

THE  
**Ramayana**

OF

■ ■ **Valmeeki**

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH

WITH EXHAUSTIVE NOTES

BY

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## PREFACE

The Ramayana of Valmeeki is a most unique work.

The Aryans are the oldest race on earth and the most advanced ; and the Ramayana is their first and grandest epic.

The Eddas of Scandinavia, the Niebelungen Lied of Germany, the Iliad of Homer, the Enead of Virgil, the Inferno, the Purgatorio, and the Paradiso of Dante, the Paradise Lost of Milton, the Lusiad of Camcens, the Shah Nama of Firdausi are Epics—and *no more* ; the Ramayana of Valmeeki is an Epic—and *much more*.

If any work can claim to be the Bible of the Hindus, it is the Ramayana of Valmeeki.

Professor MacDonell, the latest writer on Samskritha Literature, says :—

“The Epic contains the following verse foretelling its everlasting fame —

*As long as mountain ranges stand  
And rivers flow upon the earth,  
So long will this Ramayana  
Survive upon the lips of men.*

This prophecy has been perhaps even more abundantly fulfilled than the well-known prediction of Horace. No product of Sanskrit Literature has enjoyed a greater popularity in India down to the present day than the *Ramayana*. Its story furnishes the subject of many other Sanskrit poems as well as plays and still delights, from the lips of reciters, the hearts of the myriads of the Indian people, as at the

great annual Rama-festival held at Benares. It has been translated into many Indian vernaculars. Above all, it inspired the greatest poet of medieval Hindustan, Tulasi Das, to compose in Hindi his version of the epic entitled *Ram Charit Manas*, which, with its ideal standard of virtue and purity, is a kind of Bible to a hundred millions of the people of Northern India."—*Sanskrit Literature*, p. 317. So much for the *version*.

It is a fact within the personal observation of the elders of our country, that witnesses swear upon a copy of the *Ramayana* in the law-courts. Any one called upon to pay an unjust debt contents himself with saying, "I will place the money upon the *Ramayana*, let him take it if he dares." In private life, the expression, "I swear by the *Ramayana*," is an inviolable oath. I know instances where sums of money were lent upon no other security than a palm leaf manuscript of the *Ramayana*—too precious a Talisman to lose. When a man yearns for a son to continue his line on earth and raise him to the Mansions of the Blessed, the Elders advise him to read the *Ramayana* or hear it recited,—or at least the *Sundarakanda*. When a man has some great issue at stake that will either mend or mar his life, he reads the *Sundarakanda* or hears it expounded. When a man is very ill, past medical help, the old people about him say with one voice, "Read the *Sundarakanda* in the house and Maruthi will bring him back to life and health." When an evil spirit troubles sore a man or a woman, the grey-beards wag their wise heads and oracularly exclaim, "Ah! the *Sundarakanda* never fails." When any one desires to know the result of a contemplated project, he desires a child to open a page of the *Sundarakanda* and decides by the nature of the subject dealt with therein. (Here is a case in point. A year or two ago, I was asked by a young man to advise him whether he should marry or lead a life

of single blessedness. I promised to give him an answer a day or two later. When I was alone, I took up my Ramayana and asked my child to open it. And lo! the first line that met my eye was

*Kumbhakarna-siro bhathu  
Kundala-lankritam mahath.*

“The severed head of Kumbhakarna shone high and huge in the heavens, its splendour heightened by the earrings he wore.”

I had not the heart to communicate the result to the poor man. His people had made everything ready for his marriage. I could plainly see that his inclinations too lay that way. I could urge nothing against it—his health was good, and his worldly position and prospects high and bright. Ah me! I was myself half-sceptical. So, quite against my better self, I managed to avoid giving him an answer. And he, taking my silence for consent, got himself married. Alas! *within a year* his place in his house was vacant, his short meteoric life was over, his health shattered, his public life a failure, his mind darkened and gloomy by the vision of his future, Death was a welcome deliverer to him, and an old mother and a child-wife are left to mourn his untimely end.

The Karma-kanda of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Smrithis, the Mahabharatha, the Puranas, nay, no other work in the vast range of Samskritha literature is regarded by the Hindus in the same light as the Ramayana. The Karma-kanda is accessible only to a very few, an infinitesimal minority of the Brahmanas—the Purohiths who are making a living out of it, and they too know not its meaning, but recite it parrot-like. The Upanishads are not for the men of the world, they are for hard-headed logicians or calm-minded philosophers. The Smrithis are

but Rules of daily life. The Bharatha is not a very auspicious work ; no devout Hindu would allow it to be read in his house, for it brings on strife, dissensions and misfortune ; the temple of the Gods, the Mathas of Sanyasins, the river-ghauts, and the rest-houses for the travellers are chosen for the purpose. The Bhagavad-geetha enjoys a unique unpopularity ; for, he who reads or studies it is weaned away from wife and child, house and home, friends and kin, wealth and power and seeks the Path of Renunciation. The Puranas are but world-records, religious histories.

*But, for a work that gives a man everything he holds dear and valuable in this world and leads him to the Feet of the Almighty Father, give me the Ramayana of Valmeeki.*

The Lord of Mercy has come down among men time and oft ; and the Puranas contain incidental records of it short or long. But, the Ramayana of Valmeeki is the *only biography* we have of the Supreme One.

“ Nothing that relates to any of the actors in that great world-drama shall ‘escape thy all-seeing eye—Rama, Lakshmana, Seetha, men and monkeys, gods and Rakshasas, their acts, their words, nay, their very thoughts, known or secret. Nothing that comes out of your mouth, consciously or otherwise, shall prove other than true.” Such was the power of clear vision and clear speech conferred on the poet by the Demiurge, the Ancient of Days.

“ What nobler subject for your poem than Sree Ramachandra, the Divine Hero, the soul of righteousness, the perfect embodiment of all that is good and great and the Director of men’s thoughts, words and deeds in the light of their Karma ? ” And this Ideal Man is the *Hero* of the Epic.

“ The cloud-capped mountains, the swift-coursing rivers and all created things shall pass a way and be as

nought. But, your noble song shall outlive them and never fade from the hearts of men." This is the boon of immortality the *poem* shall enjoy.

"And as long as the record of Rama's life holds sway over the hearts of men, so long shall you sit by me in my highest heaven." This is the eternity of fame that comes to *the singer* as his guerdon

The Hero, the Epic, and the Poet are the most perfect any one can conceive.

It was composed when the Hero was yet upon earth, when his deeds and fame were fresh in the hearts of men. It was sung before himself. "And the poem they recite, how wonderful in its suggestiveness ! Listen we to it"—such was *his* estimate of the lay.

It was not written, but sung to sweet music Who were they that conveyed the message to the hearts of men ? The *very souls* of the Divine Hero. "Mark you the radiant glory that plays around them ? Liker gods than men ! . . . Behold these young ascetics, of kingly form and mien. Rare singers are they and of mighty spiritual energy withal"—and this encomium was from him who is Incarnate Wisdom.

What audience did they sing to ? "Large concourses of Brahmanas and warriors, sages and saints . . . Through many a land they travelled and sang to many an audience.

Thus many a time and oft did these boys recite it in crowded halls and broad streets, in sacred groves and sacrificial grounds. . . . And Rama invited to the assembly the *literati*, the theologians, the expounders of sacred histories, grammarians, Brahmanas grown grey in knowledge and experience, phonologists, musical experts, poets, rhetoricians, logicians, ritualists, philosophers, astronomers, astrologers, geographers, linguists, statesmen politicians, professors of music and dancing, painters

sculptors, minstrels, physiognomists, kings, merchants, farmers, saints, sages, hermits, ascetics . . . .”

What was the effect produced on the hearers ?

“And such the perfectness of expression and delicacy of execution, that the hearers followed them with their hearts and ears . and such the marvellous power of their song, that an indescribable sense of bliss gradually stole over them and pervaded their frame and every sense and faculty of theirs—strange, overpowering and almost painful in its intensity”

What was the critical estimate of the audience ?

“What charming music ! what sweetness and melody of verse ! And then, the vividness of narration ! We seem to live and move among old times and scenes long gone by .

A rare and noble epic this, the Ramayana of honeyed verses and faultless diction, beautifully adapted to music, vocal or instrumental and charming to hear , begun and finished according to the best canons of the art, the most exacting critic cannot praise it too highly , the first of its kind and an unapproachable ideal for all time to come , the best model for all future poets , the thrice-distilled Essence of the Holy Scriptures , the surest giver of health and happiness, length of years and prosperity, to all who read or listen to it. And, proficient as ye are in every style of music, marvellously have ye sung it.”

But what raises Ramayana from the sphere of literary works into “a mighty repository of the priceless wisdom enshrined in the Vedas ?” The sacred monosyllable, the Pranava, is the mystic symbol of the Absolute , the Gayathri is an exposition of the Pranava , the Vedas are the paraphrase of the Gayathri , and the Ramayana is but the amplification of the Vedic mysteries and furnishes the key thereto. Each letter of the Gayathri begins a thousand of its stanzas.

• The poem is based upon the hymns of the Rig-veda taught to the author by Narada. For, it is not a record of incidents that occurred during a certain cycle; it is a symbolical account of cosmic events that come about in every cycle with but slight modifications, Rama, Seetha, Ravana and the other characters in the Epic are *archetypes and real characters*—a mystery within a mystery. The numerous “Inner Meanings” of the Ramayana (vide *Introduction*) amply bear out the above remarks.

There is not one relation of life, private or public, but is beautifully and perfectly illustrated in the words and deeds of the Ramayana characters (vide *Introduction* “The Aims of Life”)

It is not a poem of any one world-asset, it must find a place in every country, in every town, in every village and in every house.

The Text

(a). *The Bengal recension* Charles

Sardina, helped Gortessio to bring of it in 1867

(b) *The Benares recension*. Between 1805—1810, Carey and Marshman, the philanthropic missionaries of Serampore, published the text of the first two kandas and a half. In 1846, Schlegel brought out an edition of the text of the first two kandas. In 1859, the complete text was lithographed at Bombay, and in 1860, a printed edition of the same appeared at Calcutta.

(c) *The South Indian recension*—While the first two recensions are in Devanagari, this exists in the Grantha characters or in the Telugu. This was unknown to the west and to the other parts of India until 1905, when Mr. T. R. Krishnacharya of Kumbakonam, Madras Presidency,



conferred a great boon upon the literary world by publishing a fine edition of it in Devanagari (1905). The earliest Grantha edition was published in Madras in 1891 by Mr. K. Subramanya Sastry, with the commentaries of Govindaraja, Mahesa-theertha, Ramanuja, Teeka-siromani and Peria-vachchan-Pillai. Mr. Raja Sastry of Madras has almost finished another edition of the same (1907), supplementing the above commentaries with that of Thilaka (till now accessible only in Devanagari). It shows a considerable improvement in the matter of paper, type, printing and get-up. Meanwhile, Mr. Krishnacharya has begun another beautiful edition of his text (1911) with the commentary of Govindaraja and extracts from Thilaka, Theertheeya, Ramanujeeya, Sathyadharmatheertheeya, Thanislōki, Siromani, Vishamapada-vivṛithi, Kathaka, Munibhavaprakasika etc. It will, when completed, place before the world many a rare and priceless information inaccessible till now.

#### *Commentators*

1. *Govindaraja*. He names his work the *Ramayana-Bhooshana* "an ornament to the Ramayana," ; and each kanda furnishes a variety of it—the anklets, the silk-cloth, the girdle, the pearl necklace, the beauty-mark between the eye-brows, the tiara and the crest-gem. He is of the Kausikas and the disciple of Sathakopa. The Lord Venkatesa appeared to him in a dream one night while he lay asleep in front of His shrine on the Serpent Mount and commanded him to write a commentary on the Ramayana ; and in devout obedience to the Divine call, he undertook the task and right manfully has he performed it. It is the most comprehensive, the most scholarly and the most authoritative commentary on the Sacred Epic, albeit his zealous Vaishnavite spirit surges up now and then in a hit at Siya and the Saivites. Priceless gems of traditional int̥ert

pretations and oral instructions are embedded in his monumental work.

2. *Mahesa-theertha*. He declares himself to be the pupil of Narayana-theertha and has named his work *Ramayana-thathva-deepika*. "I have but written down the opinions of various great men and have nothing of my own to give, except where I have tried to explain the inner meaning of the remarks made by Viradha, Khara, Vali and Ravana". In fact, he copies out the commentary of Govindaraja bodily. He quotes Teeka-siromani and is criticised by Rama-panditha in his *Thilaka*.

3. *Rama-panditha*. His commentary, the *Ramayana-thilaka*, was the only one accessible to the world (outside of southern India), being printed in Devanagari characters at Calcutta and Bombay. He quotes from and criticises the *Ramayana-thathva-deepika* and the *Kathaka*, but makes no reference to Govindaraja. It may be that work of the latter, being in the Grantha characters, was not available to him in Northern India; and Theertha might have studied it in the South and written *his* commentary in the Devanagari. Rama-panditha is a thorough-going, uncompromising Adwaithin, and jeers mercilessly at Theertha's esoteric interpretations. In the Grantha edition of the Ramayana, the Uthtnarakanda is commented upon only by Govindaraja and Theertha; but, the Devanagari edition with the commentary of Rama-panditha, contains word for word, without a single alteration, the gloss of Mahesatheertha! I have tried in vain to explain or reconcile this enigma. But, the Adwaithic tenor of the arguments and the frequent criticisms of *Kathaka*, savor more of Rama-panditha than of Theertha.

4. *Kathaka*. I have not been able to find out the author of the commentary so named, which exists only in the extracts quoted in the *Thilaka*.

5. *Ramanuja*. He confines himself mainly to a discussion of the various readings of the text. What commentary he chances to write now and then, is not very valuable. He is not to be confounded with the famous Founder of the Visishtadwaitha School of Philosophy.

6. *Thanisloki*. Krishna-Samahvaya or as he is more popularly known by his Tamil cognomen, Peria-vachchan Pillay, is the author of it. It is not a regular commentary upon the Ramayana. He selects certain oft-quoted stanzas and writes short essays upon them, which are much admired by the people of the South, and form the cram-book of the professional expounder of the Ramayana. It is written in Manīpravala—a curious combination of Samskritha and Tamil, with quaint idioms and curious twists of language. Many of the explanations are far-fetched and wire-drawn and reveal a spirit of Vaishnavite sectarianism.

7. *Abhaya-pradana-sara*. Sree Vedantha-desika, the most prominent personage after Sree Ramanuja, is the author of this treatise. It selects the incident of Vibheeshana seeking refuge with Rama (Vibheeshana-saranagathi) as a typical illustration of the key-note of the Ramayana—the doctrine of Surrender to the Lord, and deals with the subject exhaustively. It is written in the Manīpravala, as most of his Tamil works are.

### *Translations*

Gorresio published an Italian rendering of the work in 1870. It was followed by the French translation of Hippolyte Fauche's. In the year 1846, Schlegel gave to the world a Latin version of the first Kanda and a part of the second. The Serampore Missionaries were the first to give the Ramayana an English garb ; but they proceeded no further than two Kandas and a half. Mr. Griffith, Principal of the Benares College, was the first to translate the

Ramayana into English verse (1870—74). But, the latest translation of Valmeeki's immortal epic into English prose is that of Manmathanath Dutt, M. A., Calcutta (1894).

“Then why go over the same ground and inflict upon the public another translation of the Ramayana in English prose?”

1. Mr. Dutt has translated but the text of Valmeeki and that almost too literally ; he has not placed before the readers the priceless gems of information contained in the commentaries.

2. The text that, I think, he has used is the one published with the commentary of Rama-panditha, which differs widely from the South Indian Grantha text in readings and in the number of stanzas and chapters.

3 More often than once, his rendering is completely wide of the mark. (It is neither useful nor graceful to make a list of all such instances. A careful comparison of his rendering with mine is all I request of any impartial scholar of Samskritha).

4. I venture to think that his translation conveys not to a Westerner the beauty, the spirit, the swing, the force and the grandeur of the original.

5. Even supposing that it is a faultless rendering of a faultless text, it is not all that is required.

6. As is explained in the Introduction, the greatness of the Ramayana lies in its profound suggestiveness ; and no literal word-for-word rendering will do the barest justice to it.

7. Many incidents, customs, manners, usages and traditions of the time of Rama are hinted at or left to be inferred, being within the knowledge of the persons to whom the poem was sung ; but to the modern world they are a sealed book.

8. Even such of the above as have lived down to our times are so utterly changed, altered, ~~modified~~ and over-laid by the accretions of ages as to be almost unrecognisable.

9. The same incident is variously related in various places.

Every one of the eighteen Puranas, as also the Mahabharatha, the Adhyathma Ramayana and the Ananda Ramayana, relates the coming down of the Lord as Sree Rama, but with great divergences of detail ; while the Padmapurana narrates the life and doings of Sree Rama in a former Kalpa, which differs very much in the main from the Ramayana of Valmeeki. The Adbhutha Ramayana and the Vasishta Ramayana deal at great length with certain incidents in the life of Rama as are not touched upon by Valmeeki ; while the Ananda Ramayana devotes eight Kandas to the history of Rama after he was crowned at Ayodhya. Innumerable poems and plays founded upon Valmeeki's epic modify its incidents greatly, but base themselves on some Purana or other authoritative work.

