let this cool balm sooth my burning heart and offer succour to my suffering body by its graceful acceptance of me. I am pure and holy and untainted; and yet I am questioned. Oh revered Fire God; come to my aid and bear witness of my righteousness and auspiciousness. Have mercy and pity on me; I have been in your custody, so there is no one who can certify my virtues better than you. It’s your moral duty to do it now.]’ (8)

[Note—¹The use of the word “baidēhī”, meaning one who has ‘no physical body’, is very significant here. It clearly implies that the Sita who entered the fire was merely a

‘shadow’; some kind of apparition or specter that is not the real thing, that has no physical presence, that is not there in physical body made of bones, flesh and blood.

That indeed is true, because at the time of Lord Ram keeping her in the safe custody of the fire god, Sita had left behind a shadow that was her mirror image—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

छं०. श्रीखंड सम पावक प्रबेस कियो सुमिरि प्रभु मैथिली । १ ।
जय कोसलेस महेस बंदित चरन रति अति निर्मली ॥ २ ॥
प्रतिबिंब अरु लौकिक कलंक प्रचंड पावक महँ जरे । ३ ।
प्रभु चरित काहुँ न लखे नभ सुर सिद्ध मुनि देखहिं खरे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

śrīkhaṇḍa sama pāvaka prabēsa kiyō sumiri prabhu maithilī. 1.
jaya kōsalēsa mahēsa bandita carana rati ati nirmalī. 2.
pratibimba aru laukika kalaṅka praçaṇḍa pāvaka mahum̐ jarē. 3.
prabhu carita kāhum̐ na lakhē nabha sura sid'dha muni dēkhahim̐ kharē. 4.

By remembering Lord Ram and invoking his grace and mercy, Sita (the daughter of the king of Mithila, i.e. king Janak of Janakpur; “maithilī”) entered the fire as if it was a coolant, as if the scorching flames of the blazing fire had transformed themselves into a cool paste of sandalwood that provides succour to those burnt by the same fire. (Chanda line no. 1)

Glory to Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya), whose holy feet is worshipped and revered by Lord Shiva (Mahesh) with the greatest of affection, faith and devotion¹! (Chanda line no. 2)

Both Sita’s shadowy form, as well as the social and worldly taint or stigma that were associated with it due to its prolonged presence in an evil environment during her captivity in Lanka, a place infested by evil demons, were burnt in the blazing flames of the fire². (Chanda line no. 3)

Lord Ram’s ways are so strange, magical, mystical and mysterious that no one present at the time, such as the gods, the mystics and sages who were watching everything from the sky (heaven), could perceive and understand what was actually happening³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹To wit, it was due to Lord Ram’s divine grace and quiet intervention that the fire did not affect Sita in the least. The fire, which has a natural habit of burning anything touching it, magically metamorphosed into a coolant, and did no harm to Sita.

²To wit, what burnt in the fire was the impurity associated with Sita’s form arising out of her symbolic presence in the land of the evil demons. It is very interesting to note how Lord Ram complied with the laws of Nature and Dharma simultaneously. He allowed the ‘fire’ to carry out its natural function and live up to its reputation—which

was to burn anything coming in contact with it, to burn only the impurity of gold and leave behind the purified metal, to burn rubbish from a heap of garbage and leave behind solids things of value, such as metals.

By devising this clever device, Lord Ram had ensured that any taint or stigma that might have been associated with Sita would be instantly and visibly eliminated, leaving no trace of doubt in anybody's mind, and that what survived would be her true and immaculate form that could not be questioned for its purity and truth.

³To wit, the gods, mystics and sages could not fathom why Lord Ram had said harsh words to Sita and forced her to undergo the fire test. They could not realize that it was merely a ploy by the Lord to settle all doubts and questions about Sita's purity and integrity, while at the same time destroying her fake form of a shadow and enabling the fire god to appear and produce the original Sita from behind the smokescreen of the glare of the blazing fire as we shall see in the verses herein below.]

धरि रूप पावक पानि गहि श्री सत्य श्रुति जग बिदित जो । ५ ।
जिमि छीरसागर इंदिरा रामहि समर्पी आनि सो ॥ ६ ॥
सो राम बाम बिभाग राजति रुचिर अति सोभा भली । ७ ।
नव नील नीरज निकट मानहुँ कनक पंकज की कली ॥ ८ ॥

dhari rūpa pāvaka pāni gahi śrī satya śruti jaga bidita jō. 5.
jimi chīrasāgara indirā rāmahi samarpī āni sō. 6.
sō rāma bāma bibhāga rājati rucira ati sōbhā bhalī. 7.
nava nīla nīraja nikaṭa mānahum̐ kanaka paṅkaja kī kalī. 8.

The Fire God revealed himself in a visible form, and holding the original Sita—who has been praised and honoured by the scriptures and famed in the world as the virtues wife of Lord Ram and a divine manifestation of goddess Laxmi—by the hand (as a elderly father or guardian would do for his daughter or ward respectively), he bestowed her to Lord Ram in the same way as the patron deity of the celestial ocean known as 'Kshir Sagar' had manifested himself and bestowed goddess Laxmi to Lord Vishnu (at an ancient time when the ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of bliss and eternity)¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

She (Sita) came and stood by the left-hand side of Lord Ram². This image was exceptionally beautiful and enthralling for the beholder. (Chanda line no. 3)

This bewitching sight reminded one of a blue-tinged lotus flower by the side of which there is a creeper made of gold³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram was married to Sita, a similar analogy is cited wherein it is said that her father Janak had held her hands and gave her in marriage to Lord Ram just like Parvati's father Himwant gave her in marriage to Lord Shiva, and the patron deity of the ocean has appeared himself to give goddess Laxmi to Lord Vishnu. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 324.

How did Sita look when she was produced by the Fire God at the end of her fire test? This question is answered in sage Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 19-20.

Let us see what these verses have to say:

श्रुत्वा स्तुतिं लोकगुरोर्विभावसुः स्वाङ्के समादाय विदेहपुत्रिकाम् ।
विभ्राजमानां विमलारुणद्युतिं रक्ताम्बरं दिव्यविभूषणान्विताम् ॥ १९॥
प्रोवाच साक्षी जगतां रघूत्तमं प्रपन्नसर्वार्तिहरं हुताशनः ।
गृहाण देवीं रघुनाथ जानकीं पुरा त्वया मय्यवरोपितां वने ॥ २०॥

śrutvā stutiṃ lokagurorvibhāvasuḥ svāṅke samādāya videhaputrikām ।
vibhrājamānāṃ vimalāruṇadyutiṃ raktāmbarāṃ divyavibhūṣaṇānvitām ॥ 19॥
provāca sākṣī jagatām raghūttamaṃ prapannasarvārtiharaṃ hutāśanaḥ ।
grhāṇa devīm raghunātha jānakīm purā tvayā mayyavaropitām vane ॥ 20॥

19-20. After Lord Brahma, the creator, had offered his prayers in honour of Lord Ram, the Fire God, who stands witness for the whole world, appeared on the site with the daughter of Videha (Sita) in his lap¹.

She was adorned in divine ornaments and attired in a red garment². Her glorious form was radiant with a reddish hue; she was surrounded by a halo of red splendorous light³.

The Fire God said to Lord Ram, the Lord who is a vanquisher of the sorrows and miseries of all those who seek refuge at his holy feet: 'Oh Lord Raghubir! Please be gracious and kind to accept Janki (Sita) whom you had previously kept in my safe custody in the forest (at Panchvati)⁴ (19-20).

[Note—¹When Sita had entered the fire, she sat down on the pile of firewood in a meditative posture known as 'Padmasan', the lotus posture. It was in this posture she emerged when the flames cooled down, giving a visual impression that she was sitting in the lap of the Fire God.

In this episode Lord Ram has shown two aspects of the 'fire', one is its 'elemental form' which is characterised by its inherent nature of burning whatever is put into it, and the other is its 'personified form' as the Fire God who is calm and cool like all other Gods. The illusionary or shadowy form of Sita was burnt by the elemental form of the fire, whilst her real and truthful form was produced by the deity who is responsible for controlling the fire element, i.e. the Fire God, who was calm and cool.

When king Dasrath of Ayodhya had performed the fire sacrifice to be blessed with sons, at that time too the Fire God had emerged from the sacrificial fire pit to give the king a pot of cool sweet porridge which he was to give to his queen so that she can bear a son—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 190

This porridge was cool, not hot and boiling, which clearly indicates that the Fire God is cool like any other God or living entity in creation as compared to the element known as 'fire' which he represents.

²A married Hindu woman traditionally wears red coloured garments and ornaments as auspicious signs of her happy marriage. On the other hand, a widow is expected to shed all ornamentation and wear white clothes.

³This refers to the colour of the flames. Since she was in the lap of the Fire God, the red-coloured flames surrounded her. It is the colour of the setting sun, indicating that the flames of the fire were slowly cooling down.

The visualization is remarkable here. When Sita had entered the fire, it was burning fiercerly with leaping flames like a newly lit fire would. But soon the flames subsided, and Sita emerged from the fire like a golden idol that is red like ember and purified by the flames.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.

²According to custom, a wife's place is on the left of her husband.

³In this metaphoric representation, Lord Ram is the 'blue lotus' because the colour of his body is bluish like the colour of the sky, and Sita is like the 'creeper of gold' as her complexion is fair and shiny.]

दो०. बरषहिं सुमन हरषि सुर बाजहिं गगन निसान ।
गावहिं किंनर सुरबधू नाचहिं चढ़ीं बिमान ॥ १०९ (क) ॥
जनकसुता समेत प्रभु सोभा अमित अपार ।
देखि भालु कपि हरषे जय रघुपति सुख सार ॥ १०९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

baraṣahim sumana haraṣi sura bājahim gagana nisāna.
gāvahim kinnara surabadhū nācahim caṛhīm bimāna. 109 (a).
janakasutā samēta prabhu sōbhā amita apāra.
dēkhi bhālu kapi haraṣē jaya raghupati sukha sāra. 109 (b).

The gods were jubilant and exhilarated. To celebrate the occasion and express their joy and happiness, they rained down flowers on the divine couple from their station in the sky, and simultaneously played their kettle-drums.

At the same time, the Kinnars (singers of heaven) sang and the goddesses danced in merriment in their aerial vehicles. (Doha no. 109-a)

Lord Ram, alongside Sita (the daughter of king Janak; "janakasutā samēta prabhu"), looked exceptionally adorable and charming beyond measure.

Beholding this fascinating sight, the bears and monkeys felt very glad and exhilarated. They applauded the divine couple and hailed them with cries of 'Glory to Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus, who is like an ocean of joy and bliss.'¹ (Doha no. 109-b)

[Note—¹The bears and monkeys were so charmed and overwhelmed by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Sita standing side-by-side that they could no longer restrain

their emotions of joy and happiness, breaking out in a loud chorus praising Lord Ram and extolling his virtues of granting happiness to one and all.

They chose this particular virtue of the Lord because just a while ago it seemed that there would be sadness and gloom everywhere, but the sudden positive turn of events convinced them that the Lord does everything that would ultimately bring nothing else but cheer to one and all.]

चौ०. तब रघुपति अनुसासन पाई । मातलि चलेउ चरन सिरु नाई ॥ १ ॥
आए देव सदा स्वारथी । बचन कहहिं जनु परमारथी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

taba raghupati anusāsana pāī. māṭali calē'u carana siru nāī. 1.
ā'ē dēva sadā svārathī. bacana kahahim janu paramārathī. 2.

Then, after receiving Lord Raghupati's (Lord Ram's) permission, Matali (the charioteer of Indra who was sent by the latter to help Lord Ram in the battle against Ravana) bowed his head most reverentially before the Lord and departed from there (to return to heaven). (1)

Meanwhile, the gods, who are by nature very self-centered and concerned only with their own interests¹, came there (to pay their homage to Lord Ram). They spoke words as if they were very selfless and sought the good of others like those who are seekers of spiritualism². (2)

[Note—¹Here, the poet-saint Tulsidas is alluding to the universal truth of this world, that everyone, even the high gods, are driven by selfishness; every living being, from the lowly to the most high as symbolized by the gods, mind their own interest first and foremost, and then think of anything else.

There are verses in Ram Charit Manas that aver to this universal principle of creation. If the gods, who are supposed to be spiritually evolved and stand on a high moral ground, being the leaders of the world and its guide, can be selfish, then there is no wonder that ordinary creatures are self-centered and selfish. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 295 and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (ii) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Even one's parents are not exempt from this universal principle which says that everyone in this world develops friendship with another person if it suits one's own self-interest, and no one thinks of the welfare of others if it does not fit in well with his own agenda—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 47.

²Only saintly persons would think in a selfless manner. One of the grand characteristic of saints is that they would not mind their own welfare if their suffering can help others in any way. This is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 38; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41.

Besides saints, it is only Lord Ram, the merciful, kind and compassionate Lord God, who would think of the welfare of others no matter what happens—

apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 47.]

दीन बंधु दयाल रघुराया । देव कीन्हि देवन्ह पर दाया ॥ ३ ॥
बिस्व द्रोह रत यह खल कामी । निज अघ गयउ कुमारगामी ॥ ४ ॥

dīna bandhu dayāla raghurāyā. dēva kīnhi dēvanha para dāyā. 3.
bisva drōha rata yaha khala kāmī. nija agha gaya'u kumāragāmī. 4.

The assembled gods paid their obeisance to Lord Ram and prayed as follows: ‘Oh Lord of the Raghus (Lord Ram) who are a friend of the distressed, the meek and the miserable, and a Lord who is most merciful, gracious, kind and compassionate by nature!

Oh Lord, you have been very kind and merciful upon us, the gods. (3)

This fellow (Ravana) was inimical for the whole world; he was always engaged in hostility with all; he was a wicked creature who enjoyed pursuing his worldly passions relentlessly, without qualms.

He has gone the way his sinful ways naturally led him to; he has perished due to his own sins; he is responsible for his own undoing.

[To wit, he has died a horrifying death by having his body dismembered, and falling to the ground covered in dust and blood, as a result of his sinful deeds. He who once ruled the world now lies dead on the ground in such a humiliating manner because of the evil deeds that he did in his life, evil deeds that brought this evil fate to him.] (4)

तुम्ह समरूप ब्रह्म अबिनासी । सदा एकरस सहज उदासी ॥ ५ ॥
अकल अगुन अज अनघ अनामय । अजित अमोघसक्ति करुनामय ॥ ६ ॥

tumha samarūpa brahma abināsī. sadā ēkarasa sahaja udāsī. 5.
akala aguna aja anagha anāmaya. ajita amōghasakti karunāmaya. 6.

[Lauding the grand virtues of Lord Ram, the gods continued—] Oh Lord! You have equanimity and treat all alike (samarūpa). You are Brahm¹, the Supreme Being, who is eternal and imperishable (brahma abināsī); who remains unchanging and uniform (sadā ēkarasa); and who is by his nature dispassionate and impartial (sahaja udāsī)². (5)

You (as Brahm) are one of your own kind, having no parallel (akala); you are without any attributes and their associated characteristics (aguna); you are without any birth (because you are eternal and immutable, having no end or beginning) (aja); you are faultless and free from any taints and blemishes associated with this gross world (anagha anāmaya); you are invincible (ajita); your astounding powers are unfailing (amōghasakti); and you are an embodiment of mercy, compassion, kindness and benevolence (karunāmaya). (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram as Brahm personified: refer to Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 93; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 116.

²If Lord Ram has equanimity and treats all alike, if he is dispassionate and impartial, then the question is ‘why did he kill Ravana’? The answer is provided by the gods themselves in the previous verse where they said that Ravana attained this fate due to his own sinful deeds.

This fact, that one reaps the harvest like the seed one has sown, is reiterated elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 219.

To wit, Ravana died an ignominious death as a result of the sort of sinful life he had lived. No one is to be held responsible for it. Lord Ram, being the Lord of this world, has a duty to be just to all, and therefore it was obligatory for the Lord to punish Ravana for the way he and his cruel demons had been tormenting the world; the Lord was morally bound to punish Ravana for his evilness and transgression of the laws of Dharma, the laws that govern good conduct in this creation. For if the Lord had not punished Ravana for his wickedness then he would be doing injustice to other humble creatures, which would not be acceptable. So therefore, the Lord had no choice.]

मीन कमठ सूकर नरहरी । बामन परसुराम बपु धरी ॥ ७ ॥

जब जब नाथ सुरन्ह दुखु पायो । नाना तनु धरि तुहई नसायो ॥ ८ ॥

mīna kamaṭha sūkara naraharī. bāmana parasurāma bapu dhārī. 7.
jaba jaba nātha suranha dukhu pāyō. nānā tanu dhari tumha'im' nasāyō. 8.

It was you, in your primary form as Lord Vishnu, who had assumed the form of a Fish¹, a Tortoise², a Boar³, Lord Narhari⁴ (Nrisingh or Narsingh, the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu), Lord Vaaman⁵ (the legendary Dwarf), and sage Parashuram⁶ (the warrior sage with an axe as his trademark)*. (7)

Oh Lord! Whenever the gods were subjected to sufferings and felt distressed, it was you who had come to their help and eliminated the cause of their miseries by assuming various forms as occasioned by prevailing circumstances⁷. (8)

[Note--*These are the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Briefly, they are as follows:

¹Fish: Also known as ‘Matsya’. This is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu. In this form, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah’s Arc.

²Tortoise: Also known as 'Kurma'. It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

³Boar: Also known as 'Varaaha'. It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

⁴Narsingh or Nrisingh: Lord *Nrsingh or Narsingh* is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped and had devotion for Lord Vishnu whom the demon loathed. After having killed the demon, Nrisingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh. [Refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 8.] Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no characteristic features, attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched authority, stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete and unchallenged sway over the

entire domain of creation just like a lion has over the forest and its inhabitant wild animals. This term is symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned and powerful Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad varieties of living beings, called the Jivas, just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolizes the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man is of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists with all its variations in this creation, whether in its primary form represented by the wild and primitive animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by the man, with all the other stages of creation included in between these two.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalaad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Nrisingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism, power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

⁵Vaaman or the Dwarf: This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

When the great King Bali, the grandson of Prahalaad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a 'Vaaman' or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth and the nether world with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali's own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali.

To wit, when Bali found that he was cornered as he could not fulfil the word given to a Brahmin, because the land for the third step was not available, he offered himself to be tied and enslaved by Lord Vaaman as a punishment for unfulfilled vow. So Lord Vaaman gracefully put his third step on Bali's head, which though appeared to be a punishment but was actually a blessing in disguise.

From then onwards, Lord Vishnu is also called ‘Trivikram’—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps.

However, the Lord was very pleased with Bali’s principles of keeping one’s words even at the cost of allowing himself to be a slave of the Lord. So even though Lord Vaaman put his leg on Bali’s head, thereby pushing him into the nether world, yet the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice that was done to Bali, a magnanimous and righteous King who had stood firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitment inspite of losing his crown and self-respect.

So therefore, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gate-keeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.

An episode is narrated in Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ where Jamvant, the old bear chief, refers to this incarnation of Lord Vaaman and says that at that time he (Jamvant) was young and in his youthful days, and that he had performed seven rounds (clockwise circumambulations) of the colossus form of Lord Vaaman to pay his homage to the latter. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

⁶Parashuram: This is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdaagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Shursena, the son of Kaartavirya-Arjuna, because the sage had refused to hand over the celestial cow known as Kapila to him. Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Kaartavirya-Arjuna.

⁷Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

यह खल मलिन सदा सुरद्रोही । काम लोभ मद रत अति कोही ॥ ९ ॥

अधम सिरोमनि तव पद पावा । यह हमरें मन बिसमय आवा ॥ १० ॥

yaha khala malina sadā suradrōhī. kāma lōbha mada rata ati kōhī. 9.
adhama sirōmani tava pada pāvā. yaha hamarēm mana bisamaya āvā. 10.

This fellow (i.e. Ravana) was very wicked and evil, was always hostile to the gods, was very passionate and lustful, was highly greedy and rapacious, was engrossed in pursuit of his sensual pleasures, and was haughty, arrogant and angry by nature. (9)

He was an epitome of sins, vices and evil, yet he attained an exalted stature by attaining salvation and emancipation at the time of his death—this singular achievement by him has left us amazed and full of wonderment¹. (10)

[Note—¹To wit, we are astonished that such a sinful creature as Ravana seemed to be would be so fortunate and blessed that he would attain an abode so near to your holy feet that made him achieve an honourable and exalted stature that is equivalent to your own holy state of existence. Forsooth, this has perplexed us and left us wondering, as to how it came about, and how lucky and blessed Ravana indeed was.

This single development has shown us without doubt how exceptionally benevolent, forgiving, kind, gracious, magnanimous and compassionate you really are, that you would forgive Ravana for all his misdemeanours and mischief, and instead grant his soul the rare privilege of attaining deliverance, salvation and emancipation. It's a rare achievement for Ravana; it's an objective for which the greatest of sages, ascetics and hermits undertake the severest of spiritual practices, but rarely succeed in achieving. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and (ii) Doha no. 104 along with Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede it.]

हम देवता परम अधिकारी । स्वार्थ रत प्रभु भगति बिसारी ॥ ११ ॥
भव प्रबाहँ संतत हम परे । अब प्रभु पाहि सरन अनुसरे ॥ १२ ॥

hama dēvatā parama adhikārī. svāratha rata prabhu bhagati bisārī. 11.
bhava prabāham̐ santata hama parē. aba prabhu pāhi sarana anusarē. 12.

We gods, though entitled to attain your holy abode and to be closest to you (i.e. attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation by reaching higher echelons of spiritual attainment rather than being contented with being a 'god'), as we are deemed to superior to and more able than all others in this creation, yet it is so unfortunate a paradox that (due to the influence of Maya, or delusions) we miss this opportunity, as we are driven more by self-interests and less by spiritual objectives, which in its turn has led us astray by distracting us so much that we have neglected having full and exemplary level of devotion for your holy Self¹. (11)

Instead of attaining beatitude and eternal bliss, we remain trapped in the flow of the world by remaining engrossed in worldly affairs as its Regulatory Authorities.

Oh Lord! We seek the shelter of your holy feet and request you to grant us your grace so that we can be protected from falling in the trap of delusions like ordinary creatures do.² (12)

[Note—¹This goes to the credit of the gods that at least they acknowledged their shortcomings. From the perspective of the Upanishads, these gods are manifestations of the various aspects of creation and the forces that govern its functioning. From the macrocosmic point of view, these gods represent various aspects or facets of Nature

and the forces that regulate their functioning in a proper and systematic way, while from the microcosmic perspective they represent the various aspects of an individual creature's nature.