10. Many a story that we have heard from the lips of our elders when we lay around roaring fires during long wintry nights and which we have come to regard as part and parcel of the life and doings of Rama, finds no place in Valmeeki's poem.

11. The poem was to be recited, not read, and to an ever-changing audience. Only twenty chapters were allowed to be sung a day, neither more nor less. Hence the innumerable repetitions, recapitulations and other literary rapids through which it is not very easy to steer our frail translation craft. The whole range of Samskritha literature, religious and secular, has to be laid under contribution to bring home to the minds of the readers a fair and adequate idea of the message that was conveyed to humanity by Valmeeki.

12. A bare translation of the text of the Ramayana is thus of no use—nay, more mischievous than useful, in that it gives an incomplete and in many places a distorted

view of the subject. It is to the commentaries that we have to turn for explanation, interpretation, amplification, reconciliation and rounding off. And of these, the most important, that of Govindaraja, is practically inaccessible except to the Tamil-speaking races of India. The saints of the Dravida country, the Alvars from Sree Sathakopa downwards, have taken up the study of the Ramayana of Valmeeki as a special branch of the Vedantha and have left behind them a large literature on the subject, original and explanatory. The Divya-prabandhas and their numerous commentaries are all in the quaint archaic Tamil style known as Manipravala, and are entirely unknown to the non-Tamil-speaking world. With those teachers the Ramayana was not an ordinary epic, not even an Ithihasa. It was something higher, grander and more sacred. It was an Upadesa-Grantha—a *Book of Initiation*, and no true Vaishnava may read it unless he has been initiated by his Guru into its mysteries. It is to him what the Bible was to the Catholic world of the Medieval Ages; only the Initiated, the clergy as it were, could read and expound it. Over and above all this, there are many priceless teachings about the Inner Mysteries of the Ramayana which find no place in written books. They form part of the instructions that the Guru gives to the Disciple by word of mouth.

13. Then again, there is the never-ending discussion about the method of translation to be followed. Max-Muller, the Grand Old Man of the Orientalist School opines thus :—“When I was enabled to collate copies which came from the south of India, the opinion, which I have often expressed of the great value of Southern Mss. received fresh confirmation. The study of Grantha and other southern Mss. will inaugurate, I believe, a new period in the critical treatment of Sanskrit texts. The rule which I have followed myself, and which I have asked my fellow-translators

to follow, has been adhered to in this new volume also, *viz.* whenever a choice has to be made between what is not quite faithful and what is not quite English, to surrender, without hesitation, the idiom rather than the accuracy of the translation. I know that all true scholars have approved of this, and if some of our critics have been offended by certain unidiomatic expressions occurring in our translations, all I can say is, that we shall always be most grateful if they would suggest translations which are not only faithful, but also idiomatic. For the purpose we have in view, a rugged but faithful translation seems to us more useful than a smooth but misleading one.

However, we have laid ourselves open to another kind of censure also, namely, of having occasionally not been literal enough. It is impossible to argue these questions in general, but every translator knows that in many cases a literal translation may convey an entirely wrong meaning."—Introduction to his Translation of the Upanishads. Part II, p. 13

"It is difficult to explain to those who have not themselves worked at the Veda, how it is that, though we may understand almost every word, yet we find it so difficult to lay hold of a whole chain of connected thought and to discover expressions that will not throw a wrong shade on the original features of the ancient words of the Veda. We have, on the one hand, to avoid giving to our translations too modern a character or paraphrasing instead of translating; while on the other, we cannot retain expressions which, if literally rendered in English or any modern tongue, would have an air of quaintness or absurdity totally foreign to the intention of the ancient poets.

While in my translation of the Veda in the remarks that I have to make in the course of my commentary, I shall frequently differ from other scholars, who have done

their best and who have done what they have done in a truly scholarlike, that is in a humble spirit, it would be unpleasant, even were it possible within the limits assigned, to criticise every opinion that has been put forward on the meaning of certain words or on the construction of certain verses of the Veda. I prefer as much as possible to vindicate my own translation, instead of examining the translations of other scholars, whether Indian or European."—  
From the Preface to his translation of the Rig-veda Samhitha.

In his letter to me of the 26th of January 1892, referring to my proposal to translate the Markandeya Purana as one of the Sacred Books of the East, he writes —

"I shall place your letter before the Chancellor and Delegates of the Press, and I hope they may accept your proposal. If you would send me a specimen of your translation, clearly written, I shall be glad to examine it, and compare it with the text in the *Bibliotheca Indica*. I have a Mss. of the Markandeya-purana. Possibly the palm leaf Mss. in Grantha letters would supply you with a better text than that printed in the *Bibliotheca Indica*."

But, Mrs. Besant, in her Introduction to 'The Laws of Manu, in the Light of Theosophy. By Bhagavan Das, M. A.,' takes a different view —

"One explanatory statement should be made as to the method of conveying to the modern reader the thought of the ancient writer. The European Orientalist, with admirable scrupulosity and tireless patience, works away laboriously with dictionary and grammar to give an "accurate and scholarly translation" of the foreign language which he is striving to interpret. What else can he do? But the result, as compared with the Original, is like the dead pressed 'specimen' of the botanist beside the breathing living flower of the garden. Even I, with my poor knowledge of Samskrit, know the joy of contacting the pulsing



virile scriptures in their own tongue, and the inexpressible dulness and dreariness of their scholarly renderings into English. But our lecturer is a Hindu, who from childhood upwards has lived in the atmosphere of the elder days ; he heard the old stories before he could read, sung by grand-mother, aunt, and pandit ; when he is tired now, he finds his recreation in chanting over the well-loved stanzas of an Ancient Purana, crooning them softly as a lullaby to a wearied mind ; to him the ' well-constructed language ' (Samskrit) is the mother-tongue, not a foreign language ; he knows its shades of meaning, its wide connotations, its traditional glosses clustering round words and sentences, its content as drawn out by great commentators. Hence, when he wishes to share its treasures with those whose birthright they are not, he pours out these meanings in their richness of content, gives them as they speak to the heart of the Hindu, not to the brain of the European. His close and accurate knowledge of Samskrit would make it child's play for him to give "an accurate and scholarly translation" of every quotation; he has preferred to give the living flowers rather the dried specimens. Orientalists, in the pride of their mastery of 'dead' language, will very likely scoff at the rendering of one to whom it is a living and familar tongue, who has not mastered Samskrit as a man, but has lived in it from an infant. For these, the originals are given. But for those who want to touch the throbbing body—rather than learn the names of the bones of the skeleton—of India's Ancient wisdom, for those these free and full renderings are given. And I believe that they will be welcomed and enjoyed."

*The best test of a translation is that it must not at all appear to be a translation.* Some hold that a translation must be a guide to the text, a 'crib' as it were, and should enable any one ignorant of the original language

to master it easily and sooner. I believe that a translation is meant to convey to a foreigner the thoughts, the ideas and the *heart* of the writer ; it is not to be a dictionary and grammar combined. A faithful translation and a literal are contradictory terms ; no word-for-word, wooden rendering can be any other thing than faithless ; and no good translation can be literal. No two races think alike ; the same thought, the same fact requires to be clothed in different words, in different expressions to reach the mind of the hearer. A translation should be faithful not to the words, not to the constructions, not to the grammar of the original, so much as to the *Kavi-hridaya*, 'the heart of the poet.' Curious notions of literary accuracy have rendered the translations of the Orientalists perfectly useless. Useless to those ignorant of Samskritha, in that it places before them strange thoughts and foreign modes of life and speech in an English garb, but not as they speak it, not as they understand it ; useless to the people whose literature they belong, in that the translators are foreigners.

They have no sympathy with the writer, or with the subject or with the people whose thoughts they attempt to place before the world. They bring to the work a prejudiced heart, a cold hyper-critical intellect, and an iconoclastic pen. Everything that they cannot understand, everything that they cannot reconcile with their preconceived notions of men and things, of God and the Universe, they throw overboard, without a glance at it, without a pang, just as the grave-digger cast aside the skull of Yorick the jester. They fix the correct readings ; they sit in dread judgment over the commentators who were born in and breathed the very atmosphere of the poet and of his nation ; they give the right meaning of words ; they formulate the canons of interpretation ; they judge of the stage of

progress the people might have attained in the march of material civilisation. They fit every event in the life of a non-christian nation to their Procrustean bed of Biblical chronology ; there was no civilisation superior to *their* own ; there was nothing good or noble, spoken or done, before *their* chosen people, the Lord's Elect, came into the world ; nothing is historical to them except *their* own made-up, lame accounts of the last 2,000 years. That is *their* Time ; that is *their* Eternity. They are very wise men—the Orientalists ; they are psychometrical adepts. Place any thing before them, a rag, a thigh-bone, a tooth, a coin, or a piece of stone and they will spin you an interminable yarn of the man, of the beast or of the people—their history physical, mental, moral, political, literary, economic, industrial, religious—as if they were the very Maker of the objects they operate upon. They would search for history in a Book of Sacrificial hymns like the Rig-veda, in Ritualistic Manuals like the Yajur-veda, in a Book of Psalmody like the Sama-veda, in a book of Rimes and Charms, like the Atharva-veda. They would seek for 'historic finds' in moral text-books like the Smritis, in sacred epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha ; nay, they profess to give you the life and thoughts of a nation from its grammar like the Maha-bhashya, from its philosophical works like the Vedantha literature, from its medical books like Vagbhata, Susruta and Charaka ; and wonderful to relate ! they find history in treatises upon logic like Tarkasangraha, in *mathematical* works like the Leelavathi and the Beejaganitha !! Nothing is too trivial, too humble, too insignificant for them ; their historical appetite is omnivorous.

I would give anything to know what *they* might feel like, if an orthodox Brahmana or a Charvaka Atheist were to

place before the English Christian reading world an English version of the Hebrew Bible ; if he should have the additional advantage of only a nodding acquaintance with the language ; if he should never have set his eye on the people whose revealed Scriptures he professes to further reveal ; if he should never have come across the real Sacred Books of the East ; if he should have come into contact only with the lowest strata of the nation or with unprincipled renegades to the faith of their fathers , if he should not even dream of access to the higher classes, their homes, their life, their words, their acts, their joys, their sorrows, their virtues, their vices, their faith, and their scepticism ; if he should be imbued with a supremely high notion of his omniscience, of his unerring keenness, of his literary infallibility ; if he should take it for granted that *his* race is the chosen one, that *his* religion is the only true one and that the others are false, that *his* people are destined to march for ever in the forefront of civilisation, prosperity and power. Now what would the orthodox English Christian or the devout Bishops and Archbishops think of such a version of the Holy Bible, embellished to boot, with original commentaries, remarks, reconciliations and judgments *ex-cathedra*, based mostly upon the unhealthy fumes of his imagination and prejudices ? How would the English nation like to have *its* history written, say, 5000 years hence, from stray coins, from mouldering skeletons, from moss-covered pieces of stone and architecture, from its 'Book of Common Prayer,' from its 'Book of Psalmody', from the 'Paradise Lost' of Milton, from the 'Holy Living' of Taylor, from Abbott's Shakespearean Grammar, from Jevon's Logic, from Masson's British Philosophy, from Barnard Smith's Arithmetic, from Todhunter's Algebra and Geometry, from Webster's Dictionary, from its scientific, medical, industrial, and

mechanical treatises, and the other decaying rubbish, of a forgotten nation buried under the mounds of the Past ?

That is exactly how the true Arya feels when he reads translations like that of Max-Muller, Griffith and their ilk or original critical estimates like those of Weber & Co., the Orientalist Iconoclasts. Western historians depict in glowing colors and sneering language how Mahommad of Ghazni destroyed the idol of Somanatha ; but Weber & Co. essay to shatter to pieces *the faith of millions*, their guide here and there hope hereafter. *Well, as he soweth so shall he reap.* My opinion of the whole class and of their Indian parasites is the same as what I expressed in the Preface to my " Life and Teachings of Sree Ramanuja ;" and I quote it for the benefit of those who have not come across that book.

" What care I about your coins and inscriptions, your pillars, and mounds, the dry bones of History ? To me it is of far more importance how a man lived and worked among his fellows, than when and where he was born and died, where he was at a particular date, when he wrote such and such a book, whether he was tall or short, dark or fair, single or married, a flesh-eater or a vegetarian, a teetotalter or no, what particular dress he affected, and so on. And yet more important still it is to me what a man thought and wrote, than how he lived and died. Your Orientalists ! Heaven save me from the brood. Mischief enough they have done, those human ghouls that haunt the charnel houses of Antiquity, where rot the bones of men and events of the Dead Past. They have played sad havoc with the fair traditions of our forefathers, that placed ideas before facts and theories, and the development of a nation's heart before ' historical finds ' or ' valuable discoveries '. Many a young man of promise they have turned away to

paths uncongenial, where his bray betrays the animal within the skin. You will find no such antiquarian twaddle in my book."

Well do they fit in with the lines of Tennyson.

"Those monstrous males that carve the living hound,  
And cram him with the fragments of the grave,  
Or in the dark dissolving human heart,  
And holy secrets of this microcosm,  
Dabbling a shameless hand with shameful jest,  
Encarnalize their spirits," *The Princess*

Gladly would I exchange shiploads of them for one Sir Edwin Arnold.

One more extract, this time from 'The Zanoni' of Lytton and I have done.

"The conduct of the individual can affect but a small circle beyond himself; the permanent good or evil that he works to others lies rather in the sentiments he can diffuse. His acts are limited and momentary, his sentiments may pervade the universe, and inspire generations till the day of doom. All our virtues, all our laws, are drawn from books and maxims, which are sentiments, not from deeds. In conduct, Julian had the virtues of a Christian, and Constantine, the vices of a Pagan. The sentiments of Julian reconverted thousands to Paganism, those of Constantine helped, under Heaven's will, to bow to Christianity the nations on the earth. In conduct, the humblest fisherman on yonder sea, who believes in the miracles of San Genaro, may be a better man than Luther. To the sentiments of Luther the mind of Modern Europe is indebted for the noblest revolution it has known. Our opinions, young Englishman, are the angel part of us; our acts, the earthly". *Book I, Chapter 5.*

Alas! The History of India by the Reverend Dr. Sinclair, is at present more authoritative in the eyes of the school boys than the Ramayana of Valmeekee or the Puranas of Vyasa. The History of Samskritha Literature by Messrs.

Max Muller, Weber, Monier Williams, MacDonell, etc., is the last word upon the writings of the Aryans, religious or secular. *Translations* are quoted and the *originals* are decried or are unknown. Verily, we are in the Iron Age, in the everdownward cycle of the Kaliyuga.

I hold that any History of India worth reading ought to be written by a true-hearted Hindu; I hold that the sacred books of the Hindus ought to be translated by a Hindu, by a Brahmana; by one that has faith in the virtues and manhood of his people, in the wisdom and philanthropy of his forefathers; by one that combines in himself a deep and comprehensive knowledge of the literature and traditions of his country, and of that to which he means to convey his message—but *never one of alien faith, nor a follower of Christianity without Christ, nor an apostate seeking to curry favour with the ruling race and the leaders of Western thought*. Now, in the case of the Ramayana of Valmeeki, it is all the more imperative that the Translator should possess the additional qualification of a thorough knowledge of the Tamil religious literature of the Dravidian School of Vaishnavism, that he should have been brought up in and saturated with the atmosphere of those amongst whom the Ramayana is recited and listened to with profound faith and devotion and to whom it is not a bare literary work but a living reality, a sacred Book, one that can mould their life here and hereafter.

As to the cobwebs of Western speculation about the historical value of the Ramayana, its date, the contemporary mention of it, the critical biography of the poet, its posteriority or otherwise to the Mahabharatha, its being a Zodiacal allegory or an account of the spread of the conquering Aryans into the South of India, about Rama being the type of the husbandman and Seetha being a symbol of agriculture and such-like Orientalist twaddle run riot, I have my

own opinion, certainly not creditable to them or to their authors. It is an open secret how History is written. The Boer war is within the memory of most of us; but, I have seen three diametrically different versions of it. The most important elements of a man's life or of a nation's are their thoughts. And History, to deserve its reputation of being "Philosophy teaching by example", should record *them* alone and not dry facts and dates. The history of western nations do not run back, honestly speaking, farther than 2,000 years; and huge libraries are already filled to overflowing with the records of that small period. The Aryans, who have, as *we* believe, existed as a separate race on this planet for over 5 millions of years, can but afford to preserve *their highest and most valuable thoughts. That forms their History* and is inextricably woven into their religion, morality and philosophy *That is "Philosophy teaching by example," and no other.*

Is the Ramayana historically true? Is it a record of events that actually took place? The best answer I could make is in the words of the lecturer on the Bhagavad Geetha, Mrs. Besant. Her remarks apply equally well to the Ramayana or to any other Hindu Purana

"Now, in the Bhagavad-Geetha there are two quite obvious meanings, distinct and yet closely connected the one with the other, and the method of the connexion it is well to understand. First, the historical. Now, specially in modern days when western thought is so much swaying and coloring the eastern mind, Indians as well as Europeans are apt to shrink from the idea of historical truths being conveyed in much of the sacred literature; those enormous periods, those long reigns of kings, those huge and bloody battles, surely they are all simple allegory, they are not history. But what is history and what is allegory? History is the working out of the plan of the *Logos*, His plan, His



scheme for evolving humanity ; and history is also the story of the evolution of a *World Logos*, who will rule over some world-system of the future. That is history, the life-story of an evolving *Logos* in the working out of the plan of the ruling *Logos*. And when we say *allegory*, we only mean a smaller history, a lesser history, the salient points of which, reflexions of the larger history, are repeated in the life-story of each individual *Jivatma*, each individual embodied spirit. History, seen from the true standpoint, is the plan of the ruling *Logos* for the evolution of a future *Logos*, manifested in all planes and visible on the physical, and therefore full of profoundest interest and full of profoundest meaning. The inner meaning, as it is sometimes called that which comes home to the hearts of you and me, that which is called the allegory, is the perennial meaning, repeated over and over again in each individual, and is really the same in miniature. In the one, *Iswara* lives in His world, with the future *Logos* and the world for his body, in the other, He lives in the individual man, with the *Jeevatma* and its vehicles for His body. But, in both are the one life and the one lord, and he who understands either, understands the twain. None, save the wise, can read the page of history with eyes that see; none, save the wise, can trace in their own unfolding the mighty unfolding of the system in which a future *Logos* Himself is the *Jeevatma* and that ruling *Logos* is the Supreme Self; and inasmuch as the lesser is the reflection of the greater, inasmuch as the history of the evolving individual is but a poor faint copy of the evolving of the future *Logos*, therefore in the scriptures there is even what we call a double meaning—that history which shows a greater self-evolving, and the inner allegorical meaning that tells of the unfolding of the lesser Selves. We cannot afford to lose either meaning, for something of the richness of the

treasure will thus escape us ; and you must have steadily and clearly in mind that it is no superstition of the ancients, no dream of the forefathers, no fancy of the ignorant generations of far-off antiquity, that saw in the little lives of men reflections of the great Life that has the Universe for its expression. Nor should you wonder, nor be perplexed when you catch, now and again, in that unfolding picture, glimpses of things that, on a smaller scale, are familiar in your own evolving ; and instead of thinking that a myth is a cloudy something which grows out of the history of a far-off individual, exaggerated and enlarged, as is the modern fancy, learn that what *you* call myth is the truth, the reality, the mighty unfolding of the supreme Life which causes the shaping of a Universe ; and that what *you* call history, the story, the story of individuals, is only a poor faint copy of that unfolding. When you see the likeness, learn that it is not the great that is moulded by the small ; it is the minute that is the reflexion of the mighty. And so, in reading the Bhagavad-Geetha, you can take it as history ; and then it is the great Unveiling, that makes you understand the meaning and the purpose of human history, and thus enables you to scan, with eyes that see, the panorama of the great unfolding of events in nation after nation, and in race after race. He who thus reads the Geetha in human history can stand unshaken amid the crash of breaking worlds. And you can also read it for your own individual helping and encouraging and enlightening, as an allegory, the story of the unfolding spirit within yourselves. And I have purposed this morning, to take these two meanings as our special study, and to show how the Geetha as history is the Great Unveiling, the drawing away of the veil that covers the real scheme which history works out on the physical plane ; for it was that which removed the delusion of Arjuna and made him able to do his

duty at Kurukshetra. And then, turning from that vaster plane, to seek its meaning as it touches the individual unfolding of the spirit, we shall see what that has of teaching for us, what that means for us of individual illumination; for just as history is true, so is allegory true. As the history, as we shall see, was the preparation for the India of the present, and the preparation for the India of the future, so also is that true which is elsewhere written in the Mahabharatha. "I am the Teacher and the Mind is my pupil." From that standpoint we shall see Sree Krishna as the Jagath-guru, the world-Guru, and Arjuna as the Mind, the Lower Manas, taught by the Teacher. And thus we may learn to understand its meaning for ourselves in our own little cycle of human growth.

Now, an Avathara is the Iswara, the *Logos* of a world-system, appearing in some physical form at some great crisis of evolution. The Avathara descends—unveils Himself would be a truer phrase; 'descends' is when we think of the Supreme as though far-off, when truly He is the all-pervasive Life in which we live; to the outer eye only is it a coming down and descending—and such an Avathara is Sree Krishna. He comes as the *Logos* of the system, veiling Himself in human form, so that He may, as man, outwardly shape the course of history with mighty power, as no lesser force might avail to shape it. But the Avathara is also the Iswara of the human Spirit, the *Logos* of the spirit, the Supreme Self, the self of whom the individual spirit is a portion—an *amsa*. Avathara then is the Iswara of our system; the Avathara also, is the Iswara of the human spirit; and as we see him in these two presentments, the light shines out and we begin to understand.

Let us take the historical drama, the setting of the great teaching. India had passed through a long cycle of great-

ness, of prosperity. Sree Ramachandra has ruled over the land as the model of the Divine Kingship that guides, shapes, and teaches an infant civilisation. That day had passed. Others had come, feebler to rule and guide, and many a conflict had taken place. The great Kshathriya caste had been cut down almost to the root by the Avathara, Parasu Rama, Rama of the axe; it had again grown up strong and vigorous. Into that India the new manifestation came.

In that part of her story, this first offshoot of the great Aryan Race had settled in the northern parts of India. It had there served as the model, the world-model, for a nation. That was its function. A religion, embracing the heights and depths of human thought, able to reach the ryot in his field, able to teach the philosopher and the metaphysician in his secluded study, a world-embracing religion, had been proclaimed through the lips of the Rishis of this first offshoot of the Race. Not only a religion, but also a polity, an economic and social order, planned by the wisdom of a Manu, ruled at first by that Manu himself. Not only a religion and a polity, but also the shaping of the individual life on the wisest lines—the successive Varnas, the successive Asramas, the stages of life, in the long life of the individual, were marked in the castes, and each caste-life of the embodied Jeevathma reproduced in its main principles, in the individual life, the Asramas through which a man passed between birth and death. Thus perfectly thought out, thus marvellously planned, this infant civilisation was given to the race as a world-model, to show what might be done where Wisdom ruled and Love inspired.

The word spoken out by that ancient model was the word Dharma—Duty, Fitness, Right Order.—*Hints on the Study of Bhagavad-Geetha*, pp. 6—12.

The Ramayana of Valmēekī “ is a romance and it is not a romance. It is a truth for those who can comprehend it, and an extravagance for those who cannot.”

Out of the vast mass of events in the history of the world, the Guardians of Humanity select only such as are best suited to their purpose and weave around them narratives that stand as eternal symbols of cosmic processes.

To the man of facts and dates, coins and inscriptions, I would recommend the advice given by Tennyson's Ancient Sage to the rationalistic young man.

“ The days and hours are ever glancing by,  
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and shade,  
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or Pain,  
But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour,  
Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought to thought,  
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now  
This double seeming of the single world '—”

To the sceptic, cased in the impenetrable armour of doubt and disbelief, owning no world outside the perception of his unerring senses, who wants to prove everything by the touchstone of *his* reason before he would deign to allow it a place in his Hall of Knowledge, I say with the Sage that .—

“ Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one  
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no  
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,  
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,  
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,  
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
Nor yet disproven, wherefore thou be wise,  
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith !  
She reels not in the storm of waving words,  
She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and 'No,'  
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,  
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night

- She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,  
 She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,  
 She hears the lark within the songless egg,  
 She finds the fountain where they wail'd 'Mirage' ! "

But, to him who would pierce thro' the exoteric narrative down to the bed-rock of Truth, out of which bubbles ever the Waters of Immortality and Omniscience, to him who would feel the heart-throb of Valmeeki, to him who would understand the mystery of the Divine Incarnation and its sublime purpose, I say :—

" If thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and will dive  
 Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,  
 There brooding by the central altar, thou  
 Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,  
 By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,  
 As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know ,  
 For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake  
 That sees and stirs the surface—shadow there,  
 But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,  
 The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within  
 The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,  
 And in the million millionth of a grain  
 Which cleft and cleft again for ever more,  
 And ever vanishing, never vanishes,  
 To me, my son, more mystic than myself,  
 Or even than the Nameless is to me  
 And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,  
 Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,  
 Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names. "

For, saith the Lord. "He who thus knoweth my divine birth and action in its essence, having abandoned the body. cometh not into birth again, but cometh unto me, O, Arjuna!"—*Geetha* IV, 9.

I have tried my best to be faithful to the original in word and in sentiment wherever it was possible. I have tried to place before his readers the thought that underlay the words of the poet. I have tried to preserve, as far as I could, the force, the beauty and the spirit of the Ramayana, that it may arouse in the hearts of the readers the same sentiments, passions and feelings that well up in the hearts of a

Hindu audience, when it listens to its recital. I have incorporated into the translation of the text, wherever it was necessary, the explanations and the comments of Govindaraja and the other authoritative commentators ; but, where they differed or supplemented one another, I have given the essence of their opinions in the form of Notes. I have drawn from all available sources of information, the Hindi version of Thulasi Das, the Prakrith of Hemachandracharya, the Vedas, the Smrithis, the Puranas, the Darsanas, in fact, the whole range of Samskritha and other literature, as far as was accessible to me. I know that any one who undertakes the translation into English of such colossal works as the Ramayana or the Mahabharatha must have at his disposal a large and well-represented library; I know also that I have neither the means nor the influence to possess it. But, I take this opportunity to render my heart-felt thanks, full and over-flowing, to all such as have helped me by placing their books at my disposal, more especially to the Brahma Vidya Lodge, T.S. Kumbakonam. I know that this enterprise requires a large initial outlay of capital and that I have it not Babu Pratap Chandra Roy, the brave translator of the Mahabharatha, appealed and with success to the various Governments of India, Europe, and America ; Mr. Manmath Nath Dutt, the first translator of the Ramayana into English prose, was favoured with the royal support of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, to whom he dedicated his work.

*But my mainstay and support is Sree Ramachandra, whose greatness and glory I humbly endeavour to bring home to the hearts of the millions in the East and in the West. To Him I dedicate, in all humility and reverence, my unworthy production—to Him, to Seetha, to Lakshmana, to Bharatha, to Sathrugna and last, not least, to Maruthi, the Ideal Rama-bhaktha. In their never-failing grace do*

*I place my trust to enable me to carry on this work to its completion.*

I know, better than others, the shortcomings of my work and of the numerous disqualifications I labour under to do my duty towards it ; and I humbly crave the indulgence of my readers, their sympathy, their support, their advice and their good thoughts.

C. R. SRINIVASA AIYANGAR, B.A.,  
TRICHINOPOLY



# INTRODUCTION

I :—“ *The Ramayana.*”

“ The record of the life and adventures of Srī Rama.”

This expression is naturally applicable to all works that treat of Srī Rama , but custom and tradition have limited it to the grand epic of Valmiki.

Words are of three kinds :—*Rudh*, used in a conventional sense ; *Yaugika*, derivative, retaining that signification which belongs to it by its etymology ; and *Yaugika Rudha*, having both an etymological and special meaning.

Such names as *Krishna* belong to the first class ; *Dasarathu*, the son of Dasaratha, is a type of the second ; *Pankaja*, the lotus, represent the third. The last word, etymologically understood, means “born in the mud ;” but other flowers such as the water-lily are not so called. It is confined by convention to the lotus alone. Even so the expression ‘ Ramayana ’ Many have sung ‘ the Life of Rama, ’ but convention restricts it by pre-eminence to the immortal epic of Valmiki alone. The Gita, the Brahma Sutras, The Maha Bhashya and Rama, are by conventional usage and tradition understood to mean respectively, The Bhagavad Gita, The Brahma Sutras of Vedavyasa, the Maha Bhashya of Patanjali and Rama the son of Dasaratha.

## II.—‘*The Original.*’

Brahma, the Ancient of Days, sent down Narada to instruct Valmiki in the mysteries of Divine wisdom. Vedic Hymns was the form in which the teaching was imparted. Later on, the Four-faced One came down even unto where Valmiki abode and endowed him with the Open Eye of the Seer. The sage saw with clear vision into the past, the present, and the future, and the record thereof was given to the world in the form of a grand poem of 100 crores of stanzas—*A. R. Manohara Kanda I; A. R. Yatra Kanda I, Adb. R., I.*

Brahma sung the life of Rama in a poem of 100 crores of stanzas and taught it to Narada and the other Rishis of this world—*G. R., Bala Kanda, G in his preface to his ‘Notes on Bala Kanda’*

It contains 9 lakhs of cantos, 900 lakhs of chapters and 100 crores of stanzas—*A. R. Manohara Kanda 17.*

In course of time, the holy sages received the inestimable gift and continued to recite the epic in their hermitages. Countless bands of the Shining Ones gathered overhead in their bright aerial cars and listened entranced to the heart-compelling strains, showers of heavenly flowers rained on the heads of the blessed singers; and shouts of joy and acclamation rent the skies. Then began a mighty struggle among the denizens of the other worlds as to who should have exclusive possession of the sacred epic. The Devas (Angels of Light) would have it in their bright homes on high; the Daityas (the Lords of Darkness) and the Nagas (Dragons of wisdom) would not rest until their nether worlds resounded with the holy chant; but the Sages and Kings of the earth would have parted with their lives sooner. Hot was the discussion between the excited claimants; Brahma the Creator, Siva the Destroyer tried in vain

to arbitrate ; in the end, they and the ambitious aspirants along with them proceeded by common consent to where the Lord Vishnu lay reclined on the folds of the Serpent of Eternity, gently lulled by the throbbing waves of the Ocean of milk. They laid the case before him and besought a way out of the difficulty. Vishnu cut the Gordian knot by dividing the huge work equally and impartially among the three claimants, who, they averred, were all entitled to it.

33 crores, 33 lakhs, 33 thousands, 333 stanzas and 10 letters formed the portion of each. Maha Lakshmi, the Consort of Vishnu, Sesha, the Serpent of Eternity, and Garuda, the divine Bird were initiated by the Lord into the three mighty Mantras (Spells) built up of the last 10 letters above mentioned. Lakshmi shared her knowledge with the Angels on high. Sesha instructed the Dragons and the Asuras in the Nether worlds. From Garuda came the knowledge of the mighty Mantra to the mortals of this Earth. What these mantras are and how they are to be utilised can best be learnt from the Science that treats of them (The Mantra Sastra). Thus proceeding, two letters remained undivided and indivisible. Siva requested that they might be his portion. The Holy Name that they expressed, *Rama*, was reverently received by the Lord of the Kailasa ; and for all time he abides at the holy Kasi (Benares), to whisper it into the right ear of those who exchange their mortal tenements for the Robe of Glory ; and it takes them over safely through the tossing waves of material existence on to the shores of the Regions of Light.

Thereafter, the portion of the Earth was further divided among the seven spheres thereof—Pushkara, Saka, Plaksha, Kusa, Krouncha, Salmali and Jambu. Each secured to itself 47,619,047 stanzas ; but 4 remained indivisible. Whereupon. Brahma the Creator begged hard of his father

to be allowed to receive it. Later on, Narada learnt them from him.

“I was before this Universe began and no other. Being and Not-Being are the Kosmic Ultimates; but beyond them and behind them *I remain*. All else shall pass away and change—all Name and Form; but, *I remain*. That which presents itself not as Truth, that which manifests itself not as the Self, verily that is Maya, the great Illusion cast upon the Supreme One like a mist, like a pall of darkness. The Great Elements permeate all Name and Form like warp and woof; but the Manifested and the Unmanifested live in Me and move and have their being. The Supreme is the Life and Light of the Universe; but for It, it is not. Know thou the above and you know Me”. These are the Great Truths.

The inhabitants of the Pushkara Dweepa divided equally their share between the two Varshas (continents) that compose it; but the nine Varshas of our Jambu Dweepa received 5,291,005 stanzas each and a seven-lettered mantra.—Kuru, Hiranmaya, Ramyaka, Ketumala, Ilavrita, Bhadraswa, Hari, Kimpurusha and Bharata. But the letter ‘Sri’ that remained, was held in common by the nine Varshas.

Later on, the Lord took form as Veda-Vyasa; the Kaliyuga will see the Brahmanas dull of intellect and short-lived; so, he divided the one eternal Veda (Divine Wisdom) into many branches (Sakhas) to suit their varied capacities. Hence his name Veda-Vyasa, ‘He that adjusts or arranges the Vedas’. Further, he took what fell to the Bharata Varsha as its share of the Original Ramayana and based upon it the 17 Puranas, the Upapuranas, and the Maha Bharata. But, his soul knew not peace nor serenity. He sat with an aching heart on the banks of the swift-flowing Sarasvati

when Narada came unto him and instructed him in the mysteries of the Self as contained in the four stanzas that constituted the Heart of all Wisdom. Veda-Vyasa assimilated it and embodied it in his famous Śrī Bhagavatha, the child of his mature wisdom and fullness of peace.