For instance, the Sun God is responsible for giving light and energy to this world at the macro level, and the same God is responsible for enabling a creature to see things as he is the patron god of sight at the individual's level, the micro level of creation.

Another example is that of Indra. From the macrocosmic perspective, Indra is the King of heaven and of the gods, and he is a personified form of an Authority who drives all the cosmic forces that control the functioning of the world. However, from the microcosmic perspective, Indra derives his name from the word "indri", meaning the sense organs of a living being which helps the individual to interact with the world. Therefore, Indra in the latter case would be a deity that controls all the senses and their respective organs in a living being's body, and would reflect their natural habits and characters.

The ultimate spiritual goal of all living beings is to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation for their souls, which entitles a spiritual seeker to attain eternal peace, bliss, rest, beatitude and felicity. This state of existence is not the way gods live in heaven; the gods are busy in enjoying their privileges and guarding their realms of influence. If they fear someone is trying to overstep their domain, they get upset.

In short, the gods don't enjoy spiritual bliss and peace though they live in heaven, in the way they could have done or are expected to do, by the virtue of being close to Divinity represented by Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being.

So in a way they are less privileged than Ravana who had attained deliverance, emancipation and salvation by having his soul merge with the Supreme Soul of this creation personified as Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

²The Gods prayed to Lord Ram that since they are simply obeying the Lord's command, which is to carry out their respective duties of regulating the different functions and aspects of this vast and varied creation, so they be excused if they make some mistakes and transgressions here and there during the course of their lives. The Lord should forgive them, and bless them with his grace and mercy.]

दो०. करि बिनती सुर सिद्ध सब रहे जहँ तहँ कर जोरि।

अति सप्रेम तन पुलकि बिधि अस्तुति करत बहोरि ॥ ११० ॥

dōhā.

kari binatī sura sid'dha saba rahē jaham̐ taham̐ kara jōri.

ati saprēma tana pulaki bidhi astuti karata bahōri. 110.

After the Gods and the Siddhas (mystics; the attained ones) had thus offered their prayers to Lord Ram, they stood aside where they were, each of them joining his palms as a gesture of respect and reverence for Lord Ram.

Then the creator Brahma came forward to offer his obeisance to Lord Ram by praying to him with a lot of affection and a thrilled body. (Doha no. 110)

छं०. जय राम सदा सुखधाम हरे । रघुनायक सायक चाप धरे ॥ १ ॥
भव बारन दारन सिंह प्रभो । गुन सागर नागर नाथ बिभो ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

jaya rāma sadā sukhadhāma harē. raghunāyaka sāyaka cāpa dharē. 1.
bhava bārana dārana sir̥ha prabhō. guna sāgara nāgara nātha bibhō. 2.

The creator Brahma prayed to Lord Ram as follows: ‘Glory be to Lord Ram who is an eternal abode of happiness, joy and delight, and who eliminates all the sorrows and miseries (i.e. things that are the opposite of happiness and joy) (of his devotees).

Lord Raghunath (i.e. Lord Ram who was a Lord of the race of kings descending from Raghu who ruled over Ayodhya) holds a bow and an arrow in his hands. (1)

Oh Lord (prabhō)! You are like a lion for eliminating the fearsome and strong elephant representing the cycle of birth and death (or the cycle of transmigration in this mortal and gross world) that is known as ‘Bhava’.

Oh Lord (nātha)! You are an ocean of excellent virtues and noblest of qualities, and you are honoured by the epithet of ‘Vibho’, i.e. one who is all-pervading, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, wise, clever, almighty, eternal and supreme. (2)

तन काम अनेक अनूप छबी । गुन गावत सिद्ध मुनींद्र कबी ॥ ३ ॥
जसु पावन रावन नाग महा । खगनाथ जथा करि कोप गहा ॥ ४ ॥

tana kāma anēka anūpa chabī. guna gāvata sid'dha munīndra kabī. 3.
jasu pāvana rāvana nāga mahā. khaganātha jathā kari kōpa gahā. 4.

Your divine body is an embodiment or a concentrated form of incomparable beauty possessed by countless Kamdeos (cupids; the patron god of this quality).

Verily, the Siddhas (mystics and those who have superhuman powers and knowledge), the most exalted amongst the sages, hermits and ascetics as well as learned poets and bards laud your glories and sing praised about your divine virtues. (3)

Forsooth, your glory and fame are true and holy, and they purify all who sing and hear them. You had caught the ferocious serpent symbolised by the demon king Ravana as easily as Garud (the legendary vehicle of Lord Vishnu and an Eagle) when the latter becomes angry¹. (4)

[¹The Garud is known to be an enemy of serpents, and he can swoop down from the sky to gobble them. In this verse, Lord Ram is compared to Garud, and the cruel demon king Ravana to the serpents because like the latter Ravana was also feared by the whole world. In the story of the Ramayana, Lord Ram had killed him on the request of the Gods and Earth.]

जन रंजन भंजन सोक भयं । गतक्रोध सदा प्रभु बोधमयं ॥ ५ ॥
 अवतार उदार अपार गुणं । महि भार बिभंजन ग्यानघनं ॥ ६ ॥

jana ranjana bhanjana sōka bhayaṁ. gatakrōdha sadā prabhu bōdhamayaṁ.
 5.

avatāra udāra apāra guṇaṁ. mahi bhāra bibhanjana gyānaghanāṁ. 6.

Oh Lord (prabhu)! You charm your devotees and grant them delight and bliss; you destroy and dispel sorrows, grief and affright of all kinds. You are never angry, and are a personified form of knowledge about the Truth and Reality, about pure Consciousness. [To wit, you are self-realised and enlightened, and when one has attained this transcendental spiritual state of existence, he never becomes angry. No vices, let alone anger, would affect such a realised soul.] (5)

Your incarnation (as Lord Ram) is highly exalted and honourable, and it possesses the noblest and the most excellent of virtues and characters. Indeed, you have revealed yourself to remove the burden of the earth, and you are a veritable treasury where all forms of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment have been concentrated. (6)

अज व्यापकमेकमनादि सदा । करुणाकर राम नमामि मुदा ॥ ७ ॥
 रघुवंस बिभूषण दूषण हा । कृत भूप बिभीषण दीन रहा ॥ ८ ॥

aja byāpakamēkamanādi sadā. karunākara rāma namāmi mudā. 7.
 raghubansa bibhūṣana dūṣana hā. kṛta bhūpa bibhīṣana dīna rahā. 8.

[But inspite of the fact that you have assumed a physical form of a human prince, you nevertheless, in your essential and truthful form, possess the following virtues—]

You are always (*sadā*) ever-present and unborn (*aja*). You are all-pervading and all-encompassing (*byāpaka*). You are non-dual and only one (though you exist in two apparent forms, one as the ‘Nirguna’ or formless and invisible almighty Lord of creation, and the other as the ‘Saguna’ or the manifested form with its inherent limitations like the present form as Lord Ram; “*mēkam*”). You are without an end or beginning (*anādi*).

Oh Lord Ram who is a treasury and a mine of compassion, mercy and kindness! I bow before you with great delight, and do so most cheerfully, exuberantly and heartily. (7)

Oh Lord who is like an ornament (i.e. most exalted and outstanding member) of the family of king Raghu (of Ayodhya)! Oh Lord who had slayed the demon named Dushan¹, and who eliminates or eradicates all the faults and shortcomings (of your devotees)! It is well established that Vibhishan was no more than a destitute, most humble and desolate, one who was deserted by even his family and race²—verily, you had by your graceful nature made him the king of Lanka. (8)

[¹The story of the slaying of demons Khar and Dushan is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

²Vibhishan was the younger brother of the demon king Ravana of Lanka. He was kicked and insulted by Ravana when he tried to make his elder brother see reason and avoid a war that was sure be ruinous for him. Vibhishan then left Lanka and took shelter with Lord Ram who not only welcomed him but also anointed him the future king of Lanka when the war ended. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50.]

गुन ग्यान निधान अमान अजं । नित राम नमामि बिभुं बिरजं ॥ ९ ॥

भुजदंड प्रचंड प्रताप बलं । खल बृंद निकंद महा कुसलं ॥ १० ॥

guna gyāna nidhāna amāna ajam. nita rāma namāmi bibhum birajam. 9.
bhujadaṇḍa pracaṇḍa pratāpa balaṁ. khala br̥nda nikanda mahā kusalam. 10.

Oh a treasury of excellent Gunas (qualities, virtues) and Gyan (knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment about the Truth) (guna gyāna nidhāna)! Oh Lord who has no trace of pride and ego (amāna)! Oh the one who is eternal and without a birth (ajam)! Oh Lord who is honoured by the epithet of ‘Vibho’ (bibhum; i.e. one who is all-pervading, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient). And Oh Lord who is acclaimed as the one who is free from the snare of faults associated with Maya (delusions and falsehoods; “birajam”)! I regularly and most reverentially bow before your Divine Self. (9)

Verily, your arms are reputed to have stupendous powers and terrible (i.e. huge and immeasurable) strength (that make you invincible). In all sooth, you are an expert and are very deft in destroying huge contingents of those who are wicked, evil and vile. (10)

बिनु कारन दीन दयाल हितं । छबि धाम नमामि रमा सहितं ॥ ११ ॥

भव तारन कारन काज परं । मन संभव दारुन दोष हरं ॥ १२ ॥

binu kārana dīna dayāla hitam. chabi dhāma namāmi ramā sahitam. 11.
bhava tārana kārana kāja param. mana sambhava dārūna dōṣa haram. 12.

You are friendly and compassionate towards those who are meek, poor, downtrodden and humble, and look after their welfare and good without any ostensible reason (as a matter of habit, for you love all those who have no other source to get help, succour and solace).

I bow most reverentially before you along with Rama (the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, i.e. goddess Laxmi)¹. Indeed, you are a treasury of stupendous beauty. (11)

Lord, you are the one who helps a creature to cross over this measureless and horrifying ocean representing the cycle of birth and death (i.e. of transmigration).

You are supreme and transcend (param = i.e. are beyond the parameters or the reach; not affected or influenced by) the law that covers the rest of this creation, i.e.

the world that is governed by the law of ‘cause and effect’ (kāraṇa kāja). Verily, you can remove or purge all the taints that would tarnish the creature due the countless evil desires and sinful tendencies that sprout from the creature’s Mana (heart and mind)². (12)

[Note—¹It is clear here that when the creator Brahma is praying to Lord Ram with Sita by his side, he is not praying or paying his homage to the ‘son of Dasrath and the king of Ayodhya who has been victorious in the war at Lanka’, but to Lord Vishnu who had taken a human form as Lord Ram, with Laxmi accompanying the Lord as his human wife Sita, so that the task of the Gods and Earth, which was to get rid of the evil forces represented by the demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka that had been tyrannising them relentlessly, could be successfully done.

²A living being would act and do something only when his Mana motivates or inspires him to act or do it. For instance, when one feels hungry, his mind tells him to look for food, even steal it if it is not to be found honestly. If one sees something beautiful, his heart longs for it, and this longing urges him to go get it. This is a simple and plain example of the working of the ‘cause and effect’ theory. But it is not that simple and innocent in the backdrop of the complexities of the gross world of material sense objects where the temptations and allurements are endless and one better than the other, luring the creature in a vicious trap from which he finds virtually impossible to get out if once he gets in. Resources are limited, giving rise to competition, which in its turn brings jealousy, malice, ill-will and antagonism, as well as strife and loss of peace. A creature becomes so deluded that he does not realise the whirlpool in which he has landed.

In this scenario, devotees of Lord Ram are helped by the Lord, by the dint of their devotion for the Lord, to develop a pious and pure heart that motivates them to turn away from the grossness of the world around them and move on the path of righteousness and auspiciousness. They do not yearn for the world, which at once eliminates a lot many causes of the actions that a creature usually takes giving rise to hordes of problems for his spiritual well-being.

According to the law of Karma from the metaphysical perspective, every action has its origin in a cause. The ‘cause’ is known as ‘Prakriti’ or ‘Nature’, and the ‘effect or action’ is known as the ‘Creation’. In other words, this huge, indescribable and variable ‘creation’ has its origin in ‘Prakriti’. From our ordinary level of understanding we can visualise also when we realise that the same human race, born in the same process and having the same physical features and organs of the body, both external and internal, a body that functions in the same way, look and perceive and understand the world in different ways, with one person’s understanding and take on the world and its circumstances being quite dissimilar to the other person’s views of the same world with the same qualities.]

सर चाप मनोहर त्रोन धरं । जलजारुन लोचन भूपबरं ॥ १३ ॥

सुख मंदिर सुंदर श्रीरमनं । मद मार मुधा ममता समनं ॥ १४ ॥

sara cāpa manōhara trōṇa dharaṁ. jalajāruna lōcana bhūpabaraṁ. 13.
sukha mandira sundara śrīramanaṁ. mada māra mudhā mamatā samanaṁ.

14.

You (Lord Ram) are armed with a magnificent bow and an arrow (that you hold in your hands), as well as a quiver (that you tie around your waist). Your eyes have a reddish or pinkish hue like that of a red-lotus flower.

You are the best amongst all the kings of the earth (bhūpabaram). (13)

You are indeed a home to all joys, happiness and delight; you are beautiful and charming; and you are the divine consort of ‘Sri’ (i.e. goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of prosperity, wealth, success and well-being in this world).

You are the one who destroys such evils as ‘Mada’ (pride, arrogance and haughtiness), ‘Māra’ (which is another word for ‘Kaam’ or worldly lust, passion and yearnings), and ‘Mudhā Mamtā’ or false sense of affection, possessiveness, and longing and belonging to this world. (14)

अनवद्य अखंड न गोचर गो । सबरूप सदा सब होइ न गो ॥ १५ ॥

इति बेद बदन्ति न दंतकथा । रबि आतप भिन्नमभिन्न जथा ॥ १६ ॥

anavadya akhaṇḍa na gōcara gō. sabarūpa sadā saba hō'i na gō. 15.

iti bēda badanti na dantakathā. rabi ātapa bhinnamabhinna jathā. 16.

You (Lord Ram) are free from all faults and are beyond reproach (anavadya). You are indivisible and non-dual, steady and eternal (unlike the rest of the creation) (akhaṇḍa).

You are beyond the purview of perception of the gross organs of perception of the creature's body (na gōcara gō). [To wit, what we see as the person known as ‘Lord Ram’ is not your true identity, for it is so sublime and subtle that the mind and the senses cannot see it. It is because your real form is ‘pure consciousness’ that is invisible, and has a transcendental and all-pervading existence.]

Though it is true that whatever that exists in this creation is actually your all-pervading cosmic form manifested in all those individual as well as collective forms, but at the same time it is also true that none of them can ever be called your true form¹--- (15)

---in all sooth and without gainsay, this is what the Vedas affirm (iti bēda badanti), and therefore it is not something based on mere conjecture, traditional beliefs, wild theorizing or heresy (na dantakathā).

It is just like the case of the sun shining in the sky: for the ‘sun’ and its ‘rays’ are independent of each other but so closely interrelated that they exist simultaneously and cannot be separated from one another². In a similar way, you (the Supreme Being represented by the cosmic Consciousness) and this world (the creation that was revealed in the light of this Consciousness) are interchangeable as well as independent of each other. (16)

[Note—¹The world or creation is gross, it is always changing; it has an origin and an end; it grows and perishes. But you are subtle and sublime; you remain constant and steady as you are the eternal and imperishable cosmic Consciousness. You live in this

world as its essence and reality, but not at the gross level of its existence. Therefore, though this world is said to be revealed from you, it is certainly not 'you'. You transcend it; you go much beyond it.

An instance would explain. We all know that water is made of atoms of Hydrogen and Oxygen (H₂O). Water takes many physical forms—viz. steam, vapour, cloud, moisture, liquid, solid such as the ice in the household fridge or the glacier that cover huge tracts of land, and so on. Then its existence is affected by a wide range of circumstances—it is mixed with other fluids, many different chemicals and additives are added to it in varying proportions, it flows in a variety of ways such as rivers, streams, oceans, seas etc. But does this mean that the primary elements in it, i.e. the atoms of Hydrogen and Oxygen, undergo any change; does it mean that water truly represents the characteristic qualities of either of these two elements? Sure, the answer is an emphatic 'No'.

Similarly, the cosmic Consciousness remains the basic ingredient on life in this creation, but the latter is not the former, and neither is the former the latter.]

²If there is the sun in the sky then it would inevitably produce light in the form of its rays. It cannot be otherwise; it cannot be that the sun and darkness go together. Whatever is within the realm of the sun would get its light, and would be visible to the world.

If one sees the rays of the sunlight, he takes it for granted that there must be a sun shining in the sky. If one sees the sun in the sky then it cannot be denied that there is light in the world, and this light has its origin in the sun. As the sun moves across the sky, its light follows it; when the sun sets in the western sky, the rays too disappear. It is not possible to have the rays of the sun without the presence of the latter. These two, the 'sun' and its 'rays', cannot be segregated from one another.

Likewise, Brahm or cosmic Consciousness, here symbolised by the sun, makes the creation apparent, or makes it possible for the creature to see it, to understand it in clear physical terms that are approachable, describable and comprehensible. This revelation or appearance of the world in the background of cosmic darkness is possible only in the light of knowledge provided by the consciousness, which is like the sun providing the world with its light through its rays.

The sun exists even beyond the horizon, but since its rays are not here around us, we are not able to see our immediate surroundings; we would be groping in the darkness. Similarly, if we do not have wisdom and true knowledge that comes with realisation of the pure consciousness, we would be groping in the darkness of ignorance regarding the true nature of this creation.]

कृतकृत्य बिभो सब बानर ए । निरखंति तवानन सादर ए ॥ १७ ॥

धिग जीवन देव सरीर हरे । तव भक्ति बिना भव भूलि परे ॥ १८ ॥

kṛtakṛtya bibhō saba bānara ē. nirakhanti tavānana sādara ē. 17.

dhiga jīvana dēva sarīra harē. tava bhakti binā bhava bhūli parē. 18.

Oh Bibho (i.e. the all-pervading, almighty and supreme Lord, Sri Ram)! These monkeys (who fought alongside you in the war) are truly blessed and most fortunate as they watch your divine face reverentially this moment. [They are also blessed and

fortunate as they enjoyed the rare privilege of being so close to you and keep your company, have served you selflessly, and have obtained your blessings.] (17)

Oh Hari (one of the many names of Lord Vishnu)! Shame is upon us (the Gods) who though have immortal life and a form that is divine but are still devoid of your devotion and remain engrossed in the affairs of the world¹. (18)

[Note—¹The Gods have specific duties to perform in this world. They are like the magistrates, knights and commanders appointed by an Emperor to look after different aspects of administration and other affairs of the empire. Though they are powerful in themselves, they cannot surpass the Emperor. They also are not as close to him as the ordinary servant of his palace. If the Emperor's attendant, who is very diligent in serving his Lord, falls sick, the Emperor is more worried and concerned than when the brave knight takes to some illness—for the Emperor's daily needs and wants are well known and well attended to by this particular servant than it is done even by the battery of other servants in the household, and the Emperor has unconsciously begin to favour him, while the duties of the far-off knight can be carried by someone else during his sickness; the Emperor is not directly affected in the latter case.

These commanders, knights and magistrates have some gain to be had by serving the Emperor, such as the privileges that come with the powers that are bestowed upon them. But this poor and illiterate servant serves his Master without any powers and privileges that the commanders and magistrates enjoy. So the servant's service is selfless and without much of an expectations. He cannot hope to become a minister of the kingdom or the empire, or get some high honour and decoration like the knights and the commanders just because he is the Emperor's diligent servant, for he knows his limitations.

The monkeys served Lord Ram without any selfish motives, for all of them were exceedingly humble and ordinary creatures. But the Lord blessed them like the shower of rain: he lived with them, he shared a part of his life with them, he sat with them, ate with them, slept with them, fought hand-in-hand with them. And why did the monkeys fight actually? They fought so that Lord Ram could kill the demons and free the Gods and the Earth of their tormentors. And in the process, the poor monkeys had to endure a lot of sufferings and make a great lot of sacrifices: suffered hardships of leaving their homes in Kishkindha and traveling so far from home, then crossing the mighty ocean to fight in an alien land with a ferocious enemy where each one of them must have been injured in the ensuing war. This again was a selfless service done for the sake of peace and security in this world.

And who would benefit from their sacrifices: the Gods! It should be kept in mind that all this while when the war raged on the ground at Lanka, the Gods only stood in the sky to watch the proceedings on the battle-field! The creator Brahma realised this irony and felt morally guilty when he made the statement here that “the monkeys were really blessed, whereas the Gods should be ashamed of themselves”.]

अब दीनदयाल दया करिऐ । मति मोरि बिभेदकरी हरिऐ ॥ १९ ॥

जेहि ते बिपरीत क्रिया करिऐ । दुख सो सुख मानि सुखी चरिऐ ॥ २० ॥

aba dīnadayāla dayā kari'ai. mati mōri bibhēdakārī hari'ai. 19.
jēhi tē biparīta kriyā kari'ai. dukha sō sukha māni sukhī cari'ai. 20.

Oh the Lord who is merciful and compassionate towards the humble, the meek and the poor! Be kind and gracious upon me by removing the delusions of my intellect (that propels me to distinguish this creation from you, that makes me think that I am the 'creator of the world', and that there is some sort of duality in the form of your Saguna and Nirguna forms). [Let me realise that everything, including my own self, is nothing but you in that form, is nothing but pure consciousness.] (19)

Verily, it is due to this sense of confusion created by delusions that I keep committing errors, and feel merry at things which are only providers of grief and sorrows. [Here, Brahma refers to his job of creating, and acting as the old and wise patriarch of creation to whom all the Gods go for guidance. Brahma is so engrossed in the affairs of the world that inspite of knowing that it would perish, he goes on producing newer forms of creatures. Instead of advising the Gods to do meditation and seek eternal beatitude, he keeps them engaged in the myriad affairs of the world, making them believe that they are Superior Beings, i.e. the 'Gods'. According to the Purans, the heaven where the Gods live is almost like our mortal world with its own hierarchy, mutual jealousy among its inhabitants, one-upmanships and bickerings. They too have enemies such as the demons. They too need food for survival, which is provided by the humans by offerings they make to the Gods during fire sacrifices and by other means.]