The great sages, that later on gave to the world the various standard works on the Science of words, Astronomy, Astrology, Phonetics, Prosody, the Rules of Ritual and the Vedic glossaries, drew their materials from the Original Ramayana; and there is not an episode, that embodies any truth, moral, social, religious or philosophical, but owes its origin to the same.—*A. R. Yatra Kanda II.*

The Mahabharata has a similar mystery of its own. Vyasa sung it of yore in 60 lakhs of stanzas, 30 of which the Angels kept to themselves; the Fathers appropriated 15; the Rakshasas and the Yakshas had to content themselves with 14; while we on this mortal earth were blessed but with the remaining lakh. Vaisampayana has preserved it for us. 24,000 stanzas make up the work, the numerous episodes excluded. But, there exists a compendium of the same in 150 stanzas and it is called the Anukramanika.—*M. B., I. 1.*

### III.—‘*The Singer.*’

Maharshi Valmeeki is held to be the composer of the epic. The name means ‘He who sprang out of the ant-hill.’ Said Brahma, the Fashioner of the worlds, ‘Know this mighty sage as Valmeeki, in as much he has come out of the Valmeeka (the ant-hill),’—*Brahma Kawartha Purana.*

i. “I am the tenth son of Varuna, the Lord of the Waters (or the 10th in descent)—*V. R. VII. 96,19*; “Thus was sung the Ramayana by the mighty son of Varuna; and Brahma signified his glad approval thereof”—*V. R., VII. 10.*

All through the countless years, trees and shrubs sprang around him, while an immense ant-hill arose on all sides, completely concealing him from view. Later on, Varuna, the Lord of the Waters, sent down heavy rains, which dissolved the strange tenement ; coming out of it, the Gods hailed him as the son of Varuna, as Valmeeki.—*Go. on V. R.*—I. 1.

ii. He came of the line of Bhrigu, the son of Varuna. *V. R.*, VII., 94.

Riksha of the line of Bhrigu, was later on known as Valmeeki. He held the office of Veda-Vyasa in the 24th Chatur Yuga—*V. P.* III, 3.

iii. He is the son of Varuna and brother of Bhrigu—*Bh.*, IV. 1.

iv. He is the same as Riksha, the son of Prachetas of the line of Bhrigu—*V. R.* I. 1 (Go.) He abides in the world of Indra. *V. R.* VII. 71—11. ; *M. B.* II. 7.

v. Once upon a time, there lived on the shores of lake Pampa, a Brahmana, Sankha by name. Journeying through the pathless woods that covered the banks of the Godavari, a fierce-eyed hunter sprang at him and was not long in transferring to himself the clothes, the ornaments, the water pot and even the leathern sandals of the unfortunate Brahmana. It was mid-summer and the sun was high in the heavens. His pitiless rays beat down upon the head of poor Sankha ; the red-hot sand burnt his tender feet to the very bone. He folded the rags that the cruel mercies of the hunter leftd him and stood upon them while the forest solitudes resounded with his screams of agony. The iron heart of the hunter grew soft towards him. " I did right" said he to himself "in depriving the poor fellow of what he had. It is but in the exercise of my duty and hereditary calling; but let me lay

by some small merit by giving him my old sandals." Sankha was profuse in his gratitude "May all good go with you! Verily, it is some good karma of a past life that put into your head the idea of making a present of a pair of sandals to a poor wayfarer and that, when he is in most need of it." The hunter was curiously affected with the prophetic words of the Brahmana. "Good sir! May I know what merit I have laid by in a former birth?" "Alas! replied Sankha, "the fierce sun almost melts my poor brains. My tongue cleaves to my mouth from dire thirst. Is this a place to dilate upon old-world stories? Take me to some cool shady spot where I may rest my poor limbs."

A ray of pity illuminated the dark recesses of the hunter's heart. Gently he led Sankha to the cool waters of a lake hard by; and the Brahmana plunged into its welcome depths, performed his midday prayers, offered due worship to the Gods, the Fathers and the Sages. Meanwhile, the hunter busied himself in providing his late victim with sweet fruits and roots; Sankha partook of them, and quenched his thirst at the limpid lake; then sought the leafy shade of a hospitable tree where the hunter followed him. "Now will I reveal unto you some glimpses of your chequered past" said Sankha.

"There lived of old a Brahmana, by name Stambha, of the clan of Sri Vatsa. In Sala town he abode and with him his beautiful wife Kantimayee, a model of wifely virtues and whole-hearted devotion; but, the wayward heart of the man turned away from her; and he so forgot himself, his manhood and the duty he owed to a lady and his wife, that he installed in his home a harlot, in whose witching smiles he lived. Outraged in everything that a woman holds dear and sacred, Kantimayee yet remained loyal to her unworthy husband; she was most assiduous in attending to the comforts of the man and

his paramour ; she anticipated their least wishes, supremely content if she could thereby win back her husband's love.

Years passed away thus ; and the wretch suffered the torments of Hell even before he reached it, in the shape of a cruel disease that made his days and nights one long agony. The woman who owned him body and soul, quietly robbed him of what wealth he had and sought another and more congenial companion of her pleasures. He came to know it and in his bitterness of his heart called down the deadliest curses upon the head of the betrayer and upon himself that so basely abused his wife's loyalty and love. " I stand alone in the world and helpless I have wilfully destroyed every chance of deserving any help from you or sympathy. My treatment of you was simply abominable. I placed the harlot in the sacred seat of the wedded wife ; I rejoiced to see the pure hands of my life's partner serve all meekly, the unclean animal I had taken to my heart. Cruel were my words to you and crueller my behaviour. The Holy Books tell us, that the husband who wrings the heart of his loyal wife is doomed to the miserable lot of a eunuch for ten lives and seven ; the finger of scorn will ever point at him. Now, the reed on which I lent has broken and pierced my heart." But Kantimayee lifted hands of appeal to him and cried, " Lord of my heart ! Your handmaiden is ever at your service. She is yours to command—now and ever. You shall not lack for any sympathy or service that my poor self can render. Strange it is that you should feel shame-faced to ask it of me. Never did the slightest shadow of resentment darken my heart against you. As for what you say of my cheerless life, do I not know that I only pay back what I owed in my former birth ? I made my bed and I must lie upon it. And when was a dutiful wife known to be otherwise than loyal and loving to her lord?"



Forthwith she sped to her parents and got from them the wherewithal to provide for his wants and necessities.

One hot day in June, Devala the sage crossed the threshold of the humble pair and requested hospitality. Kantimayee turned to her husband and said ' This holy man is a master physician. I am sure that he will relieve you of your cruel disease, if he is so-minded'. Thus she played upon his intense selfishness and unconsciously persuaded him to welcome the sage. She washed his scorched feet with cool water, placed a seat for him, fanned his weary limbs ; and when he had rested a while, entertained him with the very best her humble abode afforded. The water that washed his feet she took to her husband and said " This is a very potent medicine and fails not " ; whereat, he eagerly drained it at a gulp.

At last, the disease ate into his vitals and he became delirious with pain she procured some medicine and was trying to force it into his mouth, when the man was seized with terrible convulsions and expired biting off finger of poor Kantimayee. She sold her ornaments and jewellery, bought fragrant wood with it, placed her unworthy husband upon it, set fire to the same and lay by his side in sweet content and supreme peace of heart. She took her place in the House of Glory.

But the dominating tendency of his life asserted itself at the last moment and of the harlot was his last thought. The wheel of Karma has turned and he is now a hunter—the natural foe of the birds of the air and the beasts of the forests *You* are no other than that renegade Brahmana. Your partner in iniquity is now born among the hunters and is your wife. Since you consented, unconsciously though, to welcome and entertain the Rishi Devala, a ray of pity, a flash of something noble crossed your dark heart and induced you to relieve my

sufferings and make a gift to me of your old shoes. The holy water that washed the feet of the sage has purified your unclean spirit ; and you have been privileged to hear from me the details of your former life. In your last moments you bit off the finger of your faithful wife ; now you live upon the flesh of slain beasts. You died in your bed ; and now the hard earth is your only bed. Nay, I will reveal to you what will befall you hereafter." He opened the eyes of the hunter to his next birth, instructed him in the right way of spending the holy month of Vaisakha. The hunter, now supremely repentant, gave back to his benefactor the articles of which he had dispossessed him and saw him safely out of the dark woods. The unexpected turn thus given to his life was productive of very favourable results.

Krinu, the sage, spent long years of severe austerities on the banks of a beautiful lake. When it was over, his life essence streamed through his eyes ; a serpent swallowed it and the quondam hunter took birth in its womb. A Brahmana by birth, he was brought up by the rude hunters and took to their ways of living. He mated with a woman of the lower classes and had many children through her. He organized a gang of foot-pads, waylaid the travellers and lived upon his ill-gotten gains.

One day, the Seven Sages chanced to pass through the forest. Our Brahmana hunter promptly held them up. "Reverend Sirs! None pass this way without paying me toll. Nay, it is but duty that I owe my wife and my young ones. So I request you to make a transfer of everything valuable you have." The Holy Ones smiled in pity and said, "My good man, please yourself. But do us a slight favour. Go home and put to your wife and children the following question — 'You share with me the gains of my calling, do you not? Well ; doubtless you will take a share of the retribution natural to such a

life of lawlessness and cruelty as I lead.' Fear not, but we will remain here, even until you come back with their answer ; " and they bound themselves thereto by the most solemn oaths. The hunter could not clearly explain to himself what they were after. But such a simple request did not deserve to be refused. So he went home and put the question to his wife and children. But they laughed in his face and cried, "Are you gone mad? Who can deny that we have a right to a share of your earnings? But, as to a share of the results of your crimes, why, the very idea is supremely absurd."

The hunter was dazed with surprise at this outburst of frank selfishness. The holy presence of the Sages purified his nature and brought out its nobler instincts. So, back he sped to where his strange visitors were. Tears of repentance and grief streamed down his rugged face as he clasped their feet and exclaimed in despair, "Lords of Compassion ! blind have I been till now ; a life of cruelty and iniquity did I lead, and went back upon the noble traditions of the Brahmanas, to whom I belong by birth. I have run through the entire gamut of crime. And now I take my refuge in your mercy. Extend the shadow of your protection over me." No other helper have I.

Then they took council among themselves. "Our poor friend is a Brahmana ; but he has chosen to degrade himself and lead a hunter's life. Yet, he seeks refuge of us ; and it behoves us to do something for him. Let us try upon him the effect of the all-potent Name of Sri Rama. He can have no better weapon to fight his past evil." They called him unto them and said, "My good man ! We instruct you in the mystery of a very powerful mantra. But, as you have a long course of purification to go through, you cannot receive it as it is ; we shall reverse it for you. Meditate upon it with your heart and soul, day and night, till we come back."

They then whispered into his ears the syllables *Mara* and vanished from his sight.

The hunter planted his staff where they stood a moment ago and sat down there in all earnestness, in all sincerity, to meditate upon the mighty spell. Many thousands of years passed over his head. The world and all it held slipped away from his consciousness. His various bodies were gradually purified of everything gross and material and shone in their splendour and radiance. But there rose around him where he sat, a large ant-hill, that in course of time concealed him from view. The Sages were as good as their word. They came back to where their hunter-disciple sat, lost in profound meditation. "Come out into the living world" called they; and he came out from the ant-hill. The Sages laid their hands on his head in sweet blessing and said, "Holy One! The Name of the Lord has consumed your past sins. You have stood face to face with the Great Mystery. You are our equal. A second time were you born when you came out of yonder ant-hill. The world shall know you hence as Valmeeki (Son of the Ant-Hill)."

Thus did Valmeeki narrate the events of his former birth to Him whose life he sung.—*A. R. Rajya Kanda*. 14; *Ad. R.* II. 6; *Bhav.* P. III. 10.

Bhrigu and Valmeeki were the sons of Charshani and Varuna—*Bh.* VI. 10.

#### IV.—*The Number of Stanzas.*

The 7 cantos are divided into 500 chapters and 24,000 stanzas. (*V. R.* VII. 94). Govindaraja's commentary extends only to so many; But, the actual number is 24,253. The commentator explains it thus:—

1. It is many thousands of years since the poem was sung. Innumerable versions of it would naturally have

arisen ; the carelessness of the later copyists might have also contributed to this irregularity.

2. It may be that Valmeekı set himself to sing the epic in 24,000 stanzas ; but, he was obliged to exceed the limit, more especially as it was sung and not written.

3. We ought to take it that 24,000 is the lowest limit. The work would not fall short of it.

4. The Day of Brahma comprises 1,000 Mahayugas. A Manvantara is 1/14 of it; but Amara Simha, in his Lexicon has it that it comprises 71 Mahayugas, ignoring the fractional portion. Even so, 24 is the nearest total number in thousands, the odd stanzas being ignored. But, as it stands, the South Indian edition in Grantha characters commented upon by Govindaraja contains:

Cantos.	Chapters.	Stanzas.
Balakanda ... ..	77	2,255
Ayodhyakanda ... ..	119	4,415
Aranyakanda ... ..	75	2,732
Kishkindhakanda ... ..	67	2,620
Sundarakanda ... ..	68	3,006
Yuddhakanda ... ..	131	5,990
Uttarakanda ... ..	110	3,234
	647	24,253

*V—When was it sung ?*

Valmeekı composed this epic before Sri Rama celebrated his horse-sacrifice. Ravana and his brood had been wiped out.—V. R. I. 4.

Satrugna went to Mathura, killed Lavana in fair fight and ruled for over twelve years in his town. Returning to Ayodhya, he spent a night at the hermitage of Valmeekı ;

when he heard the grand epic sung by Kusa and Lava,—  
V. R. VII. 71.

“Whom shall I give it to” thought Valmeeki; and it so chanced that the royal twins Kusa and Lava touched his feet and begged to be taught the sacred song.—V. R. I. 4.

So Valmeeki must have composed it when Rama held sway at Ayodhya and had put Sita away from himself.

“When the Tretayuga draws to its close and its successor the Dwapara takes its place, in that Twilight of Ages, I come down on earth as Sri Rama, son to Dasaratha, and lift the load of sin and sorrow from her shoulders.”—  
*M. B. Santi Parva* III. 39

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#### VI.—*The Epic.*

“*This* we should do; *that* we should not. *This* secures to us happiness here and hereafter; *that* plunges us in misery now and for ever. *This* is good for us; *that* is not so.” Now, no one denies that such discriminative knowledge is extremely desirable and useful to all that make the journey of life. The Holy Writ (Vedas), the World-histories (Puranas), and the sacred Epics (Kavyas) give us such knowledge, if we but get at their Heart-Doctrine. Every one of these go to develop in us the same faculty of Right Discrimination; but, there is a difference in the process.

Now, the Holy Writ is almost kingly in its authority. There is no questioning it, no altering it. It must be taken as it is and must be obeyed to the very letter. You may not take out the word *Agni* in a Mantra and replace it by its synonym, say—*Vanhi*. Why? The results predicated would not come about; nay, evil, and that of no light kind will come out of it. “If a Mantra be not rendered aright in rhythm, intonation or accent, if the letters are misplaced or omitted, the results fail to appear; and the fool would

have drawn down death upon himself. Behold! Thwashta sought to create one who *could slay* Indra. But, a slight change of accent and intonation made it to bring into existence one who *was killed* by Indra.”—*Sruti*. We may not at present understand the results of each and every commandment; but we dare not disobey them; for it will bring forth evil. No one sits down to argue the orders of a general on the battle field or of a king on his throne; he does not analyse it, examine its legality, morality or philosophic fitness. Even so, study the Holy Writ with care, learn from it what to do and what to avoid. Follow the Right and keep away from the Path of Unrighteousness. But, all this is primarily based on an unreasoned desire for happiness and fear of evil.

Now, the World-histories adopt a milder tone. They command not, but offer friendly advice. “This one did right and lived in happiness here and hereafter. This another chose the path of wickedness and came to grief and misery now and beyond.” Thus we are led to conclude that Rama should be our ideal and not Ravana. This is the more pleasant way of learning the Rules of Life.

The Epic deals with the question in a different way. It is not the nature of women to wear their hearts on their lips; but, none the less, they obtain what they want—and very often more. Even so, the epics carry a meaning on their surface; but, there runs an under current of deep thought and instruction. Lovers of literature seek to pierce through the veil of words into that which lies beneath—the heart of the poet; and once found, it is a perennial source of joy. Hence, the epic is the best teacher of the three.

A perfect Epic is flawless in every way; it abounds in all excellences; it has a beauty all its own. Rightly has it been named “The child of the poet’s heart.”

There are three varieties of it. The Gadya Kavya (narrative prose) of which Kadambari is the type; the Padya Kavya (narrative poetry), represented by Raghuvamsa; the Champu (narrative prose and poetry), like the Bhojachampu.

Man has to hand countless materials that go to build up his Palace of Happiness; even so the Epic. The words and their connotations, these form its body; the Heart Doctrine is its breath of life; Metaphor, Simile, Hyperbole and the other Figures of Speech serve to adorn it gaily; puns, innuendos and the other inferred hints make up its list of personal excellences, bravery, fortitude, valour and the like. Vaidarbhi and the other varieties of diction are its generic attributes and ennoble it. Kaisiki and the other modes of style are its graceful motions. The harmonious arrangement of words is known as the Sayya, the soft bed on which it reclines at ease. Fire brings out the sweetness of objects and distil for us their essences; even so the Pakas, the various Modes of composition. These are the ingredients that heighten the beauty of the Epic.

Words fall into three classes :—

Vachaka, Lakshaka and Vyanjaka; likewise their meanings. The Vachya represents the connotation as laid down in authoritative lexicons. The philosophers hold that the primal words were assigned their respective significance by the Divine Being. The Lakshya seeks an allied and derivative signification where the first fails to be appropriate. The Vyangya comes to light when the words have been arranged in their grammatical order and have expressed their natural meaning; it is apart from the above and renders it more graceful and charming. Dhvani is another name for it.

There are numerous Figures of Speech, chief amongst which are a hundred. These do not belie the name given them of Alamkara (ornamentation). From Slesha (the



puṅ), to Gathi (the way), there are 24 Gunas (attributes) that go to make up the character of the Epic. These are to be found in the arrangement of the words themselves.

*Reeth* (Diction):—this excellent choice of words is divided into,

*Vaidarbhu*—difficult word-joinings, harsh letters and long compounds, find no place in it.

*Gaudi*—long and tedious compounds characterise it and harsh letters.

*Panchali*—a happy combination of the above.

*Vritti* (Style):—the words and the sense aptly render the varying emotions. This is of four kinds.—

*Kausiki*—reflecting the higher emotions of Love and Pathos.

*Arabhati*—painting the Wonderful, the Humourous and the Serene

*Satvati*—picturing to us the Heroic and the Dreadful.

*Bharati*—wherein the Terrible and the Repulsive find a voice,

*Sayya* —the words must be so arranged that their relations might not be far-fetched.

*Paka*:—unripe fruits are wrapped up in straw or otherwise subjected to the influence of heat to make them soft and mellow.

The nobility and grandeur of composition gives a beauty and charm to the emotions of the heart.

*Draksha Paka* (the Grape) • The grape requires not much effort to make it yield its sweet juice ; so, the piece charms us with its manifold graces even while we read it.

*Nalikera Paka* (the Cocoanut) You have to painfully remove its hard rind, break through the shell, get at the nut and even then, you have to chew it soft before you enjoy its refreshing juice. Even so, the Epic does not

easily surrender itself to you in all its beauty, but puts you through the veritable Labours of Hercules before it rewards you.

The *grape* melts in your mouth ; the *cocoanut* is hard to crack Between these are found the *Madhu* (the Honey) the *Ksheera* (the Milk), the *Kadali* (the Plantain), and the like.

*The Epic Inferior* has no Dhvani to boast of, but the superficial graces of words and their natural meanings. 'Chitra' is another name for it.

*The Epic Middling* —the natural meaning preponderates while the Dhvani peeps in now and then.

*The Epic Superior* —the Dhvani is essentially conspicuous and graces the words and their natural significance. Towns, the ocean, mountains, seasons, moonlight, sunrise, pleasant recreations in charming groves, aquatic sports, carousals, love-making, pangs of separation, wedding, birth of a son, councils of state, gambling, military expeditions, battles and the happy times of the hero have each a chapter or more devoted to them. Various feelings and emotions that sway the human heart find perfect expression. The chapters are not long and tedious. The metres used in them are sweet to the ear. Each chapter varies the metre at its close.

This is the Epic Perfect ; and the Ramayana of Valmeeki is its best exponent.

Such a work is a source of joy to us in this world and in the other. "An Epic brings us fame, wealth and worldly wisdom ; it keeps our feet from the Path of Evil ; it needs but be studied to charm ; it ever counsels us aright like a true love."—*Kavya Prakasa*.

"Who will say that the study of noble Epics destroys not the dark brood of sin and evil in us ? Whom does it not

charm ? Whom does it not save from the wiles of wrong?"—  
*King Bhoja.*

*The Maha Kavya, the Grand Epic.*

The Hero ennobles the Epic. His very name drives away from us the Things of Darkness, and gathers round us the sweet Angels of good. Such a one must be sung of by it.—*Bhamahacharya*

"The Mount Meru towers aloft in greatness and grandeur ; but the Tree of Plenty (Kalpaka) makes it more charming and graceful Figures of Speech, Style, Diction, and Modes do beautify the Epic. But the perfect Hero is its crest-jewel."—*Udbhatacharya*

"An Epic owes its life and fame to its noble Hero."—  
*Rudra Bhatta.*

"The Hero's noble attributes hold together the poet's word-gems that shine for all time around the necks of the lovers of literature."—*Salutya Meemamsa.*

The poet may be modest of speech and his attainments of no very high order ; but his choice of a Hero compels the attention of the most fastidious—*King Bhoja.*

Else, the wise pay no great heed to them.

The Maha Bharata lives for ever in the hearts of men, only because the Lord Sree Krishna forms its central figure and hero.

The Science of Reasoning finds a place in the life of the Great One, since it affords analogical evidence and inference that the Lord is the instrumental and material cause of the universe.

The Science of Ritual is also useful in this way. One should learn the Holy Writ first and then alone proceed to inquire into the nature of the various Rules of Life laid down therein ; so begins the teaching. It sets itself to bring home to our hearts the Divine attributes and excellences. It is the hand-maiden of the Royal Science of Self,

The Vedanta, the Science of the Absolute, leads us to the feet of the Supreme One by holding up for our veneration and ideal His countless perfections.

Q. The Monists hold that the Absolute has no attributes. How then can the Science deal with the same? How then can Vedanta profess to expound to us the nature and attributes of Brahman?

A. Though some passages deny any attributes to It, we can yet postulate that the absence of imperfection is perfection. Or, we predicate attributes of It in Its conditioned and manifested aspect. Hence, Sciences and World-histories find a place in the estimation of the Wise and attain deathless fame, in so far as they contribute to unfold to human minds the glory of the Great One.

The Ramayana of ValmEEKI is the oldest Epic in the world; and it bids fair to rule the hearts of men to the very end of Time.

He who sung it is throned aloft in the Temple of Fame. And why? Sree Rama, the Supreme One, is the Hero of his immortal poem. He is the noblest of the noble. His Name dispels the Things of Gloom and Darkness and Evil. All excellences find their perfect expression in him. "He who hath not drunk of the beauty of Rama's presence, he upon whom the benign glances of Rama have not rested, even for a while, the world throws him out as a thing peculiarly vile; nay, his very self scorns him."—*V. R. II. 17.*

Of a truth, it is but a waste of time and labour to study poems that come not up to the above level.

### *The Hero*

Fame and valour are his; the Aims of Life lie next his heart; round him centre the chief events; in him shine forth all heroic qualities; and he alone enjoys the supreme good that the poem holds out.

• The Hero must exemplify in himself the following :—

1. High birth (*V. R. II. 1*).
2. His natural beauty, though unadorned, should captivate the hearts of the beholders, even as though it was adorned to perfection.
3. He must hold his head higher than any other ruler of men and should bow to no other.
4. His munificence and generosity must quite overwhelm those that seek him.
5. The grandeur of his presence must illuminate the world, even like the noon-day sun.
6. A right adaptation of means to ends, a marvelous perception, almost intuitive, of the when, the where, and the how, of human actions.
7. A heart ever wedded to the Great Law (*V.R.II. 2*).
8. Divine origin (*V. R. II. 1*).
9. A perfect knowledge and mastery of all the knowledge of his time (*V. R. II. 2*).
10. Supreme simplicity and unassumingness.

The *Hero* is of four kinds —

1. *Dhurodatta*. Joy and sorrow, anger and grief have power to move him not. Deep is his heart beyond ken, even when overwhelming emotions would lay bare its profundity. He would not see any one, man or beast, in pain or grief, but would at once devote himself to relieve it. He is remarkable by the almost utter absence of self. He sees through the Eye of Wisdom and listens through the Ear of Experience. The Heroic emotions dominate in him.

- (2) *Dhuroddhata*. Proud and jealous, he is a man of impulses. Of fierce deeds, he boasts of them and of himself, whenever the mood is on him. His knowledge of things enable him to make others see and hear and feel

what he likes. Quick to feel and ready to revenge, the Terrible characterises him.

(3) *Dhura Santa*, Of infinite patience, all griefs touch him and vanish. He has ever a smile and a gentle word for all. The Serene finds its expression in him ; and he is a Brahmana as a rule.

(4) *Dhura Lalita*. He leaves the cares of state and its control to his sons or his ministers. The gentler and finer arts of life occupy his time and attention. A happy life and a quiet is what he aims after. The emotion of Love is the key-stone of his character.

### *The Rasas (Emotions).*

A modification of mental consciousness brought into existence through

(1) *Vibhava* —Youth, beauty, intelligence, the moon-light, the southern zephyr, the spring, the flowers, the joyous notes of birds and the like (V. R. IV. 1.)

(2) *Anubhava* —The witching glances of women, the play of their eye-brows, and the like.

(3) *Satvika* —Utter sympathy with others, even to the extent of experiencing in himself their joys and sorrows; and

(4) *Sanchari* :—The minor emotions, 32 in number, from Dispassion to Anxiety.

Nine are the *Rasas*, the flashes that play over the dark waters of the human heart—Love, Humour, Pathos, the Terrible, the Heroic, Fear, the Repulsive, Wonder and Serenity. Man and woman are moved strangely by each other ; and this is known as *Sthayi Bhava*, varying with everyone of the above emotions. But, till it developes into any one of these, the others should not dominate it ; the modifying causes, mentioned above, *Vibhava* and the like, should nourish it and give it an independent existence as a *Rasa*. Man loses himself in the experience of

it. (The above is a very superficial mention of the chief varieties ; but, the reader may profitably consult Dasa Rupaka and other works on Rhetoric).

Love, Valour, the Terrible, the Wonderful and the Serene ought to find a place in any narration of the life of the Hero.

If the above are in any way unsuited to the Hero-type selected ; or if the Hero and the Heroine are wanting in mutual and perfect love ; or if the love of the Heroine stands higher than that of the Hero , or if animals, birds and savages form the subject of narration or description, it is a Perversion of Emotion.

In the Ramayana, Love and the other Emotions find apt and perfect expression. Rama takes Seeta to wife and lives happily with her in his father's capital for many years. The course of true love runs smooth here. Ravana kidnaps her, and then we have a fine description of the miseries of separated lovers. The episode of Surpanakha is a fine touch of humour. Dasaratha pines away of sorrow, having lost, through his own folly, the son of his heart, Pathos, supreme and touching, characterises the entire scene. Lakshmana's deeds of valour illustrate the Heroic in man. Ravana and his impious brood, with their cruelties, their savage grandeur and their unbounded might, voice forth the Terrible. The incident of Mareecha and his kin is a fine picture of the Fearful. Kabandha, Viradha and their fellow-monsters, appropriate to themselves the Repulsive. Wonderful past belief are the deeds of battle and might of Ravana, Indrajit, Kumbhakarna and the like ; and Sabari, the woman-saint, embodies the Serene in her noble life. But, Love in its myriad aspects dominates the epic throughout ; the other emotions are but auxiliary. Some hold that the epic is titled ' The Fall of Ravana ' and that the Heroic is the master-emotion, while the others are but secondary. Others contend

that Valmeeki named his grand-work the *Seelacharitra*, and Grief forms the key-note of the whole, while the others are its complements.

### *The Heroine.*

She partakes to a very great extent of the excellent characteristics of the Hero, in so far as they are applicable to women. Her very name must be a Word of Power to keep away evil and attract the Angels of Light. (For a fuller description of the heroine and her innumerable varieties, Dasa Rupaka and other standard works on the Poetics may be consulted).

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### VI.—*The Aims of Life.*

“An Ithihasa should take as its subject some famous episode of the Past ; it should lead us to the realisation of Virtue, Wealth, Love and Beatitude ” says the *Sabda-sthoma*. The only World-records that come up to the mark are the Ramayana of Valmeeki, the Mahabharata of Vedavyasa and the Samhita of Gargacharya.

Valmeeki divides his grand epic into the *Purvakanda*, narrating the life and adventures of Sree Rama, the Divine Incarnation ; and the *Uttarakanda*, where Vasishtha initiates Sree Rama into the Science of Brahman. The former inculcates virtue, wealth and love , the latter forms the Light on the Path of Perfection.

*Virtue* consists in the proper discharge of duties that are consonant to the Holy Books, that do not militate against the Right, and that mark the stage of Evolution the Jeeva has reached.

*Wealth* is the acquisition and the enjoyment of the goods of this world, power, place, fame, authority, influence and the like.

*Love* is the master-passion that draws man and woman to one another.



Now, Valmeeki has utilised the various incidents in his epic to exemplify the workings of the above. A father's word is a law to the son; to discharge it to his very best is his duty; right or wrong, pregnant with weal or woe, he may not stop to consider; and Rama renounced, with a glad heart, the mighty empire that was his by right and exiled himself to the lonely woods.

Brotherly love, almost ideal, and the attitude of the younger towards the eldest, no where finds more touching expression than in the relations of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrugna to one another.

A wife's place is ever by the side of her husband. Sunshine or rain, joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, she should ever share it with him; and Seeta is the ideal wife for all time.

Sages, hermits, and holy men form the life and soul of a people; and a king's highest duty consists in seeing that they want for nothing and are protected against everything that might interfere with the proper discharge of their noble trust. Rama passed his word to the saints of Dandaka and laid low Viradha, Kabandha, Ravana and the other workers of evil.

Kings and Emperors in the pride of their power and might, are as nothing before the spiritual glory of a Brahmana; the superhuman efforts of Visvamithra and the humble reverence paid by Sree Rama, the Divine king, to the pure and the holy Ones are a lesson for all mankind.

Strength and power, wealth and valour far above the human, and fierce embattled hosts countless as the sands of the ocean, are as nothing, if the possessor thereof turns away from the Path of Right to work evil upon the good and the wise and uproot the foundations of Law and Justice; and the dreadful fate that overtook Ravana and the millions that owned his sway, is a warning not to be despised.

Virtue ever outweighs wealth in the estimation of the good ; Rama gave up, with a joyful heart, the kingdom of the Ikshvakus and the wealth of the earth.

Any service rendered to us, be it the slightest, should ever bear fruit in us, even like the seed of the spreading banyan. Jatayu, the Vulture-King, defended Seeta with his life; and Rama, the incarnation of the Divine, rendered unto him the last offices and passed him on to the Worlds of Light.

Sugreeva offered him his friendship, consolation and help, when Rama wandered, heavy of heart and sore of foot, in the frightful solitudes of Dandaka ; he preserved for him the ornaments that Seeta threw down to him when she was spirited away by Ravana , in return, Rama gave him back his wife and a kingdom along with her.

Vibheeshana, sore afflicted and pierced to the heart by the cruel words of his brother, sought refuge with Rama ; length of life beyond that of mortals and unbounded sway over the Rakshasas of the world were his reward.

Love should be ever in consonance with Virtue and Law ; else, it is sweet poison. Dasaratha laid his manhood at the feet of the imperious Kaikeyi, exiled his noble son to the dreadful forests even in the prime of his youth ; and—the slave of Love paid for it with his life. Rama yielded to the importunities of Seeta to chase the golden deer and—lost her. Vali deprived his brother of his wife, all unjustly and in hasty wrath, and—his life was the forfeit. Ravana laid violent hands on Seeta and—doomed himself to destruction, root and branch.

True it is there are only some episodes in it that place our feet on the Path of Liberation ; but, the mystery of Man, the Universe and the Absolute, the various Paths that lead to It do not find a prominent place in it. The Uttarakanda or as it is better known, the Vasishtha Ramayana, deals with it in its entirety. The Poorvakanda was taught to the royal

youths Kusa and Lava ; and the Science of Self may not be properly expounded therein. It is divided into six cantos of 24,000 stanzas; the sixth is further divided into the Poorva (Yuddha) and the Uttarakandas. The spiritual teachings in the Ramayana are given by Valmeeki to Bharadwaja. It is a monumental work by itself. It is arranged into six Kandas of 32,000 stanzas, the last canto being divided into the Poorva and the Uttara. It is more popularly known as Gnana Vasishtha Ramayana and the Yoga Vasishtha Ramayana. There are no grounds to class this among the minor Puranas, as some have done.

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#### VII. *Its divine origin.*

The Almighty Father sat on His Throne of Glory in the highest heavens. His consorts—Sree, Boomı and Neela (Divine Energies)—graced His side. The Angels of Light and the Emancipated Souls thronged the Divine Presence, singing His glories. But, the Lord's look was far away, to where His children groped in darkness on this mortal earth. "Ah me, the pity of it! they are as well entitled to be in my presence as any of these, but, they will not. As the grains of gold in the ball of wax, they are swirled among the waves of Matter and are lost." And out of the depths of His infinite compassion towards those poor souls ever bound to the Wheel of Time, He provided vehicles of manifestation to them, that might dedicate them to His service and thereby reach His feet. Yet, they *would* not be saved. A poor wretch was wringing his hands in despair on the banks of a torrent roaring in its flood. A kind soul took pity on him and gave him a boat well-furnished, saying, "My good man ! weep not. Take this boat of mine, and cross over to yonder bank swiftly and in safety." The poor wretch was profuse in his thanks ; he jumped into the boat and set her head against the current. But, alas ! when he was on the safe

side of the stream, his evil genius put it into his head to go along with the current, to where the river shattered itself to pieces over a sheer wall of rock and lost itself in the abyss below. Even so, the children for whom His heart bled misused the means of salvation so mercifully furnished them and were engulfed in the Quicksands of Pleasure. Then the Lord said to Himself, "Poor things ! they have no means of following the Right and keeping away from the Wrong"; and He gave them His commandments—*The Vedas*.