खल खंडन मंडन रञ्ज्य छमा । पद पंकज सेवित संभु उमा ॥ २१ ॥
नृप नायक दे बरदानमिदं । चरनांबुज प्रेम सदा सुभदं ॥ २२ ॥

khala khaṇḍana maṇḍana ramya chamā. pada paṅkaja sēvita sambhu umā.
21.
nr̥pa nāyaka dē baradānamidaṁ. caranāmbuja prēma sadā subhadaṁ. 22.

Oh Lord, you are the one who destroy those who are wicked and evil. [To wit, you intervene to get rid of the negative elements in this creation when they try to upturn the cart of goodness and righteousness under they onslaught.]

You are a decorative ornament of the earth. [To wit, the earth is proud of you; it is because of you that the earth has got is glory and worthiness. You adorn it just like an ornament adorns the wearer and make the latter look attractive. Had it not been for your munificence and grace, the earth would have been an inhospitable planet like the rest in the solar system!]

Your holy feet are being served by Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and his divine consort Parvati. (21)

Oh the Leader of Kings (nr̥pa nāyaka; or "a King amongst Kings"; an Emperor)! Please bless me with the boon that I may cherish an everlasting devotion and affection for your lotus like holy feet which are a perennial source of auspiciousness, blessedness and beatitude." (22)

दो०. बिनय कीन्हि चतुरानन प्रेम पुलक अति गात ।
सोभासिंधु बिलोकत लोचन नहीं अघात ॥ १११ ॥

dōhā.

binaya kīnhi caturānana prēma pulaka ati gāta.
sōbhāsindhu bilōkata lōcana nahīm aghāta. 111.

The creator Brahma, who is called “caturānana” (because he is exceptionally wise and learned as he has pronounced the Vedas, and can also view all the four directions of the world and see whatever is happening anywhere), prayed to Lord Ram as narrated herein above even as his body was filled with a thrill.

His eyes could not have enough of the divine sight of Lord Ram, who was like an ocean of beauty and charm, standing before him¹. (Doha no. 111)

[Note—¹Brahma had his eyes fixed on the divine form of Lord Ram while he prayed to the Lord. Even when he had finished praying, Brahma found it difficult to move his eyes away from the bewitching charm of Lord Ram and the magnetic appeal of Lord’s holy presence. Brahma stood mesmerized with a thrilled body as he continued to gaze Lord Ram.

When Indra, the king of gods, prayed to Lord Ram as would be narrated shortly, we read that the first words Indra said were in praise of Lord Ram’s exceptional charm. Addressing Lord Ram, Indra says: “Oh Lord Ram who is a treasury of magnificence and charm”—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 113 herein below.]

{After the Gods and the creator Brahma had said their respective prayers honouring Lord Ram and paying their obeisance to him, the late king Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram and the erstwhile king of Ayodhya, who had assumed a spirit form after his death, came to the battle-field to bless Lord Ram in the role of the latter being Dasrath’s son, as well as to seek the Lord’s blessings and grace for being the Supreme Being himself personified.}

चौ०. तेहि अवसर दसरथ तहँ आए । तनय बिलोकि नयन जल छाए ॥ १ ॥
अनुज सहित प्रभु बंदन कीन्हा । आसिरबाद पिताँ तब दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhi avasara dasaratha taham̐ ā'ē. tanaya bilōki nayana jala chā'ē. 1.
anuja sahita prabhu bandana kīnhā. āsirabāda pitām̐ taba dīnhā. 2.

On that occasion, Dasrath (the erstwhile king of Ayodhya and Lord Ram’s worldly father, who was now in a spirit form after his death), came there (at Lord Ram’s camp on the fringes of the battle-field of Lanka).

When he beheld his son, his eyes were filled with tears (of excess of joy and delight, of overflowing love and affection)¹. (1)

Lord Ram, together with his younger brother (Laxman) and wife (Sita), paid their obeisance to their father, at which the latter blessed the three of them². (2)

[Note—¹It was a natural emotional reaction of a loving father to see his beloved son emerging victorious in a war, against all odds. At the time of his death, Dasrath had died longing to see Lord Ram after he left the city of Ayodhya for the forest; Dasrath had wailed and lamented most gravely, feeling guilty that he had been the of causing so much suffering to Lord Ram, his wife Sita, and his brother Laxman, by compelling them to go to the forest for 14 long years# just to honour a word that the king had given to his queen Kaikeyi some long time ago, and which she exploited for her self-interest, which was to make her own son Bharat the heir apparent and the regent of Ayodhya*, instead of Lord Ram, the eldest of the four brothers, who had the natural right to get the crown and ascend the throne of the kingdom.

{#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 34; Doha no. 38 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 155.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}

Dasrath was overwhelmed with delight and love. He had tears of joy that also indicated emotions of affection that overflowed in his heart.

²When late king Dasrath's spirit saw Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman bowing before it and paying their obeisance to their late father, it, i.e. the 'spirit of Dasrath', blessed them all.]

तात सकल तव पुन्य प्रभाऊ । जीत्यों अजय निसाचर राऊ ॥ ३ ॥

सुनि सुत बचन प्रीति अति बाढ़ी । नयन सलिल रोमावलि ठाढ़ी ॥ ४ ॥

tāta sakala tava pun'ya prabhā'ū. jītyōm ajaya nisācara rā'ū. 3.
suni suta bacana prīti ati bāṛhī. nayana salila rōmāvali ṭhāṛhī. 4.

Lord Ram said to Dasrath, 'My dear father (tāta)! It is due to the good rewards accruing to you for the auspicious deeds that you had done in life that I, your son, have been blessed to be able to vanquish the king of the demon race who was otherwise invincible and difficult to overcome¹.' (3)

Hearing such polite and gracious words of his son (Lord Ram), words that showed no trace of anger or regret at all that had happened, Dasrath was overwhelmed with affections; his love and adoration for the Lord increased manifold times so much so that tears began flowing from his eyes and his body became thrilled². (4)

[Note—¹This is a polite and modest way of Lord Ram for honoring Dasrath. The Lord gives credit to his father's good deeds and their accrued rewards that stood in good stead for him during the war. The gracious Lord does not take any credit himself for the victory over Ravana and the powerful demon army, but owes the victory to his father's blessings like a good and obedient son. Lord Ram's courteousness is exemplary here. He shows no rancour and ill-will towards his father for sending him

to the forest for 14 years, for the Lord knew that Dasrath was bound by his words of honour that he had given to Kaikeyi, that he had lamented and repented for those words but couldn't help, and that he had done his best to stop the Lord from going to the forest even till the last moment, fainting repeatedly out of grief and shock.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 78; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 79; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 82.}

²This shows that Dasrath's "spirit" had assumed a visible form when it appeared before the Lord on the battle-field. Dasrath appeared alongside other gods, and he had a divine form like these gods. It is because at the time of his death, Dasrath had gone to heaven where the gods live—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155.

He had watched the proceedings alongside the gods, and when they came to pray to Lord Ram he too accompanied them.]

रघुपति प्रथम प्रेम अनुमाना । चितइ पितहि दीन्हेउ दूढ़ ग्याना ॥ ५ ॥
ताते उमा मोच्छ नहिं पायो । दसरथ भेद भगति मन लायो ॥ ६ ॥
सगुनोपासक मोच्छ न लेहीं । तिन्ह कहूँ राम भगति निज देहीं ॥ ७ ॥
बार बार करि प्रभुहि प्रनामा । दसरथ हरषि गए सुरधामा ॥ ८ ॥

raghupati prathama prēma anumānā. cita'i pitahi dīnhē'u dūr̥ha gyānā. 5.
tātē umā mōccha nahim pāyō. dasaratha bhēda bhagati mana lāyō. 6.
sagunōpāsaka mōccha na lēhīm. tinha kahum' rāma bhagati nija dēhīm. 7.
bāra bāra kari prabhuhi pranāmā. dasaratha haraṣi ga'e suradhāmā. 8.

Lord Raghupati (i.e. Lord Ram) remembered his father's extreme level of love for him (and that it was due to this outstanding love that Dasrath had died in grief of separation when the Lord had left for the forest). He glanced at his father Dasrath very affectionately and graced the latter with sound 'Gyan (gyānā)'¹. (5)

[Lord Shiva, who was narrating this Story to goddess Uma, his divine consort, told her—] Uma, Dasrath did not attain Moksha (deliverance, emancipation and salvation; eternal beatitude and felicity, bliss and peace of the soul) because though he had unquestioned devotion for Lord Ram and loved him, it was because he treated the latter as 'his son' rather than as a 'personified form of the Supreme Being'. Dasrath had a deluded or a distorted view of devotion for Lord Ram, which prevented him from attaining final deliverance and beatitude for his soul².

[By providing 'Gyan', Lord Ram removed this delusion in the mind of Dasrath, entitling him to attain final peace for his soul. For a truly realized soul, there is no such thing as having 'tears in eyes and body being thrilled' for any cause whatsoever. Since Dasrath showed these signs, he was not enlightened enough before Lord Ram gave him the necessary wisdom.] (6)

Verily, those who worship the Lord in his visible form (sagunōpāsaka) find bliss in this form of devotion for the Lord, and therefore they have no desire to attain Moksha

(*mōccha na lēhīm*; i.e. deliverance, emancipation and salvation; beatitude and felicity; merger of the individual's soul with the cosmic Supreme Soul).

To such devotees who prefer to worship and have devotion for the visible and known form of the Supreme Being, the Lord grants such devotees their wish by gracing them with the boon of having devotion for his visible form (rather than his cosmic invisible form)³. (7)

[Since Dasrath preferred to have devotion for the visible form of the Supreme Being, rather than for the Lord's cosmic and invisible form known as Brahm, the cosmic transcendental Consciousness that is formless and without attributes, Lord Ram fulfilled his father's wish by granting him an abode in the heaven where Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram, lives.]

Dasrath repeatedly bowed his head before the Lord and cheerfully went to the heaven where exalted Gods live (*dasaratha haraṣi ga'e suradhāmā*).

[More specifically, Dasrath went to Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. It is because Lord Ram himself would go back to Vaikuntha after his obligations in this world were fulfilled. There, Dasrath hoped to meet his 'son' Lord Ram once again when the Lord resumes his primary form as Lord Vishnu. In this form, Dasrath wished to shower his love upon Lord Ram by way of worshipping and having devotion for Lord Vishnu.]⁴ (8)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram granted Dasrath spiritual knowledge that made the latter understand who the Lord was, that no one is anybody's son or father, that all such relationships are limited to the gross mortal world, that the soul has no relations, that love and affections, grief and joy etc. are matters of mortal world and not of the spiritual world, that every creature suffers or enjoys because of his own deeds, that dispassion and renunciation are the best virtues for a wise, enlightened and self-realised person. And therefore, Dasrath ought not to regret at all.

Lord Ram further enlightened Dasrath that life in heaven is not the final goal or destination of the soul; at best it may be a sort of a rest-house where the soul tarries for a while before moving ahead on its journey. So then what should be the goal that Dasrath should aim at? It is attainment of emancipation and salvation by merging the individual's soul with the Supreme Soul of creation known as the Parmatma, a goal that grants eternal rest, peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity to the living being.

This final destination of the soul is called 'Moksha'—it is a destination for eternal rest, from where there is no return to the cycle of birth and death with its attendant miseries in this mundane gross world.

²To wit, Dasrath's devotion and love for Lord Ram was based on an erroneous premise from the perspective of spiritualism and metaphysics. Dasrath was deluded; he thought that Lord Ram was his 'son', and he loved and adored and died in grief of his 'son'. Had he been wise and enlightened as he should have been, he would have remained dispassionate towards and detached from the physical world, and would rather have devoted his time and efforts in meditating upon the divine form of Lord Ram, worshipping him and paying his homage to the Lord, feeling privileged to have the Supreme Being living so close to him. Dasrath would not have died weeping and wailing for his 'son Ram' because he would have understood that Lord Ram is not his 'son' but the 'Supreme Being in the form of Ram', that the Lord has come down to honour the wishes of the gods and mother earth to eliminate the evil demons, and

therefore there was no reasonable cause to lament and weep when the Lord went to the forest as part of his divine mission.

This is what is meant by saying that Dasrath had a deluded or a distorted view of devotion for Lord Ram, which prevented him from attaining final deliverance of his soul; it prevented him from attaining emancipation, salvation, beatitude and eternity for his soul, and made him live in heaven instead.

³To wit, the bliss, beatitude and felicity that is attained by the soul on attaining emancipation and salvation when the individual's soul merges and becomes one with the cosmic form of the Soul, the Supreme Soul or the Parmatma, which is known as attaining 'Moksha of the soul', because then the soul finds eternal peace and bliss as it does not have to return to the cycle of birth and death in this gross world, does not seem attractive to those who derive happiness and joy in worshipping the Lord's physical and visible form. So the Lord too prefers not to insist in giving them knowledge of the form of devotion that relates to the invisible form of the Lord.

There are two types of devotees of Lord God—one who is called 'Saguna Bhakta', i.e. a devotee who worships the form of the Lord that has a describable and verifiable physical form, a form that is visible and has certain attributes; the other is the 'Nirguna Bhakta', i.e. a devotee who worships the cosmic form of the Lord that is invisible, all-pervading and without specific attributes.

The cosmic form of the Lord God is known as Brahm; it is nothing but pure cosmic Consciousness that has a universal existence; this is 'Nirguna Brahm'. When the same cosmic Consciousness assumes a visible and known form at the micro level of creation, it is known as 'Saguna Brahm'.

⁴Dasrath fell into the latter category, one who worshipped the Saguna form of Brahm as Lord Ram. So therefore, though Lord Ram first graced Dasrath with knowledge pertaining to Moksha of his soul, known as granting of 'Gyan', or granting of 'truthful knowledge; gnosis', Dasrath did not wish to have it. Hence, in deference to his father's wishes, the Lord sent him to his own abode in the heaven, known as 'Vaikuntha', the abode of Lord Vishnu. There, Dasrath would have ample opportunity to fulfill his desire to shower abundance of love and affection on Lord Ram, to make up for its lack in this gross physical world because his desires were cut short by the fiat of fate and the cruel whip of destiny that brought about separation of Dasrath from his beloved son Lord Ram when the latter went to the forest. Dasrath wished that in the guise of loving his son Lord Ram, he would be actually worshipping and paying his obeisance to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world.

This opportunity was more appealing to Dasrath than attaining Moksha.]

दो०. अनुज जानकी सहित प्रभु कुसल कोसलाधीस ।
सोभा देखि हरषि मन अस्तुति कर सुर ईस ॥ ११२ ॥

dōhā.

anuja jānakī sahita prabhu kusala kōsalādhīsa.
sōbhā dēkhi haraṣi mana astuti kara sura īsa. 112.

Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya), looked adorable alongside his younger brother Laxman and wife Janki (Sita).

When the Lord (or the king) of the gods, i.e. Indra, observed that the three were safe and happy, he felt exhilarated in his heart and mind; lauding their charming forms and extolling Lord Ram's virtues and glories, he offered his prayers to the Lord. (Doha no. 112)

छं०. जय राम सोभा धाम । दायक प्रनत बिश्राम ॥ १ ॥

धृत त्रोन बर सर चाप । भुजदंड प्रबल प्रताप ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

jaya rāma sōbhā dhāma. dāyaka pranata biśrāma. 1.

dhṛta trōna bara sara cāpa. bhujadaṇḍa prabala pratāpa. 2.

‘Oh Lord Ram who is an embodiment of astounding beauty, charm and magnificence (sōbhā dhāma)! You give peace, rest, succour and solace to those who seek refuge with you and take your shelter¹. (1)

You bear an excellent quiver, and hold a bow and arrow in your hands. I bow most reverentially to the Lord whose might and strength of arms are legendary and world famed. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram grants unconditional support and protection to all those who come to seek refuge in the holy feet of the Lord. This is the inherent nature of Lord Ram that he welcomes his devotees without asking questions. All those who are tormented by the world and come to surrender themselves before Lord Ram, praying to him to save them, the Lord would go out of his way to oblige them. Lord Ram has himself declared that it is his inherent nature and a virtue that is characteristic of him while accepting Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, when he had come to surrender before Lord Ram and seek refuge with him after he was insulted and kicked out by Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44.

This is why Indra concludes his prayers by addressing Lord Ram as being a “merciful Lord”—apropos: Doha no. 113 along with Chanda line nos. 6 and 20 that precede it herein below.]

जय दूषनारि खरारि । मर्दन निसाचर धारि ॥ ३ ॥

यह दुष्ट मारेउ नाथ । भए देव सकल सनाथ ॥ ४ ॥

jaya dūṣanāri kharāri. mardana nisācara dhāri. 3.

yaha duṣṭa mārē'u nātha. bha'ē dēva sakala sanātha. 4.

Glory to you oh Lord (Sri Ram) who is an enemy of the demons Khar and Dushan, and who has vanquished the fierce army of the demons¹. (3)

Oh Lord! You have slayed this evil, wretched and wicked demon (i.e. the demon king Ravana), and this has made the Gods fearless and feel secure². (4)

[Note—¹The demons Khar and Dushan along with their army were slayed by Lord Ram earlier as described in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

²The sight where this prayer was said by Indra was the battle-field of Lanka, and the time was when the Lord had slayed the fierce demons and their king Ravana. Hence, the words “yaha duṣṭa mārē'u” refers to the king of Lanka and of the demon race, i.e. Ravana.]

जय हरन धरनी भार । महिमा उदार अपार ॥ ५ ॥

जय रावनारि कृपाल । किए जातुधान बिहाल ॥ ६ ॥

jaya harana dharanī bhāra. mahimā udāra apāra. 5.
jaya rāvanāri kṛpāla. ki'ē jātudhāna bihāla. 6.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) who has eliminated the burden of the Earth (by getting rid of the cruel demons led by their king Ravana).

Oh Lord, your glories, munificence and benevolence are not only excellent, wonderful and stupendous but are also wondrous and so immense and profound that no one can fathom or count them (what to talk of describing them). (5)

Glory to the merciful and compassionate (kṛpāla) Lord who is an enemy of the demon king Ravana¹. You have reduced all the wicked demons to complete plight². (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is called kṛpāla because he suffered hardships to kill the demons and their leader Ravana so that the rest of the world can live in peace. The Lord is at once a friend of all, including the demons as is evident when he accepted Ravana's own brother Vibhishan and made him a part of his group of advisors, and later on anointed him as the king of Lanka. The Lord does not have any personal animosity or ill-will against anyone, be he a demon by birth or anyone else. But he does not tolerate those who use their powers to make others suffer, and become so arrogant and haughty that they wouldn't listen to any wise counsel but continue to make others suffer in spite of warnings. In this case, Ravana represented all the demonic and evil forces in this creation that torment and tyrannise all its creatures, endlessly and without cause. So, being the Supreme Lord of this world, it was the Lord's moral duty to subdue him and get rid of him so that the rest of the world can live in peace.

²When it is said that the Lord had reduced the demons to plight, it refers to the demons who were blood-thirsty, cruel and wicked. It does not refer to the good demons like Vibhishan (Ravana's brother), or Malyawant (Ravana's maternal uncle), or Marich (who was forced by Ravana to become the golden deer so that Sita could be stolen), or Mandodari (Ravana's wife), or Trijata (the demoness who had guarded Sita during captivity), or Singhika (who guarded the gates of Lanka and was humbled by Hanuman when he had entered the city in search of Sita)—for all of them personally, and other demons who aligned themselves with these noble demons, had formed a group that were not killed in the war. These demons may have had the physical body of the demon race, but their characters and heart were not like what one would mean

and understand with the word 'demon', for they were noble at heart and had a pious soul.

It ought to be remembered here that after the war ended, it is not that Lanka was completely de-populated. There remained in it those demons who had not sided with Ravana, and when, after the war, Lord Ram had made Vibhishan the king of Lanka and of the future generation of the demon race, these survivors of the war, the good demons, thrived and re-populated the place.]

लंकेस अति बल गर्ब । किए बस्य सुर गंधर्ब ॥ ७ ॥
मुनि सिद्ध नर खग नाग । हठि पंथ सब कें लाग ॥ ८ ॥

laṅkēsa ati bala garba. ki'ē basya sura gandharba. 7.
muni sid'dha nara khaga nāga. haṭhi pantha saba kēm lāga. 8.

Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, was exceedingly and outrageously proud of his strength, powers and invincibility. He had subdued and ridden rough-shod over all the Gods and the Gandharvas (demi-gods). (7)

Nay, not only this, he was audacious enough to determinedly and relentlessly, without any sense of guilt or apprehension, pursue all other living beings in this creation in his dogged desire to subdue all, sparing none, and to bring the entire creation to its knees before him. so he had persecuted the exalted sages, the mystics and hermits as well as the ordinary human beings; he did not spare either the humble members of the animal race, right from the birds (who lived in the sky) to the reptiles (who lived a most humble and lowly life by being stuck to the surface of the earth)¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, Ravana had become so haughty and arrogant of his powers and might that he wished to rule over the entire creation like a despotic tyrant, like a tyrannical and maniacal Emperor. He had started cruelly persecuting all living beings: in the heaven he subdued the powerful Gods and the Gandharvas, on the earth he started tormenting ordinary human beings as well as those who were exalted such as sages and mystics. Perhaps he may have feared from them—from the Gods due to their special strength and powers, and the humans, specially the sages and mystics because they had great mystical powers, but he had become so diabolical that he did not spare even the animals that couldn't possibly harm him by any stretch of imagination after he had conquered the Gods and the humans, for he started tormenting all the members of the animal race too, right from those who could reach high in the sky like the birds to those who were confined to the lower levels of the earth, such as the reptiles.

So it was necessary and a moral duty for the Lord to bring him to justice, for which Lord Vishnu had come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to put things in order.]

परद्रोह रत अति दुष्ट । पायो सो फलु पापिष्ट ॥ ९ ॥
अब सुनहु दीन दयाल । राजीव नयन बिसाल ॥ १० ॥

paradrōha rata ati duṣṭa. pāyō sō phalu pāpiṣṭa. 9.
aba sunahu dīna dayāla. rājīva nayana bisāla. 10.

He (Ravana) was ever-indulgent in animosity with the rest of the creation, and derived delight in afflicting suffering and plight upon others. Indeed he was most vile, wicked and evil (and it would not be wrong to say that he personified these vices).

Verily, he got what he deserved; this sinful fellow got the punishment for all his sins and wickedness. (9)

Now listen, Oh Lord who is ever so merciful and beneficent upon the poor, the meek and the humble, and who has lovely broad eyes that resemble an open lotus flower. (10) ---

मोहि रहा अति अभिमान । नहिं कोउ मोहि समान ॥ ११ ॥
अब देखि प्रभु पद कंज । गत मान प्रद दुख पुंज ॥ १२ ॥

mōhi rahā ati abhimāna. nahim kō'u mōhi samāna. 11.
aba dēkhi prabhu pada kañja. gata māna prada dukha puñja. 12.

--- I (Indra) was very proud that there is no one comparable to me (in powers, strength, abilities, majesty etc., but all that came to a naught in front of Ravana whom you have vanquished, for I was completely impotent against him and had failed miserably to either protect my own dignity as well as the safety of the Gods of whom I am supposed to be a protector as I am their heavenly king!). (11)

But now oh Lord, when I have had the Darshan (holy viewing) of your holy lotus-like feet, this worthless pride that I had, a pride that is the breeding ground of all sorrows, miseries and grief, has been dispelled¹. (12)

[Note—¹Indra is the ‘king’ of Gods, and true to his ilk, he thought that no one is greater than him. But he had to bite the dust before Ravana. Now that Lord Ram slayed the powerful demon, Indra realised who was stronger, he or Lord Ram. This punctured the balloon of his pride!

The spiritual and metaphysical principle affirmed here is that ‘pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance’, collectively called “abhimāna” or “māna”, are the cause of many a problems faced by the creature in his life. By overcoming this one negative trait, many sufferings can be easily avoided.]

कोउ ब्रह्म निर्गुन ध्याव । अव्यक्त जेहि श्रुति गाव ॥ १३ ॥
मोहि भाव कोसल भूप । श्रीराम सगुन सरूप ॥ १४ ॥

kō'u brahma nirguna dhyāva. abyakta jēhi śruti gāva. 13.
mōhi bhāva kōsala bhūpa. śrīrāma saguna sarūpa. 14.

Some prefer to worship and meditate upon the ‘Nirguna’ (the all-pervading, attributeless, invisible and cosmic) form or aspect of Brahm (the Supreme Being) who has

been described by the Vedas as being ‘Avyakta’—one who is not manifested or visible; one who cannot be perceived and described as he has no specific attributes, and also because he is most sublime and subtle. (13)

But oh Lord Ram, as for me, I love to adore this visible form of yours, known as your ‘Saguna’ form as the King of Kaushal. [The word ‘Saguna’ is the opposite of ‘Nirguna’, and it refers to the Supreme Being’s visible form during one of his manifestations.] (14)

बैदेहि अनुज समेत । मम हृदयं करहु निकेत ॥ १५ ॥

मोहि जानिऐ निज दास । दे भक्ति रमानिवास ॥ १६ ॥

baidēhi anuja samēta. mama hrdayam^१ karahu nikēta. 15.

mōhi jāni'ai nija dāsa. dē bhakti ramānivāsa. 16.

Oh Lord! Please make my heart an eternal and divine abode for your own self along with Vaidehi (Sita, the Lord’s consort) and your younger brother (Laxman). (15)

Oh Lord Ramānivāsa (i.e. the Lord who lives in the heart of goddess Laxmi)! Regard me as your devotee and humble follower, and bless me with (the fruit of) your devotion. (16)

छं०. दे भक्ति रमानिवास त्रास हरन सरन सुखदायकं ॥ १७ ॥

सुख धाम राम नमामि काम अनेक छबि रघुनायकं ॥ १८ ॥

chanda.

dē bhakti ramānivāsa trāsa harana sarana sukhadāyakam. 17.

sukha dhāma rāma namāmi kāma anēka chabi raghunāyakam. 18.

Oh Lord Ramānivāsa! Grant me your devotion¹. Oh Lord, you are the one who dispels all the fears of those who have taken shelter with you and sought refuge at your holy feet. You give delight to all of them by bestowing peace, joy and happiness upon them. (17)

Oh Lord Ram who is an abode of peace, joy, happiness and delight (sukha dhāma)!

I bow most reverentially before Lord Ram (rāma namāmi) who is the Lord of King Raghu’s Race, and who embodies in himself the charm and the beauty of countless Kamdeos (cupids; the patron god of these qualities)! (18)

[Note—¹Seeking the blessing of ‘having devotion for Lord Ram’, the manifested form of the Supreme Being, is the best boon that one can ever ask for from the Lord. If anyone seeks this blessing, the Lord becomes very pleased with him. This is amply clear when the saintly crow called Kaagbhusund had sought Bhakti (devotion) as a boon from Lord Ram when the Lord had asked him to seek whatever he wished to have, and it would be granted. Lord Ram was mightily pleased with Kaagbhusund and praised his wisdom when the latter insisted on having Bhakti as the only chosen boon.

The importance of Bhakti, and how Kaagbhhusund got it has been narrated by himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

सुर बृंद रंजन द्वंद भंजन मनुज तनु अतुलितबलं ॥ १९ ॥

ब्रह्मादि संकर सेव्य राम नमामि करुना कोमलं ॥ २० ॥

surā bṛṇḍa raṇjana dvanda bhaṇjana manuḥja tanu atulitabalaṁ. 19.
brahmādi saṅkara sēbya rāma namāmi karunā kōmalaṁ. 20.

Oh Lord who grants joy and happiness to all the Gods! You quell all the confusions and doubts that arise from opposite experiences or contrary situations in this creation (“dvanda bhaṇjana”; thereby giving peace and rest to the mind of the creature).

Oh Lord, you have assumed a human form (manuḥja tanu), and have incomparable strength, majesty and powers (atulitabalaṁ). (19)

You are being served and adored by even Brahma (the creator) and Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation)¹.

Oh Lord Ram! You are tender in heart, and you are praised for your merciful and compassionate nature². I reverentially bow before you.’ (20)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150 where a similar idea has been expressed.

²Refer also to Doha no. 113 herein below.]

दो०. अब करि कृपा बिलोकि मोहि आयसु देहु कृपाल ।

काह करौं सुनि प्रिय बचन बोले दीनदयाल ॥ ११३ ॥

dōhā.

aba kari kṛpā bilōki mōhi āyasu dēhu kṛpāla.
kāha karaūṁ suni priya bacana bōlē dīnadayāla. 113.

After saying his prayers, Indra said to Lord Ram: ‘Lord, please glance at me gracefully for once, and then, oh merciful Lord, tell me what I should do.’

Hearing these pleasing words of Indra, the Lord, who is benevolent and compassionate towards those who are meek and miserable, said (as narrated in the verses that follow herein below). (Doha no. 113)

चौ०. सुनु सुरपति कपि भालु हमारे । परे भूमि निसिचरन्हि जे मारे ॥ १ ॥

मम हित लागि तजे इन्ह प्राणा । सकल जिआउ सुरेस सुजाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu surapati kapi bhālu hamārē. parē bhūmi nisicaranhi jē mārē. 1.
mama hita lāgi tajē inha prānā. sakala ji'ā'u surēsa sujānā. 2.

Lord Ram requested Indra, the king of gods, as follows: ‘Listen oh king of gods (sunu surapati)! Our monkey and bear warriors, who were killed by the demons, are lying on the ground in the battle-field. (1)

They had laid down their lives for my sake. So I request you, the able and wise king of gods (surēsa sujānā)¹, to make them come back to life once again.² (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram reminded Indra that he must remember that these monkeys and bears were not ordinary creatures, but off-springs of the gods, for the gods had decided to come down to earth and assume the forms of monkeys and bears to help Lord Vishnu when he manifests himself as Lord Ram in order to eliminate the cruel demons and their king Ravana on the request of these same gods as well as mother earth. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.}

So therefore, it was Indra’s moral obligation to revive these monkeys and bears, as they had laid down their lives actually for the sake of the gods and mother earth, as much as it was of Lord Ram’s because it was he who had been instrumental in leading the campaign of eliminating the demons by bringing these monkeys and bears to the battle-field of Lanka to give effect to the fulfillment of the wishes of the gods and mother earth.

²Indra, being the Lord of heaven and the gods, had access to Amrit, the elixir of life. He is also the ‘god who controls rains’. Hence, what Lord Ram wanted Indra to do, and which Indra indeed did, was to rain Amrit on the battle-field so that the monkeys and bears, who lay as if dead on the ground, could be revived.

Indra had prayed to Lord Ram and asked him if he could do anything for the latter, at which the Lord asked him shower a rain of Amrit so that those warriors who had laid down their lives for his cause can be revived.

So what happened? Indra rained down Amrit from the sky, and all the wounded and dead monkeys and bears got up instantly as if nothing had happened to them. The result was that Lord Ram’s army had the same number of monkeys and bears at the end of the war as it had at the start, which in turn means that when this colossus army returned to its home place in Kishkindha, no one amongst their kith and kin had any cause to grieve and lament at losing their dear ones in any war. The army returned victorious from a campaign that would make them legendary and famous in history, with the crown of gallantry and valour and courage and daring adorning their proud heads. Their marvelous and glorious exploits during the war of Lanka became fabled and legendary for their rare achievements; the individual warriors became objects of great adulation and honour throughout the kingdom of Kishkindha; they were lauded and applauded wherever they went; their families became singularly proud of them and did not tire asking them to recount the awe-inspiring events that unfolded in that far-away land across the ocean.

To wit, Lord Ram, the Lord who is graceful, compassionate, merciful and kind, as well as very prudent and wise, did not give anyone in Kishkindha a chance to complain and regret that one of their kith and kin had lost his life for the Lord in a war that did not concern them directly, for every single monkey and bear, who had left Kishkindha to join the army of Lord Ram, returned safe and sound to his homeland.

सुनु खगेस प्रभु कै यह बानी । अति अगाध जानहिं मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ३ ॥
 प्रभु सक त्रिभुअन मारि जिआई । केवल सक्रहि दीन्हि बड़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

sunu khagēsa prabhu kai yaha bānī. ati agādha jānahim muni gyānī. 3.
 prabhu saka tribhu'ana māri ji'āī. kēvala sakrahi dīnhi barāī. 4.

[The saintly crow Kaagbhusund, who was one of the other chief narrators of this wonderful Story of 'Ram Charit Manas' besides Lord Shiva, told his listener Garud, the celestial Eagle and the king of birds as well as the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the hermitage of the saint to hear this Story being told¹, as follows:-]

'Listen oh king of birds (sunu khagēsa)! These words of Lord Ram (asking Indra to revive the fallen monkeys and bears) were profoundly mysterious and intriguing. Their true import and full of meaning is known only to enlightened and wise sages². (3)

Lord Ram has the authority and the ability to make anyone live after he has died³, but he only wished to give some credit and honour to Indra (known also as 'Sakra') by asking him to revive the fallen monkeys and bears.' (4)

[Note—¹The whole conversation betwixt Kaagbhusund and Garud form the subject matter of the second half of the seventh Canto of Ram Charit Manas, known as Uttar Kand. It is narrated in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Doha no. 125.

²Why is Lord Ram's request to Indra to revive the monkeys and bears so mysterious and intriguing that only a few selected sages would know its true meaning?

The answer is given by Kaagbhusund himself in the very next verse no. 4.

Ordinary people think that Lord Ram was a human being, and so he lacked the mystical ability needed to revive those who were dead, and so he asked Indra to do it for him. But wise sages understand why the Lord did not do it himself—it was because Lord Ram wished to play his role as a human being to perfection; he did not want raise eyebrows by doing something that can be called a miracle, especially openly when everyone was watching.

Besides this factor, Lord Ram wished to give Indra his due share of the glory, to thank him for sending his own chariot to help the Lord in the war against Ravana, and to honour Indra's authority as the king of gods. By reviving the monkeys and bears Indra would be remembered in history for this noble deed, and his act would make him share the joy of helping Lord Vishnu to reinstate all those who had sacrificed their lives for a greater and nobler cause of the gods and mother earth, which was the elimination of the cruel demons and restoring the law of Dharma in this world.

Being all-able Lord of the world, it was a noble gesture for Lord Ram to let Indra get the credit of reviving the fallen heroes of this epic war; those who are great and exalted Lords do not hesitate to give credit to those who are junior or subordinate to them for doing some good deed that can grant the latter some sort of recognition and satisfaction of being helpful to their Lord.

Hence, Lord Ram wished to give Indra some sort of satisfaction of being helpful to him and contributing to fulfillment of the Lord's wish by reviving the monkeys and bears, for the Lord himself had done a lot for the sake of the gods and mother earth, and Indra, being the king of gods, owed so much to Lord Ram.

³Lord Ram has himself reiterated this ability of his on two occasions. The first was when he asked Jatau, the vulture who had laid down his life trying to save Sita, that if he so wished, the Lord can grant him eternal life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31.

The second occasion was when he asked Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv and the king of Kishkindha, that if he wished to live then the Lord can grant him an eternal life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10.]

सुधा बरषि कपि भालु जिआए । हरषि उठे सब प्रभु पहिं आए ॥ ५ ॥
 सुधाबृष्टि भै दुहु दल ऊपर । जिए भालु कपि नहिं रजनीचर ॥ ६ ॥
 रामाकार भए तिन्ह के मन । मुक्त भए छूटे भव बंधन ॥ ७ ॥
 सुर अंसिक सब कपि अरु रीछा । जिए सकल रघुपति कीं ईछा ॥ ८ ॥

sudhā baraṣi kapi bhālu ji'ā'ē. haraṣi uṭhē saba prabhu pahim ā'ē. 5.
 sudhābrṣṭi bhai duhu dala ūpara. ji'ē bhālu kapi nahim rajanīcara. 6.
 rāmākāra bha'ē tinha kē mana. mukta bha'ē chūṭē bhava bandhana. 7.
 sura ansika saba kapi aru rīchā. ji'ē sakala raghupati kīm īchā. 8.

Indra rained down Amrit (the ambrosia of life) on the battle-field, thereby bringing to life the monkeys and bears. They got up instantly and cheered. Then all of them came to where Lord Ram was. (5)

The Amrit was showered all over the battle-field, over both the warring armies, but only the bears and monkeys were revived, and not the demons. (6)

The reason why the demons could not be revived was that their mind and heart had been so focused on Lord Ram (because they thought of nothing but the Lord all through the war) that they lost awareness of everything else, becoming exclusively focused on the Lord¹.

The spiritual benefit that naturally accrued to them as a result of this involuntary focusing of their mind and heart on Lord Ram was that they souls attained the fruit of deliverance from this world; they became entitled to obtain emancipation and salvation. Hence, all their worldly ties that would have otherwise attached their souls to this mortal world were snapped, as a result of which they found liberation from this world and attained eternal beatitude and felicity; they attained Mukti². (7)

The monkeys and bears were born from fractions of different gods, and so they could be allowed to die (as it would bereave the gods). Therefore, Lord Ram so wished that they be revived and brought back to life³. (8)

[Note—¹The demons on the one hand, and the monkeys and the bears on the other hand, had very opposite thoughts in their minds. While the monkeys and bears were always thinking and talking about their chief enemy Ravana, the demons on the other hand were thinking and talking of Lord Ram. This was very important from the perspective of spiritualism—because constant remembrance of Lord Ram was tantamount to doing contemplation and meditation on the Lord's divine form and name, which in its turn rewarded the demons with the benefit of deliverance of their souls. Hence, the fallen demon warriors had become entitled to attain emancipation and salvation by constantly thinking about Lord Ram because the Lord was a personified form of the Supreme Being.

We ought to note here that this is also the chief reason that Ravana too attained deliverance at the time of his death by having his soul merge with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

On the other hand, the monkeys and bears missed this chance as they had focused their attention on their enemy Ravana. But there is a marvelous spin to this development—and it is this: since Ravana himself was so blessed and honoured that his soul was accepted by Lord Ram himself and given an abode right where the Lord's own Soul was, some sort of reward became due to these poor monkeys and bears too for being focused on someone, in this case Ravana, whom Lord Ram had himself given such high honour.

The second reason for the monkeys and bears becoming entitled to some kind of reward was that they had laid down their lives serving Lord Ram and the noble cause for which this war was fought. Hence, Lord Ram rewarded them with a new life; the Lord entitled them to have glory and fame for winning a great war.

Thirdly, the Lord also did not want them to die because that would mean bereaving countless families in Kishkindha, something the merciful Lord couldn't bear to happen.

²It has been recorded earlier that Lord Ram had ensured that the demon commanders who came face to face with him were provided with the spiritual reward of attaining his heavenly abode—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45. It is clearly explained here “why Lord Ram granted them this exalted stature”: it is because these demons remembered the Lord and his holy name ‘Ram’ constantly, albeit not as a friend or a revered deity but as someone hostile to them, but nevertheless they did it, and this entitled them to receive its natural reward.

So when it came to deciding the fate of the fallen demon warriors in the battle-field, Lord Ram thought if he had been so gracious and kind as to grant an abode in heaven to the demon commanders, then he ought to extend this privilege to the ordinary demon soldiers too as they were merely following their duty of obeying their commanders, and had no personal animosity with the Lord. Not sending them to heaven would be tantamount to doing injustice to these poor fellows. Since Lord Ram was very mindful of his obligations to one and all, he decided that these ordinary demon warriors would go to his abode as well.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

This is another primary reason why Lord Ram wished that the monkeys and bears be brought back to life, besides the reasons cited herein above.]

राम सरिस को दीन हितकारी । कीन्हे मुकुत निसाचर झारी ॥ ९ ॥
खल मल धाम काम रत रावन । गति पाई जो मुनिबर पाव न ॥ १० ॥

rāma sarisa kō dīna hitakārī. kīnhē mukuta nisācara jhārī. 9.
khala mala dhāma kāma rata rāvana. gati pāī jō munibara pāva na. 10.

Verily indeed, for sooth and without any gainsay, who is so kind, gracious, benevolent and mindful of the welfare of those who are humble and lowly as Lord Ram is, for the Lord provided 'Mukti', i.e. liberation from sufferings that are part of life in this mortal gross world and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, to even the ordinary demons, not one or two or more selected ones from amongst the demon hordes, but all of them en masse! (9)

Not to mention the meek and humble ordinary demon warriors, the most kind and gracious Lord Ram took care of even the vilest of them, the demon king Ravana who was very wicked, passionate and lustful, and epitomized all that can be categorized as being evil, vile and sins combined, by granting his soul access to a destination which even great sages, hermits and ascetics find it difficult to attain¹. (10)

[Note—¹Ravana was the leader and the king of the demons, and from the perspective of what cruelty he inflicted on the creatures of this world and the terror he unleashed on it, he can be called the 'king of all that is categorized as sin, vile and evil'. But in spite of all these transgressions of the Law of Dharma, Lord Ram was so merciful as to forgive him and accept his soul within his own Self, which in meaningful terms translated into granting Ravana's soul the rare privilege of achieving its merger with the cosmic supreme Soul of creation represented by Lord Ram himself, thereby providing a superior destination to Ravana befitting his stature as the 'king of the demons'. This merger of Ravana's soul with the cosmic Soul represented by Lord Ram ended forever the cycle of transmigration for him, and provided him with the spiritual reward of emancipation and salvation that granted him eternal beatitude and felicity and bliss. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.}

This privilege is rare even for the greatest of sages, hermits and ascetics to attain, and this is what they all aim for.]

दो०. सुमन बरषि सब सुर चले चढ़ि चढ़ि रुचिर बिमान ।
देखि सुअवसर प्रभु पहिँ आयउ संभु सुजान ॥ ११४ (क) ॥
परम प्रीति कर जोरि जुग नलिन नयन भरि बारि ।
पुलकित तन गदगद गिराँ बिनय करत त्रिपुरारि ॥ ११४ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

sumana baraṣi saba sura calē caḍhi caḍhi rucira bimāna.
dēkhi su'avasara prabhu pahim āya'u sambhu sujāna. 114 (a).
parama prīti kara jōri juga nalina nayana bhari bāri.

pulakita tana gadagada girām̐ binaya karata tripurāri. 114 (b).

The assembled gods were elated and thrilled; they showered flowers upon the Lord from the sky. Then mounted their respective vehicles and went their way.

After the gods had gone their way, the wise and erudite Lord Shiva found that it was a good opportunity to approach Lord Ram; so Shiva came near the Lord (to offer his prayers to him)¹. (Doha no. 144-a)

He was overwhelmed with excess of affection for Lord Ram. Joining the palms of his hands, with tears filling his lotus-like eyes, body thrilled and the voice choked with emotions, Lord Tripurari (Shiva)² offered his obeisance and prayers to Lord Ram (as narrated in the verses that follow herein below). (Doha no. 144-b)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva loved and adored Lord Ram and held the latter very dear to his heart; Shiva worshipped Lord Ram, revered him, treated the latter as his chosen deity, and used Lord Ram's holy name 'Ram' as a Mantra (a divine spiritual formula) for the purpose of chanting and doing meditation with. In fact, the whole Story of 'Ram Charit Manas' which we are currently reading, was conceived by Lord Shiva in his Mana (heart and mind) during meditation and contemplation. There is no other God who reveres Lord Ram more and knows the secrets of the Lord as Shiva does.

{Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; (iii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (iv) Doha no. 46 and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (v) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.}

So, Lord Shiva wished to approach his beloved Lord Ram when the crowd of gods had gone away, so that he can keep his emotions secret from them all. Lord Shiva is a patron deity of ascetics; he did not wish to advertise his adoration and worship of Lord Ram, as he believed in keeping such relationships as that exist betwixt a devotee and his revered Lord something personal and free from prying eyes of the world, as broadcasting such private emotions would undermine their depth and sincerity. A true devotee does not seek praise or adulation for his spiritual efforts; he wishes to keep it to himself, a private affair.

We have read that the gods have been called 'selfish'—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110. So therefore, if Lord Shiva had joined their ranks to offer his prayers and thanks to Lord Ram, he would have fallen in the trap of aligning himself with these 'selfish gods'. Hence, Shiva, being 'wise and erudite', thought it prudent to wait till the other gods had gone away before he would come to pay his personal respects to his beloved Lord Ram. This would also give Shiva an opportunity to develop immediate rapport with the Lord he worships, and at the same time Lord Ram too would be able to share a private moment with his devotee Shiva.

Remember: There was a unique relationship between the two of them; Lord Ram too worshipped Shiva as much as Shiva worshipped the Lord. This is amply made clear by Lord Ram himself when he worshipped Shiva at the start of his campaign of Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.}

Hence, Lord Shiva wished to thank Lord Ram for this gracious gesture and declaration of the latter's affection and respect for him by deciding to approach Lord Ram when the crowd of gods had gone away and the Lord would be alone.

²Lord Shiva is called ‘Tripurari’ for two primary reasons: One is that he had vanquished a demon named ‘Tripurasur’; and the second reason is it signifies that he is a vanquisher of all that is evil and sinful in ‘all the three divisions of the world, i.e. heaven, earth and the nether world, as well as its Lord’.]