Yet, his children *would* not be saved. They failed to construe the Holy Books aright ; they misunderstood it ; they perverted its purpose. Then, like a king who sets out to reclaim his rebellious subjects by the might of his presence, He chose to come down from his Worlds of Light down to this dark dull Earth and resolved to take birth as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrughna; for, Example is better than Precept. The king sets the pace and his subjects do but follow him. Meanwhile, Brahma and the bright Gods had sought his protection from the terrible Rakshasas that hung like a pall of darkness over the worlds. Dasaratha had gone through untold austerities to have the privilege of being His earthly father. Further, has he not promised to all beings, " I come down among you in every cycle to lay low the wicked, exalt the righteous and to restore the Great Law.' As Rama, he rid the worlds of Ravana and was a type of filial duty. As Lakshmana, he killed Indrajit and lived out a life of sweet service to the Lord. As Bharata, he destroyed the wicked Gandharvas and made his life a touching lesson of supreme surrender to the Lord; and as Satrughna, he rid the earth of Lavana and illustrated in his life the noble doctrine of absolute service to the Lord's Elect.

Brahma, the Fashioner of the Worlds, ever intent upon the welfare of all beings, thought it a duty and a privilege to preserve for all time the grand Truths so taught

and so lived. He sung the Life of Sree Rama, in 100 crores of stanzas ; Narada and the other sages of the Brahmaloaka learnt it from him. Meanwhile, Brahma cast about for some pure and devoted soul through whom the message could be conveyed to the sons of men. Valmeeki, purified by centuries of devout meditation upon Sree Rama, and of recitation of his Holy Name, shone brightest among the mortals. And to him so nobly qualified for the task, he sent his son Narada. " Valmeeki received from Narada the life of Rama sung at great length by Brahma." (*Matsya Purana*). It dispelled for ever the doubts and questionings under which Valmeeki's soul had been labouring. The veil was lifted from the face of the Great Mystery. Brahma gave him the Open Eye of the Seer ; and the result was the grandest and the best epic poem in the world—even Ramayana, that forms the key to the heart-doctrine of the Vedas (*Go.'s Preface to his commentary upon the Ramayana*).

#### VIII.—*It is an Exposition of the Gayathri.*

Parabrahman the Absolute, is the Alpha and the Omega. The Pranava or the Word of Power, tries to convey to the universe the Triple Mystery, the Three in One and the One in Three. The Gayathri is an amplification, though faint, of the Word. It is the quintessence of the Vedas, the germ out of which they evolved. Of the 7 crores of Words of Power, it is the mightiest. The twice-born Brahmanas, Kshathriyas and Vaisyas meditate upon its countless mysteries when the Sun, the symbol of Life and Light, rises, when he stands high in the heavens and when he kisses his bride on the threshold of the west. It is the only means to secure the Aims of Life.

Now, wonderful to behold ! every thousand stanzas in

the Ramayana begin with one of the letters of the Gayathri. Hence, the Ramayana is something more than an epic poem ; something higher than a work of art.

Cantos	Chapters	Stanzas	Thousands
Bala	1	1	1,000
"	30	17	2,000
"	63	3	3,000
Ayodhya	14	37	4,000
"	44	5	5,000
"	71	33	6,000
"	99	25	7,000
Aranya	12	4	8,000
"	47	10	9,000
Kishkindha	4	3	10,000
"	31	1	11,000
"	67	50	12,000
Sundara	27	14	13,000
"	46	9	14,000
"	68	29	15,000
Yuddha	28	26	16,000
"	50	40	17,000
"	68	1	18,000
"	80	43	19,000
"	112	26	20,000
"	131	20	21,000
Uttara	22	8	22,000
"	40	29	23,000
"	77	27	24,000

#### IX.—'The Inner Meaning.'

"The Puranas and the Itihāsas unlock the mysteries of the Vedas" say the wise. Ramayana should, in consequence, deal with the problems of Life and Being.

"From whom does this universe derive its existence ? In whom does it live and have its being ? To whom does it

go back when its purpose has been served? It is Parabrahman" (Taiththareeya Upanishad). "But what is It to us, Brahma, the Ancient of Days? Vishnu, the Preserver? Rudra, the Destroyer?" Valmēeki's opening lines voice forth the same query. "Who is he that embodies in himself all these manifold excellences?" "Sree Rama" replies Narada. And at the end of the Poem, Brahma reiterates the same Truth. "In the beginning Thou wert; later on I was begotten of Thee. The whole universe was latent in Thee. Over the Great Waters Thou didst brood. The lotus came out of Thy navel; and on it I was. Thou didst ordain me as the Fashioner of Forms.—V. R. VII. 104.

The poet touches upon this point more than once in the course of the poem. "Meanwhile Maha Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe, manifested himself unto them, in His supreme glory. The Conch, the Wheel and the Mace graced His hands. The graceful folds of His vesture flashed as lightning through a storm-cloud"—do. I. 15. He is the Refuge of all, "Lord of Might, Terror of Foes! Thou art our sole Refuge"—do.

All creation lifts its voice on high, in praise of Him and Him alone; "Then the Gods, the Sages, the Rudras, the Gandharvas and the Apsarasas sang high the praises of the Lord in strains of noble melody."—do.

He is the Great One. Tapas alone can open our eye to His glory; "I know the mystery of Rama, the Great One, whose will is omnipotent. Vasishtha and the other sages here know it too, for, illimitable is their knowledge and power." (I. 19). "This Great Being shines resplendent beyond Darkness" (*Purusha Sooktha*). "The Brahmanas know Him through the teachings of the Vedas, through renunciation, through immortal Tapas." (Sruthi).

He is the Causeless Cause; "Brahma, the Fashioner," came out of the Unmanifested." (I. 70).

He is higher than the highest : " Then the Gods and the Sages knew that He was the mightier." (I. 75).

He is Time and Boundless Duration ; " The Gods prayed to Him for deliverance from Ravana, whose hand lay heavy upon the worlds ; and the Lord of Time, Maha Vishnu, came down unto the Earth " (II. 1).

He is the Eternal Light and pervades all ; " From the Unmanifested came Brahma, Eternal, all-knowing and all-powerful. (II. 110).

Inconceivable is His might ; " No limit do I see to the power of Him, whom Seetha, the child of Janaka, owns as her Lord." (III. 38).

All excellences attain their perfect expression in Him.—Being, Consciousness and Bliss. " Thou art the goal of the good ; Thou art the sole refuge of the miserable ; Thou art the balm that healeth the wounds of sorrow ; Thou art fame ; Thou knowest all things great and small ; Thou art the model of filial duty ; Thou art the Unknowable, the Unattainable ; Thou dost transcend the senses ; Thou teachest by example the highest Law ; Thy Name is engraved on the face of Eternity ; Thou art the head and foundation of knowledge and wisdom ; Thou art gentle and patient, even as Mother Earth ; Thy eyes are lovely as the fresh-blown petals of the red-lotus." (IV. 15-22).

He is the Great Destroyer. " The self-born One, the Ancient of Days, the four-faced Brahma ; the Destroyer of the Asuras of the Three Cities, the three-eyed Rudra ; and the lord of the Celestials, Indra, dare not come between Rama and the object of his righteous wrath. (V. 51).

The source of Form and Name, countless are His manifestations ; " I have heard it say that Maha Vishnu is higher than the highest, is the One, the Unmanifested,



endless and beyond thought and speech. Has He taken form as this monkey and come down among us to work our destruction?" (V. 54).

Q. "In the beginning was Hiranyagarbha"; "Darkness was not, nor day, nor night; Being was not, nor Non-being. It alone was." "Indra took countless forms through his power of illusion." Such Vedic texts lead us to conclude that Brahma, Rudra, Indra and such like may well be the cause of the universe.

A. "This great Yogi (Adept) is the Supreme Self, eternal, without beginning, middle or end. He is beyond Darkness, beyond the Mahat (the Great Element). There is none higher than He. He is the stay of the universe and its support. The divine weapons grace His hands. On His broad breast shines Sreevathsa, the mole. Mahalakshmi is his inseparable partner. He is invincible, immortal and eternal."

The above passage teaches us that He is the Supreme and no other. Being, Self and similar expressions do but denote Him; and Brahma, Siva, Indra and every other name is His. He is the highest Self. He is the Lord of matter and wisdom. He is Narayana; "Thou art Narayana; Thou art the eternal consort of the Divine Mother; Thou art omnipresent; Thou art the Great Boar with a single horn; Thou art the slayer of the wicked, past, present and future." (VI. 120).

Q. "The Gods regarded Vishnu as the higher." But we need not take that it was his natural position; but one acquired by Thapas from Siva.

A. Then, Rudra had no reason to be angry; but, we read that he was consumed with wrath when he handed over his bow. Besides, we read that he had no place of worship in Agasthya's House of Gods; nor was he regarded

as an object of worship. "Brahma, Vishnu, Agni, Indra, Soorya, Chandra, Baga, Kubera and others had their altars of worship." (III. 13).

*Q.* Why not take it that the above Beings came down to render worship to him? Rudra, as the highest, does not naturally find mention along with them; for, we read "Here do Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and Sages repair to offer their respects to Agasthya." (do. 11.)

*A.* Not so; the passage refers to the Celestials of the heavenly world, and not to Brahma or Vishnu. Besides, we erect places of worship to enshrine the Gods we bow to; not that the Gods come down there to pay reverence to us. Moreover, Paramasiva was not invited to partake of the offerings during the sacrifice of Daksha. He is not an object of worship to be placed on the same level as the Lord Vishnu; else, he would have found a place in Agasthya's temple. Salvation is in the hands of the Supreme One; and who is it but Sree Rama, whose grace lifted Jatayu to the Worlds of Light? Hence, the Ramayana teaches us that Maha Vishnu is the supreme Brahman, whom we perceive through his Holy Writ. "Listen to me, while I speak to the thousands assembled here. This poem that sings of your life and deeds, is the best and the grandest of all. This epic that unfolds your countless excellences to the hearts of all, is the first of its kind. None do I know that better deserves to be the hero of any epic, now and for ever; for, you are the rest and support of all" (do. VII. 98.) That is how Brahma speaks of the Lord; and he stands nearest to Him. It is but a waste of time and labour to apply the Ramayana and its incidents to Rudra.

*Q.* If Rama be the Supreme One, how is it that we hear of his worshipping the sun to strengthen himself against Ravana?

•A. "When you are in Rome do as the Romans do." He was in the world of men, and should behave as such. This explains his discipleship under Visvamithra.

So, the Balakanda teaches us that the Lord Vishnu is the Cause of the universe ; in the Ayodhyakanda, He appears as the Protector ; in the Aranyakanda, He leads his children unto his House ; in the Kishkindhakanda, His manifold excellences are brought home to us ; in the Sundarakanda, He appears in his irresistible might ; and in the Yuddhakanda, He is declared to be the goal of all knowledge, human and divine.

11

Q. This Supreme One. how is he realised ?

A. "He who brought into manifestation Brahma before the rest, He who imparted unto him the beginning and the end of all wisdom, He who illuminates our intellect and our soul, as supreme Deity thereof, Him do I take refuge in, desirous of Liberation." This Vedic text is the key-note of Valmeeki's poem. Supreme surrender to the Lord is the best means to accomplish our desires.

(a) "Meanwhile, the Lord of the Worlds, Maha Vishnu manifested himself unto them in his infinite glory. The Divine Weapons graced his hands, while his bright garments flashed as lightning from the heart of storm-clouds"—(V R. I. 15). The Supreme Lord was anxiously awaiting the moment when the Gods would appeal to him for help and protection. His glory was heightened as it were by the joy that the time had come for him to do good to them. He was ever armed and ever ready. "Smite Ravana sore ; burn him up" cried the Gods one and all. This is the first example we have of Surrender.

(b) The episodes of Sunassepha and Thrisanku teach that the highest duty lies in protecting those that seek

refuge with us. Ever seek the feet of Him who is able and willing, out of the mercy of his heart, to save you ; and you will not have asked in vain.

(c) " Lakshmana clasped the feet of his brother and took refuge with him, praying Seetha to intercede for him. (II. 31). So, an efficient Intercessor is a necessary element in Surrender.

" Until Rama grants my prayer, I quit not this hermitage, but shall ever call upon him in fasting and penance (II. 111).

Bharatha took refuge with Rama, as he desired to bring about his restoration to the throne of Ayodhya. But, the Lord had come out of it to fulfil his promise to the Devas ; so, he entrusted to Bharatha his sandals. He annihilated Ravana and his brood, redeemed his promise to the Gods, and later on, fulfilled the object which Bharatha sought at his hands. So, Surrender is never in vain.

(d) The holy hermits of Dandaka took refuge with Rama saying, " We live within your dominions and are entitled to your care and protection. We care not whether you are a crowned king at Ayodhya or a religious recluse in these lonely forests. You are our king everywhere and for ever." (III. 1). Residence within the dominions of the Lord forms a claim upon his mercy and amounts to seeking refuge with him.

(e) " The Crow of black heart sought shelter with his father, the king of the Gods, with the Celestials and with the Sages. But, they turned him away. The three worlds held none that dared to take him in. Back he came to where Rama sat and threw himself at his feet. The Lord of Compassion, the refuge of all, looked down in pity at the suppliant. His offence deserved cruel death and worse ; yet, the Lord spared him." (V. 38). This is another mode of taking refuge—clasping the feet of the deliverer,

(f) "You have offended Sree Rama ; I see no other means of saving yourself ; lift your hands to Lakshmana and appeal to his mercy." (V. R. IV. 32) This advice of Thara reveals to us yet another mode of it—clasping our hands in humility and reverence.

(g) "Ravana ! Have you a mind to live in peace and prosperity ? Would you save yourself from a terrible death ? Then, make a friend of Sree Rama, the Ideal man ; for, know you not that he embodies in himself the Law ? They that seek refuge of him, for ever leave behind sorrow and pain, fear and grief" (*Ib.* V. 21). So said Seetha. Verily, the turning of the heart to the Lord amounts to taking refuge in him.

(h) "Ravana treated me as a vile slave and put me to shame before all. His sharp words pierced my heart through and through. So, I have cast behind me wife and child, wealth and luxury, and sought refuge with Rama." (*Ib.* VI. 17). Vibheeshana, who spoke the above, teaches us that we should rid ourselves of such obstacles as would stand in the way of our seeking refuge with Him. Further on, we read that "Rama spread the sacred grass on the sands of the ocean and lay upon them with folded hands and face turned towards the East (*Ib. id.* 22).

Q. But, his efforts were in vain ?

A. Our would-be saviour must have the heart and the arm to free us from our sorrow and fear ; but, the Ruler of the Waters was not one such.

(i) "A terrible doom hangs over the heads of the Rakshasas and through Rama. So, let us lift our hands in humble entreaty to Seetha to intercede for us." (*Ib.* V. 27). Thus spoke Thrijata ; and the other Rakshasi-guards signified their assent thereto by their silence. Later on, this bore wonderful fruit, in that Seetha saved them from the vengeance of Hanuman. So, it appears that one can take refuge and extend the benefits to others.

(j) Vibheeshana sought shelter of Rama ; but, the four ministers that accompanied him were saved along with him. So, the Lord's protection extends even to those that accompany the suppliant.

Enough has been said to prove that Valmeeki regards the Doctrine of Refuge as the sole path that leads to Liberation, and realises for us our utmost wishes here and hereafter.

## iii

Service to the Lord is the first fruits of our efforts in this direction ; and then, the delight of His presence. This is another Truth underlying the epic.

(a) The Gods sought refuge with the Lord from the cruelties of Ravana. But, they took birth of Yakshas, Gandharvas, Apsarasas and Sages to render homage and sweet service to Him ; the death of Ravana came later on.

(b) " Brother mine ! waking or sleeping, day or night, your humble servant am I, in the lordly capital or in the lonely woods." (*Ib* II. 31). Lakshmana spoke so in the height of his joy. Rendering humble service to the Lord and our best, at all times, in all places, in all conditions of life is the supreme reward of Surrender.

(c) Bharatha prayed that Rama should come back to Ayodhya as its king, only that he may be allowed to render him service. But, he was made to offer them to the sandals of Rama before he realised his wishes.

(d) The saints and sages that abode in the forest of Dandaka claimed the protection of Rama from the cruel Rakshasas. But, they were rewarded first by his sweet presence and sweeter speech. He dawned upon their vision like the radiant moon, and they poured out their hearts in fervent blessings.

(e) " Sugreeva, the child of the Sun, gave this signal proof of his valour and humbled the pride of Ravana ; after

which, he flew back to the side of Rama." (*Ib.* VI. 40). Said Vibheeshana "I have put behind me Lanka, my friends in it and my wealth. My life, my kingdom, my friends, my all is centred in you." (*Ib. id.* 19) Both looked upon the humble service that they offered to Rama as the prime reward of seeking his protection.

(*f*) The Crow besought him to spare his life ; and it was done. His cry was not in vain. But, he must be taught to turn his feet for ever from the way of the wicked ; and his eye was the forfeit.

(*g*) Rama of the Axe came with a heart tall with pride ; and Sree Rama drew his shaft to his ear to destroy for ever the hopes of the proud warrior. But, when the scales fell from the eyes of Parasurama, he recognised His Lord and Master ; and prayed that the shaft may destroy what stood in the way of his attaining Emancipation.