छं०. मामभिरक्षय रघुकुल नायक । धृत बर चाप रुचिर कर सायक ॥ १ ॥

मोह महा घन पटल प्रभंजन । संसय बिपिन अनल सुर रंजन ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

māmabhirakṣaya raghukula nāyaka. dhṛta bara cāpa rucira kara sāyaka. 1.
mōha mahā ghana paṭala prabhañjana. sansaya bipina anala sura rañjana. 2.

‘Oh the Chief of the Raghu Race (Lord Ram)! Holding an excellent bow and a shining arrow in your hands, please give me your protection, please save me. (1)

For the sake of sweeping away huge banks of dark clouds representing the greatest of ‘Moha’ (delusions; worldly attachments and temptations), you are veritably like a very strong force of wind.

Similarly, for the sake of destroying and reducing to ashes a dense and wild forest representing ‘Sansaya’ (uncertainties, dilemmas), you are truly like a wild fire (before which no forest can survive).

In all sooth and without gainsay, oh Lord, you are the one who grants joy and delight to all the Gods at once. (2)

अगुन सगुन गुन मंदिर सुंदर । भ्रम तम प्रबल प्रताप दिवाकर ॥ ३ ॥

काम क्रोध मद गज पंचानन । बसहु निरंतर जन मन कानन ॥ ४ ॥

aguna saguna guna mandira sundara. bhrama tama prabala pratāpa divākara. 3.

kāma krōdha mada gaja pañcānana. basahu nirantara jana mana kānana. 4.

You (Lord Ram) are both ‘Saguna’ as well as ‘Nirguna’. [That is, you have a transcendental, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, most sublime and subtle existence as the Supreme Lord of creation and the cosmic Consciousness. As such, you exist both in the visible and the invisible form; you have no specific form with characteristic attributes because you are invisible, subtle and sublime, but at the same time when you reveal yourself in a visible form you assume them.]

You are an abode of (or an embodiment of) all the excellent and beautiful virtues, and hence you are beauty personified.

For the purpose of eliminating the darkness (tama; uncertainties and consternations) represented by ‘Bhrama’ (having doubts and confusions arising out of ignorance, lack of true knowledge, and caused by delusions), you are like the glorious sun with its astounding brilliance (and powers to counter darkness effectively and effortlessly by its mere presence). (3)

Similarly, for the purpose of vanquishing powerful, strong and robust elephants symbolised by such vices as ‘Kaam’ (lust and passion), ‘Krodh’ (anger, wrathfulness) and ‘Mada’ (ego, arrogance, haughtiness), you are like a lion¹.

Therefore, oh gracious Lord, please be kind to live perpetually in the forest represented by the Mana (mind and heart) of this devotee and servant of yours. (4)

[Note—¹The lion is so skilled that it can easily kill an elephant which is many times stronger, more muscular and bigger in size as compared to the former. Likewise, though these evil tendencies in a creature are very strong in themselves, but they don’t stand a chance when Lord Ram decides to remove them and stop them from tormenting his devotees. The negative qualities listed here have their seat in a person’s heart and mind. Hence, Lord Shiva requests Lord Ram to live in his Mana so that he is always free from the fear of Kaam, Krodh and Mada.]

बिषय मनोरथ पुंज कंज बन । प्रबल तुषार उदार पार मन ॥ ५ ॥
भव बारिधि मंदर परमं दर । बारय तारय संसृति दुस्तर ॥ ६ ॥

biṣaya manōratha puñja kañja bana. prabala tuṣāra udāra pāra mana. 5.
bhava bāridhi mandara paramaṁ dara. bāraya tāraya sansṛti dustara. 6.

For the purpose of destroying a thick cluster of lotus flowers representing desires for sensual pleasures and the sense objects of comforts and pleasure in the material world, you are like the deep frost. [The frost is an enemy of the lotus. No matter how fine a garden may be of lotus flowers, but once there is frost the entire garden is ruined as all the lotuses die.]

Oh Lord, you are very magnanimous, gracious, broad-hearted and liberal in your temperament, by your natural habit.

Verily, you have a transcendental existence that is beyond the reach and purview of the Mana (mind and heart); you cannot be comprehended or reached by the Mana. (5)

For the sake of churning (or crossing over or overcoming the resistance) of the ocean like world of birth and death (the world of transmigration with its attendant sufferings and horrors), you are veritably like the great Mandrachal Mountain. [This mountain was used by the Gods and the Demons as a churning rod when they had churned the ancient ocean in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss. Here it implies that if one wishes to attain this Amrit, one should seek the blessings and help of Lord Ram.]

Oh Lord! Please dispel our gravest of fears and consternations, and take us across the formidable and most terrible ocean represented by this world (of transmigration, of countless sorrows and fears, of insurmountable spiritual problems and moral hurdles, of irresistible temptations and sensual desires, of greed, malice, jealousy, hatred and selfishness, and so on and so forth, that all act like churning whirlpools and fierce crocodiles and ferocious sharks, ever ready to pounce upon us at the first chance, and from which it is well-nigh impossible for us to free ourselves and get across on by relying merely on our own strength). (6)

स्याम गात राजीव बिलोचन । दीन बंधु प्रनतारति मोचन ॥ ७ ॥

अनुज जानकी सहित निरंतर । बसहु राम नृप मम उर अंतर ॥ ८ ॥
मुनि रंजन महि मंडल मंडन । तुलसिदास प्रभु त्रास बिखंडन ॥ ९ ॥

syāma gāta rājīva bilōcana. dīna bandhu pranatārati mōcana. 7.
anuja jānakī sahita nirantara. basahu rāma nrpa mama ura antara. 8.
muni ranjana mahi maṇḍala maṇḍana. tulasidāsa prabhu trāsa bikhaṇḍana. 9.

Oh Lord who has a dark-complexioned body (syāma gāta), and large, lotus-like eyes (rājīva bilōcana)! You are a friend of the poor, the meek and the humble (dīna bandhu). You remove the fear of all those who take shelter with you from all their sorrows and miseries (pranatārati mōcana).

Oh King Ram (rāma nrpa)! Please reside always in my heart along with your younger brother (Laxman) and your divine consort Jānakī (Sita). (8)

Oh Lord! You give joy, happiness and delight to the exalted sages and hermits.

You are an ornament of the entire earth¹. You are the dear Lord of Tulsidas (tulasidāsa prabhu)², and the one who ruptures, destroys and reduces to pulp all sorts of fears and torments (trāsa bikhaṇḍana).’ (9)

[Note—¹Just like the case of a person’s body being decorated by the jewels he or she wears, the earth is all the more fortunate that you had chosen to take a birth here and live on it, walk on its surface, perform so many deeds, and spread the message of Dharma propounded by the scriptures by setting the practical standards regarding the principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility, ethics, probity and propriety by your own example and life. The earth has become all the more worthy, beautiful and glorious place to live because you decided to visit it, for otherwise, it would have been one of the so many other planets in the solar system on the one hand, and on the other hand it would be a place full of vices and sins, and dominated by demonic forces as the case was earlier when the demons, led by Ravana, had ruled over it.

²The phrase “tulasidāsa prabhu” used here can have two applications that would change the meaning of this last stanza. One is in the way as done herein above. The other would be as follows: “Tulsidas says that the Lord is the one who removes all the fears and consternations.” In this latter case, the last part of the hymn would be an observation made by Tulsidas instead of being a part of the prayer of Lord Shiva. It means that Tulsidas added his own comments here while narrating Shiva’s prayer in his book ‘Ram Charit Manas’.]

दो०. नाथ जबहिं कोसलपुरीं होइहि तिलक तुम्हार ।
कृपासिंधु मैं आउब देखन चरित उदार ॥ ११५ ॥

dōhā.

nātha jabahim kōsalapurīm hō'ihī tilaka tumhāra.
krpāsindhu mairm ā'uba dēkhana carita udāra. 115.

Lord Shiva concluded his prayers by saying: ‘Oh Lord, when you will be anointed as a King-Emperor of Ayodhya, I shall come then to witness the event and see your

deeds being done with magnanimity and a charitable disposition which would be on full display at that time.¹ (Doha no. 115)

[Note—¹This is obviously because when Lord Ram ascends the throne of the mighty and prosperous kingdom of Ayodhya, he would liberally give largesse and alms to one and all. Obviously again, the Lord would open his palms like a most charitable donor would normally do, for the Lord is exceptionally benevolent, and has a large, magnanimous and charitable heart.]

चौ०. करि बिनती जब संभु सिधाए । तब प्रभु निकट बिभीषनु आए ॥ १ ॥

नाइ चरन सिरु कह मृदु बानी । बिनय सुनहु प्रभु सारंगपानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kari binatī jaba sambhu sidhā'ē. taba prabhu nikaṭa bibhīṣanu ā'ē. 1.
nā'i carana siru kaha mṛḍu bānī. binaya sunahu prabhu saramṅapānī. 2.

After Lord Shiva (sambhu) had offered his prayers and departed from the place, Vibhishan came to Lord Ram. (1)

He bowed his head before the holy feet of the Lord and said in a pleasing voice: 'Oh Lord who holds the Sarang Bow. Please listen to my humble request. (2)

सकुल सदल प्रभु रावन मार्यो । पावन जस त्रिभुवन बिस्तार्यो ॥ ३ ॥

दीन मलीन हीन मति जाती । मो पर कृपा कीन्हि बहु भाँती ॥ ४ ॥

sakula sadala prabhu rāvana māryō. pāvana jasa tribhuvana bistāryō. 3.
dīna malīna hīna mati jātī. mō para kṛpā kīnhi bahu bhāntī. 4.

Oh Lord, you have eliminated Ravana with his horde of demons, an act that helped to spread and establish your fame and glory in all the three divisions of the world (i.e. everywhere in this world). (3)

I was especially blessed with grace and kindness by your highness in all possible ways, inspite of my being most meek, humble and lowly, as well as being devoid of any goodness and virtues, and of a low birth as I am born in the demon race. (4)

अब जन गृह पुनीत प्रभु कीजे । मज्जनु करिअ समर श्रम छीजे ॥ ५ ॥

देखि कोस मंदिर संपदा । देहु कृपाल कपिन्ह कहूँ मुदा ॥ ६ ॥

सब बिधि नाथ मोहि अपनाइअ । पुनि मोहि सहित अवधपुर जाइअ ॥ ७ ॥

सुनत बचन मृदु दीनदयाला । सजल भए द्वौ नयन बिसाला ॥ ८ ॥

aba jana grha punīta prabhu kījē. majjanu kari'a samara śrama chījē. 5.
dēkhi kōsa mandira sampadā. dēhu kṛpāla kapinha kahum' mudā. 6.

saba bidhi nātha mōhi apanā'i'a. puni mōhi sahita avadhapura jā'i'a. 7.
sunata bacana mṛdu dīnadayālā. sajala bha'ē dvau nayana bisālā. 8.

Now oh Lord, please bless my household and consecrate it by paying a visit to it. Have a bath and refresh yourself a little, as I feel you must be tired after this grueling war. (5)

Pay a visit to the treasury of our demon race; have a look at our homes and the rest of our properties.

[To wit, I invite you to come and visit the city of Lanka to personally grace it now. You have been gracious enough to make me its king, but I feel something is missing as till now you have not once visited Lanka. Now that this city has a friendly king in my person, it will be in fitness of things that you come there as an honoured guest of mine. So please Lord, oblige me by your gracious presence in the city of Lanka even for a short while. This will give me excess of pleasure, and it will also enable the citizen to pay their respects to you as well.]

After that, you can cheerfully (and without any bit of hesitation) give the monkeys (and bears) whatever you deem fit for them as a gift and reward for their effort and contribution. (6)

Oh Lord, I pray thee to please accept me unconditionally as one who is your very own, in all possible and imaginable ways. After that, proceed to Ayodhya, taking me along with you.¹ (7)

When Lord Ram heard these kind and gracious words of Vibhishan, he was very pleased; the Lord's two wide eyes (which were like petals of the lotus flower) welled up with tears. (8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan wished to express his heartfelt gratitude to Lord Ram for not only extending his protection to him when his own brother Ravana was baying for his blood, but also making him the new king of Lanka. Usually it so happens that a conqueror appoints his own governor, which under normal circumstances Lord Ram could have easily done, and it was almost certain that the Lord would have chosen Sugriv, the king of the monkey race and the ruler of Kishkindha, for this role, because Sugriv's crucial help had made it possible for Lord Ram to assemble the army which aided him in the war against Ravana and defeating the mighty demon forces. So to reward Sugriv with the governorship of Lanka, if not outright its kingdom, was a foregone conclusion.

But Lord Ram desisted from doing it, and this refrain of the Lord of not appointing anyone else but Vibhishan as the new king of Lanka was not lost on the latter, and he recognized its significance. So therefore, Vibhishan wished to express his sincere thanks and highest gratitude to Lord Ram by inviting him to the city to grace it by his presence.

And to express his thanks to Sugriv, Angad, Hanuman, Jamvant, Nala, Neela and other as senior commanders of the Lord's army, as well as the rest of the monkeys and bears of the army who helped Lord Ram to win the war against Ravana, which in turn paved the way for Vibhishan being made the new king of the kingdom of Lanka, he requested Lord Ram to grant as much largesse as he wished to give as a reward to his friends in the monkey and bear army, from the rich treasury of Lanka.

This offer of Vibhishan also shows that the kingdom of the demons was so rich and prosperous that even after the ruinous war a handsome treasury still survived.

And there is another significant point worth noting: it is that after the final victory in the war, there was no plundering and looting and mad rampaging of Lanka by the conquerors—such was the exemplary discipline of Lord Ram, and such were the high principles of noble conduct followed during those ancient times! All aggressiveness and hostility and bitterness ended as soon as the war ended. All were friends once again.

Vibhishan even offered to accompany Lord Ram to Ayodhya so that their mutual friendship can be further cemented. Perhaps this paved the way for trade and military ties and cultural exchanges between the three mighty kingdoms of the time, i.e. Ayodhya in the north, Kishkindha in the south, and island of Lanka further down in the middle of the ocean.]

दो०. तोर कोस गृह मोर सब सत्य बचन सुनु भ्रात ।
 भरत दसा सुमिरत मोहि निमिष कल्प सम जात ॥ ११६ (क) ॥
 तापस बेष गात कृस जपत निरंतर मोहि ।
 देखौं बेगि सो जतनु करु सखा निहोरउँ तोहि ॥ ११६ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

tōra kōsa gr̥ha mōra saba satya bacana sunu bhrāta.
 bharata dasā sumirata mōhi nimīṣa kalpa sama jāta. 116 (a).
 tāpasa bēṣa gāta kṛsa japata nirantara mōhi.
 dēkhaum̐ bēgi sō jatanu karu sakhā nihōra'um̐ tōhi. 116 (b).

Lord Ram affectionately replied to Vibhishan: ‘Listen my dear brother (sunu bhrāta)! I say truthfully that your treasury, your home and the rest of the things that you possess can be deemed to belong to me (because I regard you as my dear friend and brother: sakhā, bhrāta).

But in the meanwhile, when I remember the (sad and miserable) condition of Bharat (my younger brother who lives in Ayodhya and grieves at my absence), even a fraction of a moment seems to be like an age for me. (Doha no. 116-a)

He lives in a hermit’s attire; his body has become emaciated; and he constantly remembers me¹.

So therefore, my dear friend (sakhā), I request you to make arrangements so that I can see him as soon as it is possible². (Doha no. 116-b)

[Note—¹How did Lord Ram know the condition of Bharat? Well, it was Hanuman who gave a graphic description of how Bharat lived when he returned to Lord Ram with the herb sought for the treatment of wounded Laxman in the battle-field of Lanka. Hanuman had met Bharat on his way back from the northern mountains where he had gone searching for the herb. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 55; (ii) Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 60.}

And how did Bharat live? This question is answered in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 324—to Doha no. 326.

²Lord Ram deftly deflected Vibhishan's request to visit the city of Lanka and bless his family and citizens. One reason which the Lord gives in avoiding going to the city within the fort was that time was running out for him as he must reach his own city Ayodhya expeditiously, because if he delays for even a day then his dear brother Bharat would end his life. It's definitely true, because if the Lord had gone to the city then obviously there would be a grand royal ceremony and welcome formalities extended to him, which would consume precious time. Lord Ram wished to make haste to return, as is clear from his own words, and therefore expending time in things that could be avoided was a prudent way forward in the current exigency.

Besides this reason, there was one other, and this second reason was cited by the Lord himself when he declined to attend the ceremony to crown Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka, and instead deputed his brother Laxman to represent him. The reason was this: that he had to keep the words of honour that he had given his father Dasrath, that he would live like a hermit for full 14 years in the forest, and a hermit is not supposed to visit a populated place, such as a city or a town or a village, especially to attend some ceremony or feast, or to be honoured and praised for some deed done. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.}

Earlier too, during Sugriv's anointment on the throne of Kishkindha, Lord Ram declined to attend personally, and instead sent his younger brother Laxman to represent him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 11.}

At that time too the Lord had explained to Sugriv the reason for his inability to attend his coronation personally, because he was bound not to visit any city for 14 years while he lived in the forest. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12.}

The third probable reason for Lord Ram avoiding to enter the city of Lanka was that he did not want a show around himself; he wished to avoid limelight and pomp and pageantry; he did not want that he be raised on a ceremonial pedestal at the head of a victory procession like a conquering general walking triumphantly to his vanquished subjects, the chances of which were ripe should he agree to visit the city of Lanka, as it was quite certain that Vibhishan would go out of his way, and bend over backwards, to shower praises and royal honours on the Lord as a gesture of his thanksgiving to him. Remember: Lord Ram was very modest and unpretentious; so it would be extremely embarrassing for him if this happened.

And finally, it would be too embarrassing for Lord Ram, who was known for his virtues of upholding the laws of Dharma that deal with the principles of righteousness, probity and propriety, as well as for his gracefulness and equanimity, to enter a city the king of which he had just slayed and put his rival on the throne, as this unavoidable coincidence designed by Providence and a fiat of Fate had made Lord Ram highly uncomfortable with the development. It was certain that not everyone in the city of Lanka would appreciate Lord Ram's actions, and though they had no choice but to keep their mouths shut under the changed situation, the Lord himself did not wish to offend them any more by visiting Lanka in a victory procession.]

बीतें अवधि जाउँ जौं जिअत न पावउँ बीर ।

सुमिरत अनुज प्रीति प्रभु पुनि पुनि पुलक सरीर ॥ ११६ (ग) ॥

करेहु कल्प भरि राजु तुम्ह मोहि सुमिरेहु मन माहिं ।
पुनि मम धाम पाइहहु जहाँ संत सब जाहिं ॥ ११६ (घ) ॥

bītēṁ avadhi jā'um̐ jaur̐m̐ ji'ata na pāva'um̐ bīra.
sumirata anuja prīti prabhu puni puni pulaka sarīra. 116 (c).
karēhu kalpa bhari rāju tumha mōhi sumirēhu mana māhiṁ.
puni mama dhāma pā'ihahu jahām̐ santa saba jāhiṁ. 116 (d).

If I go there after the expiry of the term of my forest sojourn (which is exactly 14 years) then it is certain that I won't find that brave one alive¹.

Lord Ram's body became thrilled with repeated waves of emotions which surged inside his heart when he remembered the exemplary level of affection his younger brother Bharat had for him. (Doha no. 116-c)

Vibhishan, be blessed with a happy rule over your kingdom till the end of this Kalpa (one complete cycle of 4 eras known as Sata Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwarpa Yuga and Kali Yuga), and always remember me.

At the end of this period, you will go to my abode in the heaven where all saintly souls go.' (Doha no. 116-d)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 313 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 1 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

How many days were left for this period of 14 years of forest living by Lord Ram to end? Answer: Only one day was left—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1.

This is why Lord Ram was in a hurry to return to Ayodhya.

And how did he manage to do it, to reach the far away Ayodhya within such a short span of time of one single day? Well, the Lord and his party reached Ayodhya in time as they rode the Pushpak Plane that Vibhishan inherited from Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 117; and Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 119; (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4-a.]

चौ०. सुनत बिभीषन बचन राम के । हरषि गहे पद कृपाधाम के ॥ १ ॥

बानर भालु सकल हरषाने । गहि प्रभु पद गुन बिमल बखाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunata bibhīṣana bacana rāma kē. haraṣi gahē pada kṛpādhāma kē. 1.
bānara bhālu sakala haraṣānē. gahi prabhu pada guna bimala bakhānē. 2.

Hearing such gracious words of Lord Ram, who was an embodiment of mercy and grace, Vibhishan felt exceedingly happy, and he fell down at the Lord's feet and clasped them affectionately. (1)

The monkeys and bears too felt very happy and exhilarated; they too fell down and clasped the feet of Lord Ram to express their joy, and to extol his glories and virtues. (2)

[Note—All those who heard Lord Ram explaining why he would not visit the city of Lanka were all praises for him; they felt so happy that the Lord was extremely gracious and modest and unpretentious that he would not like to be honoured and shown royal ceremony by visiting Lanka as a conquering general walking in a victory procession; that he was an upholder of the bond of brotherhood and recognized true worth of affection as was evident by his concern for Bharat, even though the latter was the apparent cause for the Lord's long sufferings and tribulations in the forest, because Bharat's mother Kaikeyi wanted that her son should become a king of Ayodhya instead of Lord Ram, and contrived a crooked means to have the Lord banished to the forest for 14 years so that Bharat could reinforce his grip over the affairs of the mighty kingdom during the Lord's absence. But it was so singularly noble and glorious for Lord Ram not to pay heed to the intrigues of Kaikeyi, and instead see the truthfulness and depth of Bharat's love for him.

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, all those present at the time celebrated and rejoiced that they have at last found in Lord Ram a true Lord and Friend for themselves!]

बहुरि बिभीषन भवन सिधायो । मनि गन बसन बिमान भरायो ॥ ३ ॥
 लै पुष्पक प्रभु आगें राखा । हँसि करि कृपासिंधु तब भाषा ॥ ४ ॥
 चढ़ि बिमान सुनु सखा बिभीषन । गगन जाइ बरषहु पट भूषन ॥ ५ ॥

bahuri bibhīṣana bhavana sidhāyō. mani gana basana bimāna bharāyō. 3.
 lai puṣpaka prabhu āgēm rākhā. haṁṣi kari kṛpāsindhu taba bhāṣā. 4.
 caḍhi bimāna sunu sakhā bibhīṣana. gagana jā'i barāṣahu paṭa bhūṣana. 5.

After that (i.e. after expressing his joy and satisfaction by falling reverentially at the feet of Lord Ram and bowing before him), Vibhishan went to his palace. He got the air-plane (the Pushpak, which he had inherited from his brother Ravana), filled with precious gems and costly apparels. (3)

He came with all these things and placed the Pushpak plane before Lord Ram (as a token of his tribute and gift for the Lord).

Lord Ram, who was like an ocean of the virtues of kindness, grace, benevolence and magnanimity, politely laughed in an approving manner, and said --- (4)

‘My friend Vibhishan, ride on this plane and go up in the sky, and from there shower upon the ground all the gifts in the way of clothes and ornaments that you have brought here.’ (5)

नभ पर जाइ बिभीषन तबही । बरषि दिए मनि अंबर सबही ॥ ६ ॥
 जोड़ जोड़ मन भावइ सोइ लेहीं । मनि मुख मेलि डारि कपि देहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 हँसे रामु श्री अनुज समेता । परम कौतुकी कृपा निकेता ॥ ८ ॥

nabha para jā'i bibhīṣana tabahī. baraṣi di'ē mani ambara sabahī. 6.
jō'i jō'i mana bhāva'i sō'i lēhīm. mani mukha mēli ḍāri kapi dēhīm. 7.
hamṣē rāmu śrī anuja samētā. parama kautukī kṛpā nikētā. 8.

As soon as Vibhishan heard Lord Ram's instructions he went up into the sky aboard the plane, and from there he showered on the ground below every piece of gem and apparel that he had brought. (6)

The monkeys and bears who had been watching everything with amusement, marvelled at this novel spectacle. They were filled with glee and merriment; they scrambled forward in joy and grabbed whatever they fancied for and could lay their hands on.

The innocent monkeys thought that the gems were some kind of eatables, so they would first put the pieces of priceless stones, falling from the sky like so many fruits, into their mouths, but soon realizing that they weren't what they thought them to be, they immediately spat the gems out! (7)

It was a very entertaining scene which amused Lord Ram a lot. The Lord and his younger brother Laxman smiled (and cheered at the fascinated monkeys).

Verily indeed, the maverick Lord was inclined to play innocent tricks and harmless games that would amuse everyone around¹. (8)

[Note—¹It was a very charming sight indeed. But at the same time Lord Ram wished to send a subtle message to Vibhishan, and by extension to all of us. The Lord implied that what Vibhishan thought was so valuable and worthy, like the priceless gems, ornaments and clothes, was of no worth and consequence for others. To wit, what one person values, is of no value for another.

When extended and applied to this material world, the hidden spiritual and metaphysical meaning is stunningly clear—that what attracts a worldly man, something for which he would go to any length to acquire and then endeavour to retain at all costs, is worthless and pointless for a person who has renunciation and dispassion in his heart! How wonderful and fantastic is this grand spiritual message that Lord Ram conveyed for posterity by employing such a jovial means.]

दो०. मुनि जेहि ध्यान न पावहिं नेति नेति कह बेद ।

कृपासिंधु सोइ कपिन्ह सन करत अनेक बिनोद ॥ ११७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

muni jēhi dhyāna na pāvahim nēti nēti kaha bēda.
kṛpāsindhu sō'i kapinha sana karata anēka binōda. 117 (a).

It is such a great wonder that the Lord who is difficult to attain even by exalted sages who do their best to focus their minds upon him, and who even the Vedas (primary scriptures) fail to comprehend when they say “not this, not this” (nēti nēti kaha bēda)¹ in their attempt to explain who the Lord is and what are his visible forms—this same merciful and kind Supreme Lord Ram plays and jests with the humble monkeys and bears in order to entertain them and himself. (Doha no. 117-a)

[Note—¹Neti-Neti = The phrase *Neti-Neti* literally means ‘not this-not this’ or ‘neither this nor that’. This is used as a standard by the Vedas to describe the concept of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. It first describes what is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, and then goes on to negate each of these attributes of Brahm in order to establish the fact that Brahm is such a mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric divine Authority that it cannot be delineated or specified by any one or the other epithet used to describe it; Brahm cannot be butted and bounded within the limitations of words, for it transcends all knowledge and ways of expression. Brahm is an all-inclusive, all-encompassing and all-incorporating Divinity, so none of its grand attributes or virtues can be excluded or relegated to the background by emphasising one or more specific attributes or virtues as being more prominent or important or significant than the other.

The Vedas, which are not only repositories of all knowledge pertaining to the field of spiritualism, metaphysics and theology, as well as secular, but also expertly expounded and narrated in immaculate grammar and language which gives them the ability to elucidate clearly and proficiently upon even the most complex and esoteric of concepts and philosophies pertaining to creation and its varied mysteries, as well as on the subject of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism, have however failed to describe the Supreme Being in entirety. So after countless attempts and many ways to try to present a comprehensive picture of the Lord and describe who he is, they finally surrendered by acknowledging their limitations in this regard by declaring “Neti-Neti”, meaning literally ‘not this-not this, or ‘it is neither this nor that’. To wit, the Vedas say that the many things they have proposed and expounded upon with respect to understanding the nature and form and character and qualities and virtues of the Supreme Being are all only a fraction of the Great Truth, but while they are correct and true within their limited sphere of meaning, yet they do not mean to be an exhaustive, exclusive and comprehensive narration of the nature of the Lord, for much is left to be said and known which is beyond our ability.

Brahm is an entity that goes beyond the imagination of the mind. All descriptions, all narratives and all adjectives use words, and these words are totally incompetent, inapt and insufficient to describe something or some entity that goes far beyond the wildest of imaginations of the man. The phrase ‘Neti-Neti’ imply that it is not possible to either describe the attributes of qualities of Brahm conclusively or fully understand and comprehend Brahm in entirety by the use of words, because Brahm is an esoteric and mystical Being who cannot be limited to or be delineated by words that have their own limitations; the words cannot restrict an unrestricted entity within the parameter of their meanings, connotations and interpretations. So therefore, whatever is known and understood about Brahm with the use of words is just an idea of who or what Brahm is, and it should not be taken as comprehensive or exclusive definition or description of Brahm, for there are many other things or aspects of Brahm that these words do not cover.

Now, this supreme Brahm is said to be manifested as the divine Atma or pure consciousness of the creature and lives as such not only in the creature’s bosom but everywhere else in this creation, both in the visible as well as the invisible spectrum, right from the minuscule to the most colossus. In the following verses this Brahm in the form of the Atma is being described by the process of negation, or ‘Neti Neti’, which is the standard adopted by the Vedas. This is a unique approach to say something authoritatively and conclusively about an entity to prove its authenticity and truthfulness by eliminating all possible individual ways in which it is usually perceived to be in existence to emphasise the point that the entity being described is

much beyond the limited scope and periphery of that particular description or adjective. Words cannot define Divinity and ethereal concepts. At the most each epithet or honour that is given to this divine entity deals with one or the other facet of that wholesome entity, but it is a very narrow view of something that needs a holistic and 360⁰ approach to be fully understood.

Besides this point, Brahm is an entity that defies conventional ways of understanding anything, ways which are the standard norm in analyzing a thing in an empirical and logical fashion in this world. There are certain aspects of life that cannot be contained in a glass vessel to be displayed to students in a laboratory of a college. These things cannot be explained in literal words; they cannot be physically demonstrated to prove that they are indeed a reality and not a figment of mere imagination.

Brahm is one such mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric Supreme Being who is best understood by first eliminating all possible criterions normally employed to define and judge anything in this world because all the logics and arguments just aren't sufficient and potent enough instruments to completely and wholesomely describe Brahm, and then realise the latter's presence and existence by the best method to know him, and it is 'experience and witnessing him first hand in this entire creation'. It is easy said than done. This is the miracle of 'Advaita Vedanta' which says in essence that everything in this creation is Brahm and nothing but Brahm. It appears on the face of it that this axiom implies that even 'falsehood' is Brahm. It is not the case, because anything that is '*not* truth' is *not* Brahm, and falsehood is 'non-truth'!

The Vedas declared that they are incapable to enumerate all the majestic glories and mystical qualities of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and therefore what they say of the Lord is just indicative of his divinity and holiness, but not an exhaustive account of it. No one should be foolish enough to conclude that the words of praise for the Lord by the Vedas are complete in themselves because there is much more to the Lord than what the Vedas or any other scriptures manage to say about him.

The scriptures tried their best to enumerate and define the glories, the greatness and the majesty of Brahm, but no matter how hard they tried they found that whatever they said was like just scratching on the surface of the Lord's stupendity and profoundness. They discovered that their utterances were utterly insufficient to describe even a fraction of the Lord's cosmic majesty and astounding glories. So they surrendered and concluded that all they managed to say of the Lord is not the entire truth about the Lord but only an indication of what the Lord actually is.

Therefore, the phrase "Neti-Neti" means that all the glories that the Vedas narrate about the Lord are just indicative in nature of how great and majestic the Lord is, but they are not exhaustive in themselves, as much more is to be said of the Lord which even these Vedas do not know about.

It would be highly mistaken for anyone to think that since the Vedas are repository of wisdom and knowledge hence their utterances about the Lord God are exhaustive in nature, for they fail to realise that the same Vedas have declared their limitations about the knowledge of the Lord by saying "Neti-Neti". What the Vedas say of the Lord is like the tip of the iceberg, for much remains to be said and known about the Lord which the Vedas aren't capable of.

This process of establishing the greatness and magnificence of Brahm as a halloed Divinity which is not to be restricted to and bound in words has been very cleverly and marvellously described in *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Cantos 4-5 and verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6. This particular Upanishad is like

the crown-jewel in the crown of Advaita Vedanta. Refer also to *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, 2/3/6, 4/2/4, 4/4/32.

Some selected references of the concept of ‘Neti-Neti’ with reference to Brahm are to be found in the following Upanishads—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda’s *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, 2/3/6, 4/2/4, 4/4/32. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Cantos 4-5, and verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 68.

In the context of the concept of the phrase ‘Neti-Neti’, Goswami Tulsidas’ epic book “*Ram Charit Manas*” employs it to refer to Lord Ram who was a human manifestation of Brahm, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness: Refer: *Ram Charit Manas*, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 203; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 341; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 93; (vi) Sortha no. 126; (c) Aranya Kand, (vii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 27; (d) Kishkindha Kand, (viii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10; (e) Lanka Kand, (ix) the present Doha no. 117-a; (f) Uttar Kand, (x) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 124; and (xi) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216.

As cited above, we read in Goswami Tulsidas’ epic book “*Ram Charit Manas*” that the divine form of Lord Ram, who is a personified form of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma, or the cosmic Consciousness in a personified form, is referred to as “Neti-neti” by the Vedas, because ‘on the one hand, the Lord is inseparable from what is known, and yet beyond what is known’ (*Ram Charit Manas*, Ayodhya Kand, Sortha no. 126).

It simply and obviously mean that the Lord’s real form is so mystical and mysterious that it is impossible to limit it to any given definition or description. Hence, the Vedas use the term ‘Neti Neti’—meaning that if a person uses an example from the known world and says ‘this is one of the forms of Lord Ram’, he would be correct, but at the same time it does not mean that anything he has not cited as an example is not a form of Lord Ram, or that even if the entire visible and known world is said to be one or the other forms of Lord Ram, then this does not mean that whatever is not visible or known is ‘not Ram’, for Lord Ram is even there where the mind and the intellect has not reached.

Put simply, Neti-neti means that all the countless ways in which the scriptures have tried their best to describe or define the supreme Brahm, who represents cosmic Consciousness, are not the only way one can know about Brahm, for there are equal number of other countless ways in which Brahm can be known or understood, but the scriptures have not described or defined them.]

उमा जोग जप दान तप नाना मख ब्रत नेम ।

राम कृपा नहिं करहिं तसि जसि निष्केवल प्रेम ॥ ११७ (ख) ॥

umā jōga japa dāna tapa nānā makha brata nēma.

rāma kṛpā nahim karahim tasi jasi niṣkēvala prēma. 117 (b).

[Lord Shiva tells his consort Uma who was listening to this wonderful Story—]

‘Oh Uma! Lord Ram does not show the extent of his full grace by trying to please him in the form of doing Japa (repetition of holy Mantras or spiritual formulas), Daan (making charity), Tapa (austerity and penance), and many other forms of spiritual practices such as Makha (fire sacrifices), Vrat and Nema (keeping a fast and observing various religious vows)—as much as he does by having purest form of affection and love for him.¹’ (Doha no. 117-b)

[Note—¹Put simply, Lord Shiva advises the creatures of this world that the easiest way to Lord Ram’s heart is through the medium of love and affection for him. To this can be added the virtues of devotion, faith and trust, for all these virtues act together in helping a devotee to gain the Lord’s favour.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 136 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it, where the same idea is affirmed.

Here we ought to note about the importance of simple gestures of love and affection as they are held more dear by Lord Ram in his heart than the finest recitals of the Vedas. We can cite examples from the Story of Ram Charit Manas itself to reiterate this fact. For instance, when the innocent people of the forest-dwelling tribes of Chitrakoot had paid their obeisance to Lord Ram in the simple ways they were accustomed to, and had shown excess of joy and pleasure in serving Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman for the brief period they stayed with them, the Lord had graciously reciprocated their kind gestures by showing them equal affection. The Lord had talked with them courteously; he had cheerfully accepted their humble offerings of food and hospitality, and blessed them. All this is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 337.

Even prior to the Lord meeting these humble people and showing his grace upon them, we read that he had extended a similar grace upon the countless village folks and travellers whom he had met while on his way to the forest from Ayodhya. Lord Ram’s loving nature and gracious manners had overwhelmed each and everyone he met on the way so much that he left a trail of people who cherished their meeting with the Lord and enshrined him in their hearts for all times to come. Once again, all this is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112—to Doha no. 122.]

चौ०. भालु कपिन्ह पट भूषन पाए । पहिरि पहिरि रघुपति पहिं आए ॥ १ ॥

नाना जिनस देखि सब कीसा । पुनि पुनि हँसत कोसलाधीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhālu kapinha paṭa bhūṣana pā'ē. pahiri pahiri raghupati pahim ā'ē. 1.
nānā jinasa dēkhi saba kīsā. puni puni haṁsata kōsalādhīsā. 2.

When the monkeys and bears got the sort of apparel they had fancied, they wore them and came to Lord Ram to show him how they looked in these new clothes. (1)

Observing this funny spectacle, with so many monkeys and bears attired in a wide assortment of colourful clothes, some oddly fitting and others hanging loose on their bodies, Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya) smiled and laughed at this fascinating sight as he was highly amused with it¹. (2)

[Note—¹Imagine the scene. Like so many children who had never worn fine clothes in their lives were suddenly given multitudes of colourful dresses to choose from and wear them to suit their fancy, and then these overjoyed innocent children would dance and hop with excess of joy at this marvelous opportunity as they put on whatever catches their fancy, after which they rush home to show their wonderstruck parents what they had got as gifts and how they looked in these fine new clothes, these humble monkeys and bears first adorned themselves as best as they could, though it was all awkward fittings for them, and then the whole group danced and sang its way to Lord Ram so that the overjoyed monkeys and bears could exhibit their newly acquired gifts to their beloved Lord, because for all of them Lord Ram was as dear and near as if he was their parent and loving friend.

Indeed, what a wonderful and heart-touching scene it must have been, my dear readers, just close your eyes and imagine! For remember, soon they will part with their beloved Lord and Friend, Lord Sri Ram, for in a few moments time the time of departure for Ayodhya would arrive, and though Lord Ram took along with him the senior monkeys and bears, he obviously could not take such a huge army back to Ayodhya for the practical reason that there wasn't sufficient space in the Pushpak plane to accommodate everyone. So in a way these were the moments of bidding farewell to all, and therefore it was all the more emotionally fulfilling for both the sides, the ever thankful Lord Ram on one side, and the equally thankful monkeys and bears on the other side. Lord Ram was thankful to them for their help in freeing Sita from the captivity of the demons, and the humble monkeys and bears were thankful to Lord Ram for showing such grace upon them and declaring them all as their friend without condition or distinction.

So therefore, like overjoyed and excited children thronging their doting father when they are given some nice things as gifts by the latter, the enthusiastic and overjoyed monkeys and bears crowded around Lord Ram affectionately, each vying with the other to draw the Lord's kind attention on himself. And sure enough, the gracious Lord Ram acknowledged them all by smiling at them and looking them with blessing in his glances.]

चितइ सबन्धि पर कीन्ही दाया । बोले मृदुल बचन रघुराया ॥ ३ ॥

तुम्हरेँ बल मैं रावनु माख्यो । तिलक बिभीषन कहँ पुनि साख्यो ॥ ४ ॥

निज निज गृह अब तुम्ह सब जाहू । सुमिरेहु मोहि डरपहु जनि काहू ॥ ५ ॥

cita'i sabanhi para kīnhī dāyā. bōlē mṛdula bacana raghurāyā. 3.
tumharēm bala mair̥m rāvanu māryō. tilaka bibhīṣana kham̐ puni sāryō. 4.
nija nija gr̥ha aba tumha saba jāhū. sumirēhu mōhi ḍarapahu jani kāhū. 5.

The Lord looked at the assembled monkeys and bears in such a way that each individual thought that the Lord was looking at him and made an eye contact with him, and by this means the munificent Lord pleased and blessed them all with his kind grace and benevolence.

Then Lord of the Raghus, i.e. Lord Ram, addressed the assembly with sweet words that were pleasant to hear. He said: --- (3)

'I have succeeded in slaying Ravana by relying on your matchless abilities and strength, and after that I was able to anoint Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka as its new king.

[To wit, I am very obliged to you, and I affirm that I owe all my achievements to you. Verily, it may be known that I can never forget you and the help you gave me when I needed it most. I have no sufficient words to properly express my thanks to you, for your selfless help and the kind of friendship that you all have extended to me. I will remember it all through my life, I promise.] (4)

Now, all of you go back to your respective homes, and remember me. Don't be afraid of anyone or anything (because I will be always there to help you, in thick and thin, no matter what happens).¹ (5)

[Note—¹The time of saying 'good bye' had arrived. It was a very poignant moment for both the sides, and surely everyone's heart was heavy. The monkeys and bears, by this time, had developed such a close bond with Lord Ram, and he with them, that to part with each other was something they wouldn't have liked to happen if it was avoidable. But it was not practically possible to do so. Yes, Lord Ram could have taken the whole army back to Ayodhya, but there was no space in the Pushpak plane to accommodate hundreds and thousands of monkeys and bears. At best, their senior commanders and chiefs could be taken along, which Lord Ram actually did.

But the Lord promised them eternal bond of friendship and help. Ordinarily a king or a noble man would extend such privilege to those who are his equal in rank, but Lord Ram was such a magnanimous and kind Lord that he treated even the lowest in the rank of the army as his friend and companion, not distinguishing between any of them for their rank or title. Verily indeed, for Lord Ram the only eligibility that entitles one to receive his grace and blessings is having love, affection, devotion and faith in him, and the monkeys and bears, all of them without exception, qualified on this mark without a trace of doubt.

It's not written in any of the versions of the grand and magnificent Story of the Ramayana, but one can well imagine the emotional aspect of those moments when the time had come for departure of Lord Ram for Ayodhya, and his requesting the army of monkeys and bears to go back to their homeland. Everyone stood speechless, with tears in their eyes, with their throats choked, with their hearts heavy as lead, with their legs as if paralyzed, with their bodies thrilled, and their lips quivering as if they were just about to burst out crying.

But in this sad hour of parting, there was a silver lining to the gloomy cloud of separation: Lord Ram had promised every single individual monkey and bear of his friendship and affection for life; he has asked them not to forget him. But the latter request made by Lord Ram—that they must always remember him—was simply a formal one, for even if the Lord had not asked these humble monkeys and bears to do so, they would have nonetheless never ever had forgotten the Lord for the grace and kindness that they had got so much from him. They even owed their lives to Lord Ram—because the Lord had ensured that all the monkeys and bears who lay wounded or dead in the battle-field were brought back to life when he asked Indra to shower Amrit on all of them (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 5 that precede Doha no. 114).

The fact that the monkeys and bears would have liked to stay with Lord Ram for all times to come if that was at all feasible and practical, even if it meant to go to

far-away kingdom of Ayodhya, or to bring Lord Ram to Kishkindha itself, and that they were not much inclined to return home, will be evident in the following verses.]

सुनत बचन प्रेमाकुल बानर । जोरि पानि बोले सब सादर ॥ ६ ॥
 प्रभु जोड़ कहहु तुम्हहि सब सोहा । हमरें होत बचन सुनि मोहा ॥ ७ ॥
 दीन जानि कपि किए सनाथा । तुम्ह त्रैलोक ईस रघुनाथा ॥ ८ ॥
 सुनि प्रभु बचन लाज हम मरहीं । मसक कहूँ खगपति हित करहीं ॥ ९ ॥
 देखि राम रुख बानर रीछा । प्रेम मगन नहिं गृह कै ईछा ॥ १० ॥

sunata bacana prēmākula bānara. jōri pāni bōlē saba sādara. 6.
 prabhu jō'i kahahu tumhahi saba sōhā. hamarēm hōta bacana suni mōhā. 7.
 dīna jāni kapi ki'ē sanāthā. tumha trailōka īsa raghunāthā. 8.
 suni prabhu bacana lāja hama marahīm. masaka kahūm' khagapati hita
 karahīm. 9.
 dēkhi rāma rukha bānara rīchā. prēma magana nahīm gr̥ha kai īchā. 10.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram, the monkeys (and bears) became agitated as they were overwhelmed with emotions of affection for the Lord. They joined their palms and replied most respectfully (and in a manner that clearly showed their love for the Lord) --- (6)

‘Oh Lord! Whatever you say is well spoken and well becomes of you, but on our part we become mystified by them. (7)

We are humble and lowly creatures, while oh Lord Raghubar, you are the great and exalted Lord of the whole world and its three divisions (heaven, earth and nether world). So it was out of your excess of grace, kindness and mercy that you chose to grant us the opportunity to serve you, thereby making us feel honoured and privileged to be able to do so.

[So therefore, it is we who owe the greatest of thanks to you, and not you to us.] (8)

Oh kind and gracious Lord! When we hear your kind words (praising us for our valour and the help we gave you which enabled you to slay Ravana and make Vibhishan the new king of Lanka), we all feel as if buried in shyness (for we don't deserve such praise whatsoever).