(*h*) The Ruler of the Waters heeded not the command of Rama ; but, when he found that Rama's shaft was consuming him, he prayed to be saved. Rama, out of his infinite compassion, spared him ; nay, the shaft was directed against the wicked Asuras that harassed the ocean-king.

He who seeks refuge must be conscious of his utter inability to save himself. He should be denied shelter by every one. Now, Rama possessed not these essentials. Further, the Saviour must be omniscient, must be omnipotent, which the ocean-king was not. But, Vibheeshana, proud in the fulfilment of *his* prayers, requested Sree Rama to imitate him. But Sree Rama was not Vibheeshana ; nor the ocean-king Sree Rama.

There are no stringent conditions about this Doctrine of Refuge—time, place, qualifications and the like.

Hence, the Ramayana is an Exposition of the Doctrine of Surrender (Saranagathi Grantha).

The Lord's might and his wisdom were made manifest

in his breaking of the bow of Rudra ; in the humbling of Parasurama; in the piercing of the seven Sala trees ; and in the bridge that he cast over the rebellious ocean. His behaviour when he was separated from Seetha, brings out the supreme compassion of his heart and its pathos. His friendship towards Guha, Sabari and Sugreeva reflects his goodness. He protected Visvamithra's sacrifice from the Rakshasas that threatened to destroy it. He saved the sages of the Dandakaranya from the night-rangers that afflicted them sore. He gave refuge to the Devas who groaned under the iron heel of Ravana, Indrajith, Kumbhakarna and their followers. Those that had the good fortune to be born in his kingdom enjoyed the delight of his presence, and were privileged to have before their eyes a living ideal of everything good and great. And when He went back to his abode on high, he took them along with him and gave them a place near his throne. These are proofs enough of the Lord's protective power. We can best realize our heart's fondest hopes only by taking refuge in the Lord, who shows forth in perfection such excellences as power, compassion and goodness. But yet, service to the Lord comes before the attainment of a place near his Throne of Glory. That is our chief reward ; the others are but incidental, and by the way.

## IV

*The Glorious life of Seetha* is how Valmeeki has named his great work. Thrice was she separated from her lord and husband ; supreme compassion is the key-note of her character ; she is after the Lord's own heart. Now these attributes are essential to the One who is to be our Intercessor when we take refuge in the Lord.

(a) The black-hearted crow owed his life to *Seetha's* intercession. Ravana had it not and lost his life.



• (b) Vibheeshana took refuge with Rama through an Intercessor. "The world knows me as Vibheeshana. I take my refuge in Rama. Let him know it" (*Ib.* VI. 17.) Likewise, Rama accepted the suppliant through Sugreeva, the Intercessor and said, "Lord of the Monkeys! Bring him unto me." (*Ib. id.* 18.)

(c) Sugreeva himself sought refuge with Rama through Hanuman, who interceded for him.

The above teaches us to know that we should seek the Lord's mercy only through an Intercessor ; or, we lose the benefit of it.

*We are the servants of the Lord.* Lakshmana exemplified this grand truth throughout his long life of devotion. "We are the sons of Dasarathha; and I come next to Rama. His excellences drew me on to serve him"; (*Ib.* IV. 4). "Accept me as your humble servitor. It is perfectly consonant with Law and Justice. Service rendered to you will realize for me the utmost hopes of *my* heart and it will go far to aid *your* work among men." (*Ib.* II. 31), said he, to emphasize the relations between himself and Rama.

## vi

Bharatha could not contain himself and wept aloud before the assembled audience. He condemned Vasishtha for giving such pernicious advice. "I and this kingdom do belong to Rama. I pray you to advise me what is just and proper in this contingency." (*Ib. id.* 82). "Lakshmana would not hear of it, and Rama but wasted his words upon him. So he was obliged to install Bharatha as heir-apparent". (*Ib.* VI. 131). The above illustrates the truth that Bharatha, of all, regarded himself as the property of the Lord, body and soul, to do as he liked.

Bharatha started from Ayodhya to pay a visit to his mother's brother and took with him Sathrugna, the faultless. The insidious foes that work our ruin—Love and Hate and their kin—were kept by him under his foot ; and joyfully did he follow his master. (*Ib.* II. 1). He was the living exponent of the sublime Truth, that the best that a man can do is to be at the absolute disposal of the Lord's Elect.

The Supreme, the Individual Self, the Means, the Goal and the Barriers—these are the five Basic Truths of Divine Wisdom. The Ramayana is an authoritative exposition of these, in that the deeds of Rama illuminate the nature of Brahman. The life of Lakshmana typifies the ideal Jeevathma (Individual Self). The various instances of the Doctrine of Surrender illustrate the nature of the Means. The episodes of Bharatha, Vibheeshana and others bring out in definiteness the Goal as embodied in the service rendered to the Lord. And Ravana and his kin represent the Barriers

(a) The very Gods are no good to save us. Ravana secured marvellous boons and powers from Brahma and Siva ; but, they failed him against Rama.

(b) He that gives us birth can lift no hand to save us from grief. Dasarathha had to be an impotent spectator of his son's misfortunes.

(c) The crow insulted Seetha past forgiveness ; and neither its parents, the king and the queen of the Immortals, nor its kith and kin could stand between it and its fate.

(d) Sons and brothers cannot ward off the danger or the difficulty that overhangs us ; else, Vibheeshana and

Kumbhakarna could have saved Ravana, their brother, from the wrath of Rama ; or for the matter of that, Indrajith, his son, mightier than all.

So, it is brought home to us that *the Lord is our only refuge.*

Hanuman and his doings in the capital of the Rakshasas is a hint to us, that we should seek to know of the nature of the Lord only through the Teacher.

## xi

“Rama, the terror of his foes, will shatter this town to pieces with his fiery arrows, and lead me forth hence in triumph ; no other course befits his greatness and valour” said Seetha (*Ib.* V. 68.) Even when one is qualified to receive the Lord’s Grace, he should patiently wait until the hour strikes for him to throw off his mortal coil, and stand before the Lord. For, Lanka, the capital of Ravana, is but the group of vehicles that the Self uses. Ravana, is the sense of I and Kumbhakarna is the sense of Mine. Indrajith and all the fierce-hearted Rakshasas do but typify Desire, Anger, Greed, etc. Vibheeshana, the bright exception, personifies Discriminative Knowledge. Seetha, the Individual Self, is confined by past Karma within the material vehicles. Hanuman, the Teacher, opens its eye to the mysteries of the Lord. It rests with Him to dissolve this fleshly tabernacle and lead out the imprisoned self into the light of Liberation.

## xii

Such noble Beings as Rama are to be our ideals of conduct now and for ever ; while Ravana and the like, are the rocks upon which we would wreck and which we should avoid,

From the account of the inhabitants of the thrice-blessed Kosala, we learn that we should ever seek to dwell only where the Lord deigns to be.

The Ramayana must of necessity form the subject of daily study and meditation, in that it expounds the mysteries underlying the Two Truths.

The Balakanda treats of the marriage of Rama with Seetha ; in other words, it describes the Absolute, of which Matter and Consciousness are the two poles. This unmanifested aspect of Father—Mother, Purusha—Prakrithi or Parabrahman—Moolaprakrithi is expressed by the syllable *Sreemath*.

The Ayodhyakanda narrates at great length, the perfections of Rama, and his ideal observance of all duties. It represents for us the Supreme one as Narayana, in his manifested aspect, 'He who broods over the waters.' This is the connotation of the next word *Narayanasya*.

The Aranyakanda gives us a vivid and entrancing picture of the Lord's divine form and beauty. This is how He shines forth in his Garment of the universe.

" In the roaring loom of Time I play,

And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by"—*Goethe*.

This is the inner sense of the next word *Charanam*.

The Kishkindha and Sundara kandas are object-lessons of the doctrine of Supreme Surrender to the Lord. This is the next and the natural step that one should take, when he has grasped, through his mind and spirit, by intense thought and meditation, the mystery of the Absolute, the Unmanifested and the Manifested. The next syllable *Saranam* expresses for us the quintessence of this teaching.

The Yuddhakanda tells us how Vibheeshana, born and brought up in the most adverse surroundings, yet, turned

away from the path of the ungodly, took refuge in the Lord and received his reward. The next syllable *Prapadye* lays down the how of it, the actual Process, the practical realization of it.

So far the Poorvakandas of the Ramayana. The Uttarakanda gives us the key to the apparent contradictions in the nature of Ravana, his intense piety, his wide knowledge, his deep erudition and his terrible acts; the ultimate motive of his life is laid bare for us—why he abducted Seetha. Those that rendered humble service to the Lord,—those that were labourers in His vineyard—Hanuman, Vibheeshana, Jambavan, Sugreeva and his monkey hosts—and the happy dwellers in the dominions of Rama, were taken by him even unto where he abode in his Worlds of Light, while some of them remained on earth, faithfully to discharge the trust placed in them by the Lord and work for the regeneration of that great orphan—Humanity. The other part of the Manthra or the Second Truth, voices forth the supreme mystery of Mukthi—Liberation, Emancipation, Beatitude, Consummation, Nirvana, call it what you like.

## xv

What Manthra shall we meditate upon all through our life? What is the Word of Power, that will make us Lords of Time and Wisdom? The Gayathri; and the Ramayana is but its exoteric exposition. The Lord Almighty, the Veda Purusha, is the Causeless Cause of the Universe. This is the basic truth that underlies the Balakanda. His countless perfections and excellences form the theme of the Ayodhya and the Kishkindhakandas. The divine form, the Robes of Splendour in which He manifests himself, is described to us in the Aranyakanda, as the ravishing beauty of Rama, that attracted unto him the sages, the saints, the ascetics

and the hermits of the wild woods of Dandaka, men of stern self-control and iron discipline. The glory of the Lord, in so far as it shines through his Garments of Matter, the Universe, is symbolised in the episodes that form the subject of the Sundarakanda, *The Beautiful*,—aptly so named.

The Yuddhakanda imparts to us the means of reaching His Feet. The Uttarakanda takes us to the Goal—Mukthi. Now, the six parts of the Gayathri mantra set themselves to teach the same Truths.

## XVI

Shun those that would seek to destroy your faith and devotion to the Lord.

Turn thy heart away from the atheist, the materialist, the ungodly, who would have no god but himself and no law but his will. The arguments put into the mouths of Jabali (*V. R. II. 109*) and Lakshmana (*V. R. VI. 83.*) are refuted most effectively and conclusively by Rama. It is a warning to all right-thinking men to keep away from the teachings of the Charvakas (Materialists), the Madhyamikas (Buddhist Nihilists) and the like.

## XVII

Great men are often beset with troubles and difficulties. So, we should gradually wean ourselves away from the joys and sorrows of worldly life and centre ourselves in the Eternal. Rama and Lakshmana were bound by the divine weapons, the Nagasthra and the Brahmasthra. The Divine One had to renounce his kingdom, power, friends and relation, and exile himself to the frightful solitudes of Dandaka. The wife of his heart was taken away from him by force by a Rakshasa. Hence, we are exhorted not to place our trust on things transient and vain. *Govindarajeeya*,

*The Inner Meaning. II*

Mahavishnu, who is Beness (*Sat*), Consciousness (*Chith*), and Bliss (*Ananda*), is the shoreless ocean. The desire that sprang in Him to relieve the Earth of her burden of woe and misery, is the first wave in the still calm waters of it. The Individual Self is the first spray thrown out of it. The city of Ayodhya is the Akasa within the heart. Dasarathha, its ruler, is the pure Anthahkarana (Composed of *Manas* Mind, *Buddhi* Reason, *Chiththa* Feeling and *Ahamkara* Egoism) dominated by the quality of *Sathva*, Harmony. His queen Kausalya is *Buddhi* Reason in its *Sathvika* aspect. Rama, the son born to them, is the Self in its *Thureeya* state (beyond *Jagrath*, waking consciousness, *Swapna*, dreaming consciousness and *Sushupthi* consciousness in dreamless slumber). Lakshmana is the same Self in the *Jagrath*, Bharatha in the *Swapna*, and Sathrugna in the *Sushupthi*. These are the various manifestations of the Self. Rama followed *Visvamithra* from Ayodhya to guard his sacrificial rite; the *Thureeya* Athma is attracted by the mind. Rama slays *Thataka* the *Rakshasee*; the Self destroys the evil tendencies of the mind. He broke the bow of *Siva*; the Self curbs the fleeting course of the mind. He marries *Seetha*; the Self is enveloped in *Maya*. Rama puts down Rama of the Axe; the Self obtains mastery over the *Karmic Vasanas* (affinities generated in previous births). He exiles himself to the forests of *Dandaka* at the word of *Kakeyee*; *Buddhi* in its *Thamasic* (dark) aspect, leads the Self into *Samsara* (material existence). He kills the monster *Viradha*—the rooting out of *Pride*. Rama, Lakshmana and *Seetha* reside in a lowly cottage at *Panchavati*; the Self descends at last into the house of flesh, built up of the five elements and rests there after his long journey. *Soorpanakha* assails him, and loses her nose and ears; *Desire* is deprived of its sting. *Khara*, *Dooshana* and *Thrisiras* fall in battle with

Rama ; Lust, Anger and Greed are destroyed. Mareçcha lures Rama from his abode, and is laid low ; the Self shakes itself off from the trammels of Delusion. He is parted from Seetha ; the Self is freed from the bonds of Maya in its pure aspect. Ravana carries her off ; Egoism overpowers Maya. Kabandha, the deformed, falls beneath the sword of Rama ; Grief and Sorrow are annihilated. He comes across Hanuman ; the Self has an overflow of pure devotion. He seeks the friendship of Sugreeva ; the Self is endowed with Right Discrimination. Vali is shot down by him ; the Self destroys Ignorance. Later on, he secures the aid and alliance of Vibheeshana ; the Self develops its will so as to render itself invincible. He causes a bridge to be thrown over the wide ocean ; the Self finds a means to cross the waves of Nescience. Lanka on the top of Thrikoota, is the Linga Deha (the subtle body), characterised by the three Gunas (Rhythm, Mobility, and Inertia). Rama slays in battle dire Kumbhakarna, Indrajith and Ravana ; the Self triumphs over Conceit, Envy and Egoism. Seetha passes through fire to vindicate her purity ; Maya, rendered impure through its association with Egoism, passes through the fire of Purification. They leave Lanka and travel back to Ayodhya ; from the consciousness in the subtle body back to the Akasa in the heart. Rama is crowned king over the dominions of his ancestors ; the Self experiences Supreme Bliss. Sometime after, Seetha is sent away to the hermitage of Valmeeki ; the Self parts with Maya. He takes her back to himself ; Maya in its Sathvika aspect is eternally wedded to the Self. At last, Rama descends into the waters of Sarayu ; the Akasa in the heart is unified with the Boundless Akasa. And this is the realization of the Self as Beness, Consciousness and Bliss. This is Mukthi, the Consummation—

*A. R. Vilasakanda III.*



*The Inner Meaning. III*

The sea that separated Lanka from the mainland, 100 Yojanas across, is the shoreless sea of Samsara, characterised by the consciousness of I and Mine. Lanka is but the Upadhi or Vehicle of the Jeevathma. Everything but the Supreme Self is dependent upon it—like a woman. Nescience (*Avidya*) is the Asoka garden. The pure Buddhic aspect of the consciousness of the Jeevathma is Hanuman. Kumbhakarna, Ravana and Vibheeshana stand for the three Gunas, Sathva (Rhythm), Rajas (Mobility), and Thamas (Inertia). Hanuman gives Seetha the ring of her Lord as a token, initiates Buddhi the Individual Self, in the Tharaka Manthra (the word of liberation). The Jeeva must do away with the notion that he is dependent upon any other thing but the Lord; Hanuman sets Lanka on fire. The griefs and tribulations of the Jeeva are laid before the Lord by the compassionate Buddhi (Pure Reason); Hanuman takes back to Rama the news of Seetha's miserable state. Rama crosses over to Lanka in the might of his power; the Jeeva within the Upadhi is blessed with a vision of the Lord. The fall of the Rakshasa brothers is but the annihilation of the Rajasa and Thamasa Gunas. The ministers and followers of Ravana are the modifications of the Rajasic and Thamasic Consciousness. Vibheeshana is installed as monarch of Lanka; the pure Sathvic guna is enthroned in the Upadhis. Rama causes Seetha to be brought unto him; the Jeeva realises the Higher Consciousness. She passes through fire, the Self bathes in the cleansing waters of the Viraja and casts off the Karmic affinities latent in the Sookshma Sareera. The God of Fire renders back Janaki to Rama; Self puts on its Robes of Light, in which it can stand before the Throne. Seetha travels back to Ayodhya with Rama in the aerial car Pushpaka; the Individual

Self sits by the right hand of the Lord. Sree Rama is enthroned at the capital of the Ikshvakus and Seetha by his side ; the Jeevathma becomes one with the Brahman. Sugreeva, Angada, and the leaders of the monkey host stand for Manas (Mind), Chitta (Feeling), and the other Emotions. The monkeys themselves are the mental functions. Hanuman and his fellows break down the honey-grove, the royal preserves of Sugreeva ; the various modifications of the Mind are controlled and stilled Rama and his forces cross the Ocean of Egoistic consciousness—(*Anonymous*).