Say, can a humble and lowly mosquito ever be so great as to help the mighty king of birds?

[To wit, oh Lord, we are simple and humble forest-dwelling beings, and you are a great Lord, the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world himself in a personified form. So just like a mosquito is in comparison to the mighty eagle, the king of the birds, there is no comparison between us and your exalted highness. So therefore, we feel humbled and shy when we hear you shower so much praise upon us. However, we are truly very grateful to you that inspite of being so high and exalted you still prefer to show honour to us and call us your friends. It is much more than we had ever expected in our lives, and for this gracious gesture of yours, we shall

ever, forever indeed, remain indebted to you. Glory to our loving Lord! All hats off to our Lord and his loving nature!]' (9)

Lord Ram could easily perceive that they were all overwhelmed with surging waves of emotions of love and affection for him, and consequently had no desire to go back home¹. (10)

[Note—¹Refer to note appended to Chaupai line nos. 3-5 herein above.

Lord Ram discerned that the whole army was not inclined to leave his company; they would rather have him accompany them to Kishkindha if it was at all feasible and possible. But for obvious reasons it could not be that way. Lord Ram had to return to Ayodhya, and he would not do anything that would look like he was trying to impose himself on any other kingdom or infringe on the right of its king. So therefore, either to think of living in Lanka or in Kishkindha was out of the question. It was all the more unthinkable for Lord Ram because back in Ayodhya, Bharat was eagerly waiting for his arrival, and if he did not return in time then Bharat would die. Besides this, the Lord had promised the citizens of Ayodhya that he would come to them as soon as the period of 14 years expired. The people of Ayodhya loved him no less than the monkeys and bears, and since he was the prince of that kingdom, it was obligatory upon him to take that into consideration the emotions and needs of his subjects first and foremost, for the kingdom of Ayodhya needed his presence urgently as its throne was lying vacant as compared to kingdoms of Kishkindha and Lanka, because both of them had their respective kings, Sugriv and Vibhishan, to look after their interests.

So therefore, Lord Ram very politely, and with all the courteousness and civility he could muster, prevailed upon the monkeys and bears to return to their homelands, although both Lord Ram and the monkeys and bears felt very sad and sorry at this parting.]

दो०. प्रभु प्रेरित कपि भालु सब राम रूप उर राखि ।

हरष बिषाद सहित चले बिनय बिबिध बिधि भाषि ॥ ११८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

prabhu prērita kapi bhālu saba rāma rūpa ura rākhi.

haraṣa biṣāda sahita calē binaya bibidha bidhi bhāṣi. 118 (a).

Inspired by Lord Ram and in deference to his wishes (as the monkeys and bears were unable to disobey him and refuse to honour his commands), all the monkeys and bears enshrined the divine form (image) of Lord Ram inside their hearts (as one consecrates a deity in the sanctum of a shrine), and overwhelmed with grief and sadness (at parting with the Lord) on the one hand, and joy and happiness (at being able to serve the Lord and having had the privilege to be able to call the Lord as their everlasting friend and Lord) on the other hand, they offered their emotional prayers and heart-felt obeisance to the Lord in various ways (each one pouring out his heart in the best language and way he could do), and then started off on their journey back home¹. (Doha no. 118-a)

[Note—¹In this context we can recall Lord Ram's meeting with the villagers and travelers he met on the way to the forest, as well as the tribal people who came to meet him when he decided to stay in Chitrakoot. A very similar set of emotions are discovered there too. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 108—to Doha no. 122; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137.}]

कपिपति नील रीछपति अंगद नल हनुमान ।
 सहित बिभीषन अपर जे जूथप कपि बलवान ॥ ११८ (ख) ॥
 कहि न सकहिं कछु प्रेम बस भरि भरि लोचन बारि ।
 सन्मुख चितवहिं राम तन नयन निमेष निवारि ॥ ११८ (ग) ॥

kapipati nīla rīchapati aṅgada nala hanumāna.
 sahita bibhīṣana apara jē jūthapa kapi balavāna. 118 (b).
 kahi na sakahim kachu prēma basa bhari bhari lōcana bāri.
 sanmukha citavahim rāma tana nayana nimēṣa nivāri. 118 (c).

Sugriv, the lord of the monkeys, Nila, Jamvant, the lord of the bears, Angad (the prince of the monkeys), Nala, Hanuman, along with Vibhishan and other senior commanders of both the armies (i.e. the monkey army of Sugriv, as well as the demon army that supported Vibhishan) who were strong and mighty warriors in their own rights, --- (Doha no. 118-b)

--- All of them stood speechless with tears in their eyes as they were so overwhelmed with emotions that words failed them and they did not know how to react. They stood motionless before Lord Ram with their prayerful eyes fixed on the Lord¹. (Doha no. 118-c)

[Note—¹These noblemen of both the sides, the monkeys and bears on one side, and the demons on the other side, did not know what to say or do; they were in a fix as they would not like to disobey the Lord who commanded everyone to return home, while at the same time they had a great desire to accompany the Lord to his kingdom and witness his ascension to the throne, as well as to forge a deeper and stronger formal bond of friendship that is usually made between great kings, a bond that would bear a stamp of authority and create eternal ties between their great kingdoms in a formal way.

They had all heard of the famed glories and the greatness of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and hence had a sincere wish to visit it.

Lord Ram observed them and knew intuitively what was in their minds. The gracious Lord did not wish to dishonour or neglect their wishes, especially when it was so sincere and came from selfless friends who had staked everything they had to serve the Lord and his cause. Lord Ram remembered that Vibhishan had already expressed his desire to go to Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 116.

So therefore, Lord Ram agreed to take them all along with him to Ayodhya.]

चौ०. अतिसय प्रीति देखि रघुराई । लीन्हे सकल बिमान चढ़ाई ॥ १ ॥
 मन महुँ बिप्र चरन सिरु नायो । उत्तर दिसिहि बिमान चलायो ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

atisaya prīti dēkhi raghurāī. līnhē sakala bimāna caṛhāī. 1.
 mana mahum̐ bipra carana siru nāyō. utara disihi bimāna calāyō. 2.

Lord Ram (raghurāī), perceiving that all of them were overwhelmed with affection for him (and would like to accompany him back home to Ayodhya to witness his happy union with his subjects and appointment as the sovereign of the kingdom), he gave his consent and welcomed them all aboard the plane¹. (1)

Then the Lord mentally bowed his head at the feet of Vipras (elderly Brahmins) and ordered the plane to fly in northward direction². (2)

[Note—¹This plane, the Pushpak, was placed at Lord Ram's disposal by Vibhishan—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 117.

²One thing is to be noted here, and it is that this Pushpak plane was not an ordinary aircraft. It had two unique features—one, that it could be remote controlled; even a voice command could help to steer it, and two, that it could expand its capacity to accommodate passengers, though of course within certain limits. For example, it could grow large enough to, say, accommodate senior commanders of the two armies who were asked by Lord Ram to come aboard, but it would be practically impossible to adjust the whole army of monkeys and bears numbering into hundreds of thousands, for had it been possible then it is quite sure Lord Ram would have obliged all of them by taking them all to Ayodhya like he did with these few selected senior commanders.]

चलत बिमान कोलाहल होई । जय रघुबीर कहइ सबु कोई ॥ ३ ॥
 सिंहासन अति उच्च मनोहर । श्री समेत प्रभु बैठे ता पर ॥ ४ ॥
 राजत रामु सहित भामिनी । मेरु सृंग जनु घन दामिनी ॥ ५ ॥

calata bimāna kōlāhala hōī. jaya raghubīra kaha'i sabu kōī. 3.
 simhāsana ati ucca manōhara. śrī samēta prabhu baiṭhē tā para. 4.
 rājata rāmu sahita bhāminī. mēru sṛṅga janu ghana dāminī. 5.

No sooner had the plane become airborne and headed northwards to Ayodhya, than there was a spontaneous expression of joy and exhilaration from all those on board who cheered and applauded loudly in chorus. They exclaimed thunderously: 'Glory to Lord Ram; Hail the Lord of the Raghus; Long live the Lord.' (3)

There was a raised platform on this plane in the form of a magnificent throne, and Lord Ram sat on it with his consort Sita by his side. (4)

Lord Ram looked most adorable and majestic as he sat on this wonderful throne; it was like the beautiful scene of dark clouds with streaks of lightening lighting them up as they crowned the summit and hovered on the top of the wonderful Sumeru mountain¹. (5)

[Note—¹Here in this imagery, Lord Ram's dark-complexioned body is compared to the dark clouds; the lightening represents Sita as she is fair complexioned; and the summit of Mt. Sumeru is symbolized by the magnificent throne on Pushpak plane as the throne is high and distinguished.]

रुचिर बिमान चलेउ अति आतुर । कीन्ही सुमन बृष्टि हरषे सुर ॥ ६ ॥
परम सुखद चलि त्रिबिध बयारी । सागर सर सरि निर्मल बारी ॥ ७ ॥
सगुन होहि सुंदर चहुँ पासा । मन प्रसन्न निर्मल नभ आसा ॥ ८ ॥

rucira bimāna calē'u ati ātura. kīnhī sumana br̥ṣṭi haraṣē sura. 6.
parama sukhada cali tribidha bayārī. sāgara sara sari nirmala bārī. 7.
saguna hōhim sundara cahum̐ pāsā. mana prasanna nirmala nabha āsā. 8.

The magnificent plane moved with speed across the sky even as the exhilarated gods showered an abundance of flowers on it. (6)

A very pleasant breeze blew; it had all the three qualities that are known to grant pleasantness to wind¹.

The ocean, the rivers and the lakes—all seemed to be filled with crystal clear and sweet water. (7)

All sorts of auspicious signs were visible in all the four directions. Everyone's mind and heart were filled with joy and happiness. The firmament and the directions—everywhere it seemed to be clear and bright². (8)

[Note—¹The three qualities that make the air pleasant are the following: it should be cool, it should be fragrant, and it should be blowing softly.

²To wit, it was a bright sunny day. The sky and the air were clear; one could see distinctly in the far away horizon. There was a soft, cool and fragrant breeze wafting across the land and caressing all aboard the plane. From high up in the sky where the Pushpak cruised, all water bodies down below on the earth looked clear and calm. And taken all in all, every thing seemed to have acquired an auspicious hue.]

कह रघुबीर देखु रन सीता । लछिमन इहाँ हत्यो इंद्रजीता ॥ ९ ॥
हनूमान अंगद के मारे । रन महि परे निसाचर भारे ॥ १० ॥
कुंभकरन रावन द्वौ भाई । इहाँ हते सुर मुनि दुखदाई ॥ ११ ॥

kaha raghubīra dēkhu rana sītā. lachimana ihām̐ hatyō im̐drajītā. 9.
hanūmāna aṅgada kē mārē. rana mahi parē nisācara bhārē. 10.

kumbhakarana rāvana dvau bhā'ī. ihām' hatē sura muni dukhadā'ī. 11.

[Meanwhile, Lord Ram pointed out to Sita some of the landmarks down on the ground below as the plane lifted and became airborne on its way to Ayodhya.]

‘Look Sita’, said Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) as he pointed out to her the different places of importance down below on the ground, ‘This is the place where Laxman had slayed Indrajeet (Meghand)¹. (9)

This below is the place where the two brothers Kumbhakaran² and Ravana³, who had been tormentors of pious sages, were eliminated. (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 76 along with Chaupai line nos. 14-16 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 71.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

दो०. इहाँ सेतु बाँध्यों अरु थापेउँ सिव सुख धाम ।
सीता सहित कृपानिधि संभुहि कीन्ह प्रनाम ॥ ११९ (क) ॥
जहँ जहँ कृपासिंधु बन कीन्ह बास बिश्राम ।
सकल देखाए जानकिहि कहे सबन्हि के नाम ॥ ११९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

ihām' sētu bāmdhyōm' aru thāpē'um' siva sukha dhāma.
sītā sahita kṛpānidhi sambhuhi kīnha pranāma. 119 (a).
jaham' jaham' kṛpāsindhu bana kīnha bāsa bīsrāma.
sakala dēkhā'ē jānakihi kahē sabanhi kē nāma. 119 (b).

‘This is the site where I had got the bridge constructed to tame the ocean¹ and here below is where I consecrated Lord Shiva’s image and worshipped him².’

Seeing Lord Shiva’s holy Icon below, Lord Ram, who was like a treasury of the virtues of mercy, grace and kindness (kṛpānidhi), bowed his head along with Sita to pay his respects to Lord Shiva. (Doha no. 119-a)

As the plane crossed the ocean and moved northwards across the mainland, Lord Ram pointed to Sita and told her the names of all the different places he had visited and abided for some time during his long journey southwards from Panchavati from where she was abducted by Ravana³. (Doha no. 119-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 1 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 2.

³To wit, Lord Ram was retracing his steps as he pointed out to Sita all the places he had visited and stayed while searching for her.

First came to sight the city and the kingdom of Kishkindha, and the Prabarshan hill where he stayed for four months during the rainy season before the campaign to find Sita was launched. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 12.

Next came into view Mt. Rishyamook where Lord Ram had met Hanuman and Sugriv for the first time. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 44.

Now, as the plane cruised over Kishkindha, passing over the capital city, over the nearby Mt. Prabarshan and Mt. Rishyamook, Lord Ram's monkey and bear friends erupted in joy. Lord Ram ordered the plane to slow down and descend in height so that Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela etc. could have a bird's eye view of their homeland, the landscape of which looked so grand and majestic from the sky, what with its natural beauty and charming range of undulating hills and deep valleys, verdant forests and green meadows, crystal clear brooks and streams, and all other bounties of Mother Nature that this place was abundantly graced with. As the plane hovered overhead, the citizens of Kishkindha rushed out to marvel at this spectacle, whereat Sugriv and the rest waved at them enthusiastically from the sky while those on the ground cheered back in approval. It is quite possible that Sugriv and Angad and the rest of the monkey chieftains must have dropped some kind of message from the plane for their subjects standing on the ground below, telling them that everything was fine, that they are going to Ayodhya to join the celebrations marking Lord Ram's appointment as the king of that great kingdom, and that their kith and kin who had gone to Lanka as part of the mighty army are all on their way back, and will arrive very soon.

Sita too joined in these moments of joy and happiness as she remembered that it was at Rishyamook that she had seen some monkeys sitting on its summit, and that she had dropped some part of her torn clothes and ornaments to them from the chariot in which Ravana was taking her away to Lanka, so that should Lord Ram come that way these monkeys would show these things to the Lord, which in turn would convince the Lord that she was indeed taken in this direction. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 25 that precedes Doha no. 29; and Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 5.

After a brief pause over Kishkindha, the plane moved ahead northwards to reach the place where Lord Ram had met and given a brief discourse to sage Narad near a pleasant lake. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chanda line nos. 1-4 precede Doha no. 46.

Then, after passing over the pleasant forest north of this lake, the plane came to the place where Lord Ram had blessed Sabari. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37.

Further north came the place where Lord Ram had met the wounded vulture king Jatayu and provided him with deliverance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

And finally, the plane reached the sky above Panchavati, the hermitage from where Sita was abducted by Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 28.]

चौ०. तुरत बिमान तहाँ चलि आवा । दंडक बन जहँ परम सुहावा ॥ १ ॥
कुंभजादि मुनिनायक नाना । गए रामु सब कें अस्थाना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

turata bimāna tahām' cali āvā. daṇḍaka bana jaham' parama suhāvā. 1.
kumbhajādi munināyaka nānā. ga'e rāmu saba kēn asthānā. 2.

The plane soon arrived over the pleasant Dandak forest¹. (1)

Lord Ram visited the hermitages of the many sages who lived here, such as sage Kumbhaj (sage Agastya) and others². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 14.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede Doha no. 12.

Besides sage Agastya, Lord Ram had met many other sages, such as Atri*1, Sarbhanga*2 and Sutikshan*3, during his outward journey to the forest, and so it was natural that during this visit when he was returning to Ayodhya he must have paid a visit to all these sages to seek their blessings.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7.

*3Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 10 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-24 that precede it.}

One important thing that is to be noted here is that the Pushpak plane had landed on the ground, for otherwise it was not possible for Lord Ram to visit the hermitages of these sages.

Another point is that it must have been brief visits, as Lord Ram had but little time left in his hands to reach Ayodhya as he has himself told Vibhishan about it a little while earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116.]

सकल रिषिन्ह सन पाइ असीसा । चित्रकूट आए जगदीसा ॥ ३ ॥
तहँ करि मुनिन्ह केर संतोषा । चला बिमानु तहाँ ते चोखा ॥ ४ ॥

sakala riṣinha sana pā'i asīsā. citrakūṭa ā'e jagadīsā. 3.
taham' kari muninha kēra santōṣā. calā bimānu tahām'tē cōkhā. 4.

After receiving blessings and permission from all the sages, the Lord of the world (“jagadīsā”; Lord Ram) arrived at Chitrakoot¹. (3)

After the Lord met and provided satisfaction to the sages and hermits living there², the plane began its onwards journey from there. (4)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 134.

It was at Chitrakoot that Bharat had come to try and take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 239—to Doha no. 319.}

It naturally follows that the sight of Chitrakoot filled Lord Ram’s heart with sadness as he recalled those days when Bharat had come there to take him back to Ayodhya. It made him more eager to reach Ayodhya as soon as it was possible.

This is the reason why Lord Ram did not make a stopover at Chitrakoot, as he had done earlier at the Dandak forest where he met sage Agastya etc. (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein above), to meet the sages living there, such as sage Atri and his wife Anasuiya, but preferred to continue on his journey to Ayodhya. This is also the main reason why the Lord did not stop at sage Valmiki’s hermitage beyond Chitrakoot, nor at sage Bharadwaj’s hermitage at Prayag, but merely bowed his head, and made Sita and others to bow theirs too, from the sky as they beheld the two holy rivers Yamuna and Ganges at Triveni, while continuing with the onwards journey to Ayodhya, without stopping the plane or reducing its speed.

²Amongst the great sages who lived in the neighbourhood of Chitrakoot was the prominent sage Atri. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 132.}

When Lord Ram established his modest hut there to tarry a while before moving ahead on his journey to the deeper parts of the forest, and onwards to Lanka, all the sages, hermits and ascetics who abided in Chitrakoot to do Tapa (penances and other spiritual practices) had come to visit the Lord and pay their obeisance to him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 134 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}

बहुरि राम जानकिहि देख्वाई । जमुना कलि मल हरनि सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि देखी सुरसरी पुनीता । राम कहा प्रनाम करु सीता ॥ ६ ॥

bahuri rāma jānakihi dēkhāī. jamunā kali mala harani suhāī. 5.
puni dēkhī surasarī punītā. rāma kahā pranāma karu sītā. 6.

After that, Lord Ram showed Janki (Sita; the daughter of king Janak), the holy river Jamuna¹, which has the mystical ability to wash away all sorts of impurities associated with the age of Kaliyug (the present era of the four-era cycle of creation and destruction). (5)

Soon they saw the purifying holy river of the gods, known as Ganges². When this river came into view, Lord Ram asked Sita to bow her head to it to pay her obeisance to the holy river. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 322.

When Bharat was going back to Ayodhya from Chitrakoot, this was the exact sequence of rivers that he had crossed. First he crossed Jamuna, and then Ganges. The confluence of these two great rivers and a third one known as Saraswati is a great place for pilgrimage, and it is known as Triveni as well as Prayag. Sage Bharadwaj lived nearby.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 322.

So, the plane also passed over river Yamuna first, and Ganges next. To wit, the plane was now over Triveni—as we shall read in the next two verses.]

तीरथपति पुनि देखु प्रयागा । निरखत जन्म कोटि अघ भागा ॥ ७ ॥
देखु परम पावनि पुनि बेनी । हरनि सोक हरि लोक निसेनी ॥ ८ ॥
पुनि देखु अवधपुरी अति पावनि । त्रिबिध ताप भव रोग नसावनि ॥ ९ ॥

tīrathapati puni dēkhu prayāgā. nirakhata janma kōṭi agha bhāgā. 7.
dēkhu parama pāvani puni bēnī. harani sōka hari lōka nisēnī. 8.
puni dēkhu avadhapurī ati pāvani. tribidha tāpa bhava rōga nasāvani. 9.

[Lord Ram told Sita—] Now look at Prayag which is called a ‘king of holy places (tīrathapati)’. It is so holy that by merely looking at it all the sins and spiritual faults of a creature that has been accumulated over countless previous births simply run away¹. (7)

Look ahead; there you can see the confluence of the three holy rivers (Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) that is renowned as ‘Triveni’. It can eliminate and dispel all worldly sorrows and grief; it is also like a ladder that can transport a creature to heaven². (8)

Again, see there—you can behold the pleasant and sacred city of Ayodhya. It is able to eliminate the three types of agonies that torment a living being, as well as the pain and misery associated with the gross world of transmigration that the creature suffers from.³ (9)

[Note—¹Prayag is honoured by the epithet ‘King of all holy places’ because it can eliminate all spiritual faults of a creature, not only of the present birth but of many previous births combined.

²These repeated honours and laurels for this broad geographical area known Prayag, that consists of the confluence of the three great rivers and its adjoining areas where sages and hermit had their hermitages, is because it is regarded as a very holy place in Hinduism. Verse nos. 5-8 are devoted to this holy place.

Sage Bharadwaj had his hermitage here. Now the question is: Did Lord Ram visit the sage to pay his respects to the latter? Yes, he did; we shall read about it soon in Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 121 herein below.

No mention is made in the Text regarding sage Valmiki's hermitage which lay between sage Bharadwaj's place in Prayag and Chitrakoot. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had visited the sage during their outward journey into the depth of the forest, and it was on Valmiki's advice that the Lord stayed in Chitrakoot. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 132.}

So it apparently looks like the Pushpak plane had skirted sage Valmiki's hermitage while on its way to Ayodhya; it is probably because it was situated at a location that was little way off from the straight-line aerial path that the plane was ordered to take to Ayodhya to save time.

³The three types of agonies are: 'Daihik'—that associated with the creature's own body; 'Daivik'—that associated with unfavourable Gods and Nature; and 'Bhautik'—that associated with the physical world outside.

Freedom from the cycle of birth and death, with torments and miseries associated with the latter, is obtained by the positive spiritual effects of the sacred city of Ayodhya by the virtue of its being the place where Lord Ram, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, took birth and lived.]

दो०. सीता सहित अवध कहूँ कीन्ह कृपाल प्रनाम ।

सजल नयन तन पुलकित पुनि पुनि हरषित राम ॥१२०(क)॥

dōhā.

sītā sahita avadha kahum̐ kīnha krpāla pranāma.

sajala nayana tana pulakita puni puni haraṣita rāma.120(a).

As soon as the holy city of Ayodhya hove into view, the merciful Lord Ram, along with Sita (and of course with Laxman and others who were accompanying him aboard the plane) bowed his head to this city.

The sight of Ayodhya overwhelmed Lord Ram so much so that his eyes welled up with tears and his body was repeatedly thrilled with a waves of affectionate emotions (as he remembered the past days and the love and affection that was bestowed upon him by every single resident of the city)¹. (Doha no. 120-a)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was overcome with nostalgia; he remembered his childhood days, his friends, his loving subjects who loved him so immensely that when he was leaving the city for the forest, the entire city had followed him on foot, vowing not to leave him and accompanying him to wherever he goes, declaring that they have nothing to do with a city, no matter how prosperous and comfortable it may have been, when their beloved Lord has decided to leave it behind. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Doha no. 86.}

It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram had bowed his head to Ayodhya even at the time when he was leaving the city for the forest (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 83).

Another point to note here is that it is mentioned everywhere that ‘Lord Ram bowed at this place and that place himself and asked Sita to do as well’, but no mention is made of others, such as his own brother Laxman, as well as his honoured guests who were on the plane. The answer is this: In Hinduism, a person is expected to perform all sacred deeds and rites with his wife if she happens to be with him on the occasion. In our case, Sita was with Lord Ram, and so it was obligatory for him to follow this rule. It does not mean that others did not accompany the Lord to bow their heads to Ayodhya here, or to the holy rivers Yamuna and Ganges earlier at Triveni, or to the various sages the Lord had stopped his plane to meet and pay his obeisance to.

From a practical point of view, many things are understood by application of one’s common sense, and it should not be expected from anyone, no matter how erudite and detailed a chronicler is, to list every person’s name attending an event in his narration of it.]

पुनि प्रभु आइ त्रिबेनीं हरषित मज्जनु कीन्ह ।

कपिन्ह सहित बिप्रन्ह कहुं दान बिबिध बिधि दीन्ह ॥ १२० (ख) ॥

puni prabhu ā'i tribēnīm haraṣita majjanu kīnha.

kapinha sahita bipranha kahum' dāna bibidha bidhi dīnha. 120 (b).

The Lord once again returned to Triveni (the confluence of rivers Yamuna, Ganges and Saraswati, at Prayag). He descended and took a bath at the place where the three rives meet.

Lord Ram, along with his Kapi friends (the monkeys and bears), made charities here and gave donations to Brahmins in various ways (as ordained by religious scriptures)¹. (Doha no. 120-b)

[Note—¹An interesting question arises here: From where, and how, did Lord Ram and his companions made charities and manage to give donations to the Brahmins when apparently they had no wealth with them at that time, as they were coming directly from Lanka aboard a plane that too belonged to the kingdom of Lanka?

The answer is this: We have already read that Vibhishan had filled his Pushpak plane with priceless jewels and clothes and placed them before Lord Ram as a tribute to him, whereat the Lord had asked Vibhishan to go up in the sky and shower these things on the army so that the monkeys and bears could pick up what they fancied. So this is how the great monkey and bear commanders aboard the plane had access to some valuables that they would not donate to the Brahmins as expected from them.

As for Lord Ram, in all probability he made a promise to the alms seekers and the Brahmins at that time, that as soon as he is crowned on the throne of Ayodhya he would send them all that he has promised to them now. Well, everyone recognized the Lord, and surely they were willing to bless the Lord as profusely as if they had actually received their desired gifts. They all knew that Lord Ram had nothing with him then, and they could see that he was still attired like a hermit.

And as for Sita, we have already noted earlier, at the time of her ‘fire test’, that though Vibhishan had erred in adoring her with jewels and royal robes as a mark of respect, yet Lord Ram had made her shun all these things as they, Lord Ram as well as Sita, were still expected to live and attire as forest dwellers. And we have also

noted that this was a primary reason which had made Lord Ram very angry at Sita. So therefore, she too didn't have anything with her to donate to these alms seekers.]

चौ०. प्रभु हनुमंतहि कहा बुझाई । धरि बटु रूप अवधपुर जाई ॥ १ ॥
 भरतहि कुसल हमारि सुनाएहु । समाचार लै तुम्ह चलि आएहु ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

prabhu hanumantahi kahā bujhā'ī. dhari baṭu rūpa avadhapura jā'ī. 1.
 bharatahi kusala hamāri sunā'ēhu. samācāra lai tumha cali ā'ēhu. 2.

Lord Ram called Hanuman and advised him as follows: 'Assume the form of a young Brahmin student (baṭu)¹ and go to the city of Ayodhya. (1)

Tell Bharat about our well-being, and come back to me with the news that you collect there.' (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram chose Hanuman for this work because of the following primary reasons:

One, the Lord knew that Hanuman could assume any form that he wished, especially as a Brahmin, because he had first met the Lord at the foot of Mt. Rishyamook in this form when Sugriv asked him to go and meet the Lord to find out who he was—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4 and 6 that precede Doha no. 1.

It was necessary to be disguised as a Brahmin, especially a young Brahmin student, as this form is shown respect by everyone, and it would therefore help Hanuman to have easy access to Ayodhya and meet Bharat to convey the Lord's message to him without arousing any alarm or suspicion in the mind of the guards who were appointed to secure the hermitage where Bharat abided in Nandigram on the outskirts of Ayodhya.

Two, Hanuman was able to cruise in the sky very swiftly as was proved on two prominent occasions earlier—once was when he had gone to the northern mountains to bring the herb needed to revive Laxman, and on another occasion when he had sailed over the mighty ocean to reach Lanka in search of Sita. Lord Ram needed someone who would silently and unnoticed sail through the sky very swiftly, and return back as swiftly after meeting Bharat and conveying the good news of the Lord's return from the forest.

Three, Lord Ram knew that Hanuman was highly intelligent and able to handle unexpected developments. The Lord wanted to find out if he was actually welcomed back in Ayodhya, of how Bharat would receive this news of his arrival—as is apparent in verse no. 2. Hanuman was clever enough to handle any difficult situation should it arise, and also wise enough to maneuver himself out of a sticky situation in case it unfortunately turned out that way. He was able in every respect—bodily he was strong and agile, mentally he was intelligent and wise, emotionally he was stable, was very polite and courteous in his mannerism, was basically warm at heart yet cold if dealing with a hostile correspondent, and in every way well qualified to be an excellent ambassador for his Lord.

Four, Hanuman had already met Bharat while bringing the herb to revive Laxman. So it would be very easy for him to go straight to the place where Bharat lived, as well as to recognize him. Besides this, Bharat too would easily recognize Hanuman after the latter formally introduces himself and reminds Bharat of their previous meeting by citing some part of its conversation in order to convince Bharat of his authenticity. No other member of the Lord's company had this benefit with him; none knew Bharat personally, nor did Bharat know any one of them.

Five, the Lord still had some time left in his hands before the exact time of 14 years of forest exile ended; a full day's time was still left (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1). Lord Ram wished to use this time to visit sage Bharadwaj, as well as Nishad, his friend of the boatman community, which he did not do while heading straight to Ayodhya because he was in a hurry to reach it in case he missed the deadline of 14 years to the dot. By sending Hanuman to inform Bharat that the Lord had arrived, the fear of Bharat harming himself, should there be some delay while the Lord spent some time with sage Bharadwaj and Nishad, was dispelled. Once Hanuman tells Bharat that the Lord has actually arrived but has gone back to pay his respects to sage Bharadwaj and then meet Nishad before coming to Ayodhya, Bharat would not do anything reckless, for surely he would have no objection at the Lord going back for a while to meet his acquaintances and friends who stood him in good stead in the forest.

Six, the Lord's plane had approached the city of Ayodhya from the southern direction, roughly the same direction where Bharat had established his hermitage at a place known as Nandigram on the southern outskirts of the city, and had been abiding there for the last 14 years. As the Pushpak plane approached the city and hovered over the sky, Lord Ram could clearly perceive Bharat's place, as well as the fact that everything appeared to be quiet and normal on the ground within the city itself; there were no hectic activities, which in turn meant that there was no cause of alarm and hurry to descend. Since one day's time was still left in hand before the expiry of an exact period of 14 years, Lord Ram decided to use it more prudently by paying a visit to sage Bharadwaj and Nishad even as Hanuman goes to give an advance notice to Bharat of the Lord's arrival.]

तुरत पवनसुत गवनत भयऊ । तब प्रभु भरद्वाज पहिं गयऊ ॥ ३ ॥

नाना बिधि मुनि पूजा कीन्ही । अस्तुति करि पुनि आसिष दीन्ही ॥ ४ ॥

मुनि पद बंदि जुगल कर जोरी । चढ़ि बिमान प्रभु चले बहोरी ॥ ५ ॥

turata pavanasuta gavanata bhaya'ū. taba prabhu bharadvāja pahim gaya'ū.

3.

nānā bidhi muni pūjā kīnhī. astuti kari puni āsiṣa dīnhī. 4.

muni pada bandi jugala kara jōrī. caḍhi bimāna prabhu calē bahōrī. 5.

No sooner had the Lord given him instructions then Hanuman went off on his mission.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram went to meet sage Bharadwaj¹. (3)

The sage worshipped Lord Ram in a variety of ways, offering his prayers and obeisance to the Lord, as well as blessing him². (4)

After their affectionate meeting, Lord Ram joined the palms of his hand in a gesture of reverence as he took his leave from the sage.

The Lord boarded the plane once again and headed to his next destination. (5)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj's hermitage was situated at Prayag, the site of Triveni, the confluence of the three holy rivers Yamuna, Ganges and Saraswati. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 106; and (b) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44.}]

It means that after sending Hanuman on errand, Lord Ram ordered the plane to turn back and return to Prayag.

An interesting observation is to be made at this juncture: The Pushpak plane had not landed yet; it was still airborne. It follows that after Lord Ram had instructed Hanuman to go to Bharat and tell him the good news that the Lord has arrived, Hanuman had gone on his assignment directly from the sky. We are aware of his ability to 'fly' or 'cruise' or 'sail' in the air, as he has done it in the past on at least two prominent occasions: once when crossing the ocean to search Sita, and the second time when he had gone to the northern mountains to bring the herb to revive Laxman who lay wounded in the battle-field of Lanka. This helped the Lord to order the plane to turn back mid-air, as it saved a lot of time, to fulfill his wishes to go and meet sage Bharadwaj and the chief of the boatman community, Nishad.

We have read that the Lord instructed Hanuman to disguise himself as a young Brahmin; so what Hanuman must have done was to land at some distant from Bharat's hermitage in Nandigram and transmute himself into a Brahmin before walking to the hermitage. If any guard stopped him and asked who he was, Hanuman would have told him that he has come to meet Bharat with an important message. Since he was in the physical form of a Brahmin, a form that is universally respected, no one would have questioned him further. It is in this way that Hanuman could have an easy access to Bharat. When they met, of course, Hanuman told Bharat who he actually was.

²Sage Bharadwaj offered his prayers and obeisance to Lord Ram as the latter was the 'Lord of the world', and he blessed the Lord because he was a very revered, a senior and an illustrious sage of great learning.

When Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had visited sage Bharadwaj on their way to the forest, at that time too the sage had done the same thing—he had worshipped the Lord, prayed to him, and blessed him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 106 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}]

इहाँ निषाद सुना प्रभु आए । नाव नाव कहँ लोग बोलाए ॥ ६ ॥

सुरसरि नाधि जान तब आयो । उतरेउ तट प्रभु आयसु पायो ॥ ७ ॥

ihām' niṣāda sunā prabhu ā'ē. nāva nāva kaham' lōga bōlā'ē. 6.

surasari nāghi jāna taba āyō. utarē'u taṭa prabhu āyasu pāyō. 7.

Here, when Nishad heard that Lord Ram is arriving, he immediately sent out a message to all the members of the boatman community (of which he was the chief) and summoned them to assemble on the banks of river Ganges. (6)

The plane crossed the river Ganges and arrived on this side (where Nishad was waiting for the Lord). The plane was then ordered by Lord Ram to land on the bank of the river. (7)

तब सीताँ पूजी सुरसरी । बहु प्रकार पुनि चरनन्हि परी ॥ ८ ॥
दीन्हि असीस हरषि मन गंगा । सुंदरि तव अहिवात अभंगा ॥ ९ ॥

taba sītām' pūjī surasarī. bahu prakāra puni carananhi parī. 8.
dīnhi asīsa haraṣi mana gaṅgā. sundari tava ahivāta abhaṅgā. 9.

Then Sita offered her worship to the holy river Ganges, the river of the gods (surasarī) in various ways, and then prostrated at the feet of the deity of the river to pay her obeisance¹. (8)

River Ganges, in a personified form, felt very happy, and blessed Sita profusely, saying: 'Oh fair lady! May you be blessed with a happy married life for an eternal time.' (9)

[Note—¹Sita had offered her worship to the deity of river Ganges on her way out to the forest and sought the deity's blessings for protection and safety for herself, her husband Lord Ram, and her brother-in-law Laxman during their period of trial in the forest, promising the deity that she would come again to pay her respects to the latter on the return journey back to Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.}]

It was one main reason why Lord Ram decided to turn back from Ayodhya to go to the same place to enable Sita to keep her vows made to the holy river.]

सुनत गुहा धायउ प्रेमाकुल । आयउ निकट परम सुख संकुल ॥ १० ॥
प्रभुहि सहित बिलोकि बैदेही । परेउ अवनि तन सुधि नहिं तेही ॥ ११ ॥
प्रीति परम बिलोकि रघुराई । हरषि उठाइ लियो उर लाई ॥ १२ ॥

sunata guhā dhāya'u prēmākula. āya'u nikaṭa parama sukha saṅkula. 10.
prabhuhi sahita bilōki baidēhī. parē'u avani tana sudhi nahim tēhī. 11.
prīti parama bilōki raghurā'ī. haraṣi uṭhā'i liyō ura lā'ī. 12.

As soon as Nishad (whose other name was "Guha"; "guhā") heard that Lord Ram has landed, he rushed forward to meet and welcome the Lord. He went near the Lord with emotions of extreme joy and happiness overwhelming him. (10)

When he beheld Lord Ram along with Vaidehi (Sita), he felt so thrilled and exhilarated that he lost awareness of his body as he fell down on the ground before the Lord (to express his joy and show reverence for the Lord). (11)

When Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (*raghurāṭi*), observed Nishad's immense affection for him, the Lord became very emotional even as he lifted Nishad up from the ground and embraced him most lovingly¹. (12)

[Note—¹A special bond of friendship and affection had developed between Lord Ram and Nishad. When the Lord was on his way to the forest, he reached Sringeripur where Nishad lived. There the two met, and Nishad, along with his entire family and friends, had offered his worship to the Lord, and given him sweet fruits and edible roots as refreshment. Nishad had kept vigil as Lord Ram and Sita slept under a tree during the night. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 92.}

Though it is not clearly mentioned in the main Text of 'Ram Charit Manas' about till when Nishad accompanied Lord Ram into the forest, but in all probability it was till Chitrakoot. This would be evident on close analysis of the Text—for when we reach the point in the narrative of Lord Ram's journey into the forest and his establishing a small hermitage at Chitrakoot, the Text says that Nishad returned home, and on the way he found Sumantra, the chief minister of Ayodhya who had brought Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in a chariot on the instructions of king Dasrath, still somewhere near the banks of river Ganges, grieving for the Lord. It was here that Sumantra was left by Lord Ram as he crossed the river on a boat to reach the other side and continue with his onwards journey. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 142.}

छं०. लियो हृदयँ लाइ कृपा निधान सुजान रायँ रमापती । १ ।
 बैठारि परम समीप बूझी कुसल सो कर बीनती ॥ २ ॥
 अब कुसल पद पंकज बिलोकि बिरंचि संकर सेव्य जे । ३ ।
 सुख धाम पूरनकाम राम नमामि राम नमामि ते ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

liyō hr̥dayam̐ lā'i kṛpā nidhāna sujāna rāyam̐ ramāpatī. 1.
 baiṭhāri parama samīpa būjhī kusala sō kara bīnatī. 2.
 aba kusala pada paṅkaja bilōki biran̄ci saṅkara sēbya jē. 3.
 sukha dhāma pūranakāma rāma namāmi rāma namāmi tē. 4.

Lord Ram—who is a veritable treasury of the glorious virtues of grace, mercy, kindness and compassion (*kṛpā nidhāna*), who is an exemplary gentleman (*sujāna*), the Lord of the world (*rāyam̐*), and Lord Vishnu, the divine husband of goddess Rama (also known as Laxmi; “*ramāpatī*”)—picked up and clasped Nishad affectionately to his bosom. (Chanda line no. 1)

Then the Lord made Nishad sit very close to him (signaling that the Lord treated Nishad as a dear friend), and asked the latter about his welfare. (Chanda line no. 2)

Nishad replied, ‘Oh Lord! Now that I have seen the lotus-like feet of yours, feet that are served and worshipped by the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, everything is fine with me. (Chanda line no. 3)

Oh Lord Ram who is an abode of joy, happiness and bliss (sukha dhāma), and who is a fulfiller of all wishes (pūranakāma)! I repeatedly bow my head before your majesty (rāma namāmi rāma namāmi tē). (Chanda line no. 4)

सब भाँति अधम निषाद सो हरि भरत ज्यों उर लाइयो । ५ ।
 मतिमंद तुलसीदास सो प्रभु मोह बस बिसराइयो ॥ ६ ॥
 यह रावनारि चरित्र पावन राम पद रतिप्रद सदा । ७ ।
 कामादिहर बिग्यानकर सुर सिद्ध मुनि गावहिं मुदा ॥ ८ ॥

saba bhām̐ti adhama niṣāda sō hari bharata jyōm̐ ura lā'iyō. 5.
 matimanda tulasīdāsa sō prabhu mōha basa bisarā'iyō. 6.
 yaha rāvanāri caritra pāvana rāma pada ratiprada sadā. 7.
 kāmādi-hara bigyānakara sura sid'dha muni gāvahiṁ mudā. 8.

I am a lowly person by all accounts, but you are so gracious and kind that you have so affectionately embraced me as if I was like your own dear brother Bharat¹. (Chanda line no. 5)

[Goswami Tulsidas, the poet-saint who first penned the divine Story of 'Ram Charit Manas' as we know of it today, addresses himself and says—]

“Oh Tulsidas! Say how stupid you are to have forgotten such a magnanimous and gracious Lord as Lord Ram (who had gone out of his way to show so much love for even a lowly person as a boatman, treating him as if he was very dear to him and elevating him to the same pedestal as his own brother Bharat).²” (Chanda line no. 6)

This Story relating the life of Lord Ram who had slayed Ravana is spiritually purifying and elevating for the soul of a living being, for it grants a person the benefit of having eternal devotion for the holy feet of the Lord who is no one else but a personified form of the Supreme Being. (Chanda line no. 7)

This divine Story helps to eliminate all worldly enemies such as Kaam (passions) etc. that torment a creature; it also blesses one with spiritual enlightenment and wisdom.

This is why illustrious sages, the exalted gods and great mystics sing it most enthusiastically. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹When Bharat had gone to Chitrakoot to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, Nishad had accompanied him. It was Nishad who had guided Bharat to the Lord's hermitage. Nishad was also a witness of the most loving way Lord Ram had clasped Bharat to his bosom when the two brothers finally met. At that time, Lord Ram had embraced Nishad too.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 198; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 203; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 216; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 225; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 239; (vi) Doha no. 240 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede it; (vii) Doha no. 241.}

So, all this memory was fresh in Nishad's mind; he became overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness when he realized that Lord Ram took a special detour just to come and meet him.

²Tulsidas warns himself never to forget Lord Ram, as he will never find any other Lord as gracious and kind as Lord Ram is.]

दो०. समर बिजय रघुबीर के चरित जे सुनहिं सुजान ।

बिजय बिबेक बिजूति नित तिन्हहि देहिं भगवान ॥ १२१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

samara bijaya raghubīra kē carita jē sunahim sujāna.

bijaya bibēka bibhūti nita tinahi dēhim bhagavāna. 121 (a).

Those wise gentlemen with good understanding and high intellect who hear this magnificent story of Lord Rughbir's victory in the epic war (of Lanka) are always blessed by the Lord (Sri Ram) with the boon of victory in all the endeavours in their lives, as well as by the virtues of wisdom and attainment of worldly prosperity¹. (Doha no. 121-a)

[Note—¹A similar idea is affirmed by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 120 while explaining the importance of the company of saints where the divine Story of Lord Ram is recited and discoursed upon.

The great rewards that accrue to a spiritual seeker by hearing Lord Ram's divine Story are elaborately enumerated in Ram Charit Manas at a number of places. Some of these are the following verses: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126; Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 53; and (b) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 33.]

यह कलिकाल मलायतन मन करि देखु बिचार ।

श्रीरघुनाथ नाम तजि नाहिन आन अधार ॥ १२१ (ख) ॥

yaha kalikāla malāyatana mana kari dēkhu bicāra.

śrīraghunātha nāma taji nāhina āna adhāra. 121 (b).

[In this verse, Tulsidas addresses his own self and says—]

‘Oh my Mana (i.e. my inner-self; my heart and sub-conscious mind)! Ponder over the matter wisely and patiently, and arrive at the unequivocal Truth yourself. The present age of Kaliyug is a veritable den of all sorts of sins, mischief, vices and other evil devices. In this spiritual quagmire, the only source of succour and solace for the trapped creature is to be found in the holy name of Lord Raghubir, which is “Ram” (pronounced as Raam; or ‘Rām’)¹, for in all sooth and without gainsay there is no other way.’ (Doha no. 121-b)

[Note—¹The great spiritual significance of the holy name of Lord Ram, i.e. the word “Rām”, especially with reference to Kaliyug, is detailed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 27 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede it and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; and (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; and Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 130.

Meanwhile, a whole set of verses in Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas are dedicated to extolling the glories of Lord Ram’s holy name: apropos—from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

[PAUSE 27 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

इति श्रीमद्रामचरितमानसे सकलकलिकलुषविध्वंसने
षष्ठः सोपानः समाप्तः ।
(लंका काण्ड समाप्त)

iti śrīmadrāmacaritamānasē sakalakalikaluṣavidhvansanē
ṣaṣṭhaḥ sōpānaḥ samāptaḥ.
(end of laṅkā-kāṇḍa)

--- To be continued in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Canto 7 ---

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.

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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 (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
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(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.
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