#### *The Inner Meaning. IV*

The Pranava, the Word, is the Beginning and the End of every thing. From its first letter A, arose Lakshmana, the Visva; he is the Jeeva in his Sthoola Sareera (Gross body). From the second letter U, arose Sathrugna, the Thajasa ; he is the Jeeva in the Sookshma Sareera (Subtle body). From the third letter M, arose Bharatha, the Pragna , he is the Jeeva in the Karana Sareera (the Causal body) The Ardhamathia (the prolongation of the sound), is Sree Rama, the Supreme Brahman. Seetha is the Moolaprakrithi (Primal Matter). Through the force of the presence of Sree Rama, she carries on the functions of Evolution, Preservation and Involution of the Kosmos. As Pranava, she is also styled Prakrithi.

Yagnavalkya, the great yogin, approached Athri, the mind-born son of Brahma, and said, " Mahadeva meditated for countless ages upon the holy name of Sree Rama and sought after him with a devout heart. The Lord manifested himself unto him and said ' Brother ! Ask what thou wilt ; and it is thine.' Mahadeva spake unto Sree Rama, the Supreme One, ' Lord ! Grant thou this boon, that the souls that quit their fleshly vehicles on the

banks of the Ganga and especially at Manikarnika, so dear to me, may be freed for ever from the trammels of material existence.' And unto him replied the Lord, 'Brother! Those that quit their mortal coil in the spot sanctified by thy presence, be they men, be they beasts of the field, be they birds of the air, be they the worms that painfully crawl on the earth, all without exception, shall verily come unto me. And as a visible guarantee of the promise I make to you, I do abide for all time in the Holy Kasi. Those that meditate upon me and my Name of Power in that holy spot, are freed from all their sins, even the deadliest ; and this I do solemnly declare unto you Those that receive from thee and from Brahma my Six-lettered Manthra, are invested with every power that they may desire ; they cross the ocean of Samsara (material existence), and come unto me. They in whose right ears thou whisperest my Manthra when they depart from this life, do sit by me for ever."

Yagnavalkya called unto him Bharadwaja, and said, "The first letter of the mantra of Rama connotes Sree Rama himself, who is Absolute Consciousness, Unbounded Glory and Supreme Splendour. The very Gods ever meditate upon him to secure Emancipation. He who daily recites this holy Manthra is washed pure of all sins. He lays in the accumulated merit of countless sacrificial rites ; the merit of having recited a hundred thousand times, the whole body of the Ithihasas, the Puranas and the Rudra ; the merit of reciting the sacred Gayathri a hundred thousand times ; and the merit of reciting the Pranava millions of times. He exalts ten generations that go before him and ten that come after him. He purifies those whom he comes across. He is a great soul. He realises Beatitude"

The following texts from the far-off Past do reveal the same Truths. " Many are the manthras associated with such

Beings are Ganapathi, Mahadeva, Sakthi, Soorya, Vishnu, and the like; but the manthra of Sree Rama is their Crown. Alone it has power—this Six-lettered Manthra—to confer upon us the highest good—and that most easily. There are no sins it cannot destroy. Hence, the wise know it as ‘the *Royal Manthra*.’ As a spark of fire in a mountain of cotton, it consumes to nothing all sins, conscious or unconscious, that one may commit during the year, during the month, during the fortnight, during the day. The five Deadly Sins and the millions of lesser ones vanish before the might of this Manthra. Bhoothas, Prethas, Pisachas, Koosmandas, Rakshasas and other Beings that inhabit the Bhuvanloka (the Middle world), dare not approach where the holy Manthra is recited. Happiness here, the delights of the world of Gods, and final Emancipation are the meed of him who clings to it. The slaughter of animals wild and tame; the sins of our accumulated past lives; the sins of tasting what is forbidden; the sin of robbing a holy Brahmana of his gold or gems; the sin of slaying a Brahmana, a Kshathriya or a Vaisya; the sin of foul incest or adultery; the sin of associating with the wicked, of eating with them, of sleeping with them; the sin of parricide, matricide and regicide; the sin of wantonly defiling our vows and observances; the sins that we consciously commit, waking, sleeping or in dreamless slumber; the sins consciously committed in such holy places as Kurukshethra, Kasi, and the like; the sins that countless pilgrimages to the sacred spots of the earth cannot wash away; the sins that the hardest penances and the severest mortifications cannot wipe off; the sins that a gift of one’s own weight in gold cannot condone—all these and much more does the holy Manthra annihilate.

Those lands in which Sree Rama is revered, worshipped and meditated upon, know not famine, plague, pestilence

or sorrow. It has not its equal. It is the easiest passport to the grace of Sree Rama. The Lord grants his devotee length of years and happiness here ; and at the end of his life, He takes him even unto Himself; yea, even unto Himself—" *Ramathapim Upanishad.*

*The Inner Meaning. V.*

Once upon a time, Sanaka and the other Eternal Virgins approached Hanuman and requested to be initiated in the mysteries of the holy Rama Manthra. And unto them said Hanuman, " Sree Rama is the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Truth, the Path of Emancipation. The Lord Mahadeva, and he alone, knows in its entirety the grand mystery of the Holy Manthra ; for, it forms the subject of his deep meditation ever. The eight-lettered Narayana Manthra, and the five-lettered Siva Manthra are the highest in their line. But, the most potent letters of either, the very heart of them, are drawn out and go to make up the Holy Name. The former, devoid of the single letter, means ' Not towards the securing of the highest heavens,' ; and the latter, shorn of its letter of power, means ' Not towards the realisation of Absolute Goodness.' Hence, the Rama Manthra combines in itself, the essence of all the Manthras dedicated to Siva or Vishnu.

The first letter *R* is the Germ of Fire ; it denotes the Supreme Self, the Sachchidananda, the Self-radiant. The same consonant without the vowel, denotes the Brahman beyond all limitations. The next letter *A* stands for Maya. The union of the two making *Ra*, signifies the descent of the Self-radiant One into Matter. The next letter *Ma* is the Germ of Eternity, and Immortality and denotes Supreme Bliss and Goodness.

As in a tiny seed of the banyan is contained the wide-spreading tree, so in the germ of the Rama Manthra is

contained the whole Universe, animate and inanimate, as the Effect in the Cause. The Supreme Brahman is beyond Maya. The letter *Ra* corresponds to the syllable *Thath* in the Mahavakya (the Great Sentence); *Ma* stands for *Thwam*; the union between the two is rendered by *Asi*. But, the Mahavakya is capable of conferring only Emancipation, while the Rama Manthra secures to us Happiness here and Emancipation hereafter. Besides, it is not allowed to all to recite or to meditate upon the Mahavakya; while the Rama Manthra is the common property of all. As the expression of Pranava, the aspirant for Emancipation or the man of dispassion, or he that has renounced the world to work for it, may with profit to meditate upon it. Hence, it is higher than the Mahavakya and more practically useful. He who grasps and assimilates the manifold mysteries embodied in this Sree Rama Manthra, attains Emancipation even here. Doubt it not, yea, doubt it not." —*Ramarahasyopanishad*.

#### *The Inner Meaning. VI.*

From the letter *A* arose Brahma, known on earth as Jambavan. From the letter *U* arose Upendra, known on earth as Sugreeva. From the letter *M* arose Siva, known on earth as Hanuman. From the Bindu arose the Discus of the Lord, known on earth as Sathrugna. From the Nada arose the Conch, known on earth as Bharatha. From the Kala rose Sesha, known on earth as Lakshmana. The Chit (Consciousness) beyond it, is Seetha. And beyond all, is the Supreme One, Sree Rama. He is Eternal, Pure, Consciousness, Truth, Immortality, Absolute, Perfect—the Supreme Brahman—*Tharasaropanishad*.

#### *The Inner Meaning. VII.*

Seetha is Moolaprakrithi. The letters forming her name connote Maya. Unmanifested by nature, she sometimes

manifests herself. During the chant of the Holy Writ, she is sensed as the Sabda Brahman (the Logos, the Word); this is her first manifestation. King Janaka found her at the point of his plough while he was furrowing the sacrificial ground, and made her his daughter, known on earth as Seetha; this is her second manifestation. Her third is the primal Unmanifested form.

Though she is dependent upon the Lord, yet she sheds her light on the universe, through the might of his presence. She is the energy that lies behind Evolution, Preservation and Involution. Seetha in her eight-fold manifestation of power is Moolaprakrithi.

As Pranava is her visible symbol, she is also titled Prakrithi—*Saunakeeya*.

She is Prakrithi; She is the Vedas; She is the Divine Hierarchy; She is Fame; She is the Universe; She is all; she is the Law; she is the Cause and the Effect. She exists apart from Mahavishnu; and She is identical with him. As the animate and the inanimate; as gods, sages, men, Asuras, (fallen Angels), Rakshasas (giants), Bhoothas (Elementals) Prethas (shades), and Pisachas (Nature spirits), through infinite modifications of attributes and actions; as the five Elements, the senses, the mind, the Prana (Vital current), She underlies all the manifested universe.

Ichcha Sakthi, Kriyasakthi and Sakshath Sakthi (Will, Activity and Wisdom) are her prime aspects.

*Ichcha Sakthi* is again varied as Sree Devi, Bhoo Devi and Neela Devi.

*Sree Devi* manifests herself as the energy that lies behind Goodness, Power, the Moon, the Sun and the Fire.

Through the Moon she presides force over plants and herbs of occult virtues. As the Kalpa tree, as flowers and fruits, creepers, herbs, medicinal leaves and the Waters of Immortality, she nourishes the Gods.

Through the Sun she supports the Shining Ones by ever increasing the Food ; the cattle, by ever producing grass and fodder ; and all beings, by shedding light and life upon them. She is Time, from its minutest point to the life-period of Brahma—seconds, minutes, hours, day, night, weeks, fortnights, months, seasons, half-years, years, Yugas, manvantaras, kalpas and parardhas. She turns the Wheel of Time.

Through the Fire she makes herself felt as hunger and thirst in all Beings , she is the face of the Gods into which are thrown the sacrificial offerings to them. She is heat and cold in the plants and the trees of the forest ; she is the fire latent in the wood and transitory on its surface. Thus, Sree Devi works out the Lord's will and comes forth as Sree and Lakshmi to sustain the universe.

*Bhoo Devi* is the stay and the support of the fourteen spheres, including the seven islands and the seven oceans around them. She is the Pranava, the symbol visible of the Invisible Presence.

*Neela Devi* is visible in the thousand and one forces that go to sustain all beings, animate and inanimate—the wind, the air, the fire, the water and the like. She is the Great Waters upon which all worlds rest. She is the Frog, one of her mystic symbols.

From the mouth of Mahavishnu arises Nada (Sound). From Nada arises Bindu (the Point). From Bindu comes forth the Pranava. From the Pranava springs forth the Tree of Knowledge (the Vedas), with its branches of Action and Wisdom.

Brahman, whose nature they illuminate, is *Kriya Sakthi*.

*Sakshath Sakthi* (the Direct Energy) of the Lord is inseparate from him. It lies behind Evolution,



Preservation, Disintegration and Involution, and the other world-processes. It brings about the infinite variety of Form. It is the Differentiated and the Undifferentiated. It is Self-radiance. It is the Power that showers good. It is the inexorable Law that rights Wrong. It is the spiritual splendour of men, of sages and of Gods. It is the heart of Serenity.

The dark mole on the left breast of Mahavishnu, known as Sree Vathsa, symbolises the Ichcha Sakthi as it rests in Him during Pralaya (Involution). It is also known as *Yoga Sakthi* (spiritual powers). The Kalpa tree, the Cow of Plenty, Chinthamani, Sankha, Padma and the other treasures of the Lord of Wealth, nine in number, are the visible results of *Bhoga Sakthi* (psychic powers). This is extremely useful to those that seek the Lord interestedly or out of unalloyed devotion ; and also to those that render service unto him in the shape of raising temples and enshrining his images therein, so that the devout might meditate upon him through the eight-fold path of Yoga.

*Veera Sakthi*, the Goddess of Valour, is described thus. Under the spreading fragrance of the Kalpaka tree shines the gem-encrusted throne. The Lotus spreads its graceful petals over it ; and on it sits enthroned the four-armed Goddess of Valour. On all sides stand elephants, bathing her with the Waters of Immortality from the gemmed vessels in their tusks. The eight Yoga-Siddhis (occult powers), Anima, and the rest, are ranged on either side of her. Jaya and her sister Apsarasas wait upon her. The Sun and the Moon illuminate the Hall of Audience. The full moon, the new moon and the half moon hold snow-white umbrellas over her head. Hladini and Maya fan her with chamaras (chowries). Swaha, that nourishes the Gods, and Swadha, that feeds the Fathers, wave fans on either side. In front of her stand the Gods, the Vedas and

the Sciences. And from her seat of power She rules the the universe.—*Seethopanishad*.

*The Inner meaning. VIII.*

The Gayathri Manthra is the seed of the Tree of Ramayana; the Rama Raksha is the sprout; the Vedas are the roots; and Emancipation is the fruit of it.

Gayathri, the mother of the Vedas, is the root of all. It has three Padas (feet). They that strive after Liberation should meditate upon the Germ, from which the Tree of the Universe sprang, as the material cause of the universe in his Matter aspect, and as the instrumental cause of the same in his Brahman aspect. This is, in brief, the Truth that underlies the first foot. The universe, as the effect, is superimposed by Nescience upon the Supreme Self; He is the Cause. Hence, we are asked to banish His matter aspect and try to realise His ultimate Brahman aspect alone.

The Vedic text "The Golden Person who is visible in the heart of the Solar Orb," denotes the Primal Being, Narayana. We should meditate upon the Supreme Self in this aspect of Unbounded Light; this is His Mayaviroopa (Form of Illusion). "I meditate upon the Ineffable Glory whom men know as Rama and Krishna; who came down on Earth, time and oft, for the uplifting of the world." This is what the second foot conveys to us. This is his second manifestation, in which man might more easily meditate upon him. This is the Means to reach the Brahman, whom the first Foot sets out to describe.

"He that directs and controls our Self and its energies"—is what the third foot teaches. He can, out of his grace, curb the fleeting mind and turn it inward towards his feet. This the epitome of the Path of Action, longer and more tortuous.

The three feet of the Gayathri Manthra are the germs out of which springs the Tree of Knowledge with its branches of Wisdom, Meditation and Action.—*Maithrayana Sruthi*

### RAMA RAKSHA.

The syllables of the Ramaraksha express the same truths as the Gayathri Manthra; and in them are condensed the incidents of the Ramayana.

1. *May Raghava protect my head.* He who presides over the universe, He who presides over the Annamayakosa (Food-Sheath), may He protect my head that symbolises the universe.

2. *May the son of Dasaratha protect my forehead.* The Pranamayakosa (Prana-Sheath) is drawn by ten horses (organs of sense and action) and is the effect of the Manomayakosa (Mind-Sheath). May he, who presides over it, protect my forehead, the tablet upon which writes my destiny Brahma, who was evolved after the universe. (The Self, as manifested in each of the above sheaths, has a wider consciousness and powers than in the preceding one).

3. *May the son of Kausalya protect my eyes.* He who presides in the Vignanamayakosa (Intuition-Sheath) is endowed with the faculty of cognising all impressions. May he protect my eyes, the channel of all knowledge and wisdom.

4. *May he who is dear to Visvamithra protect my ears.* The Self as manifested in the Anandamayakosa (Bliss Sheath) is filled with infinite compassion towards the universe—innate, unselfish and disinterested. It is he that in the state of Sushupthi does away with all grief and sorrow. He is the embodiment of Bliss and Consciousness. May he protect my ears through which I reach him.

[The first three Manthras superimpose the universe upon Sree Rama, the Parabrahman and the next three help to

remove the illusion. Thus far the nature of the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute, that forms the subject of the first foot of the Gayathri].

5. *May he who protected the sacrifice of Visvamithra guard my nose.* The delights of the heavenly world form the reward of sacrifices. May he, that brings about the result of sacrifices, protect my organs of smell and taste, where-with divine fragrance and taste are experienced.

6. *My he whose heart goes out to the son of Sumithra protect my face.* The Lord's heart goes out towards Hiran-yagarbha, that evolved from Himself and is the best friend of the Jeeva. Those that attain Emancipation in the ordinary way reach the world of Brahma ; there they are initiated into the mysteries of the Absolute; and when Brahma goes back to the Lord, they go along with him.

7. *May he who is the fountain of all knowledge protect my organ of speech.* Knowledge is the only means of reaching him. May he protect my organ of speech through which I acquire knowledge.

8. *May he whom Bharatha reverences protect my neck.* Those that follow the Path of Action worship him with sacrificial rites. "The Brahmanas seek to know It by sacrifices"—*Sruthi*. Manthras, Sthothras and Sasthras form the component parts of sacrificial rites. They should ever find a place in the throat, the channel through which they pass from the heart. Hence, the prayer to protect that portion of the body. The Jeeva lays by much merit by such holy acts as sacrifices ; *that* directs him to the Path of Meditation ; whereby reaches the Soothrathma (He on whom the worlds are strung).

9. *May he who wields the Divine Weapons protect my shoulders.* In his divine incarnation, the Bow, the Sword and the other weapons, symbolising Power, Time and

the like attributes, graced his arms. May he protect the corresponding portions of my body.

10. *May he who broke the Bow of Siva protect my arms.* When he walked on earth as a man among men, with the might of his arms he broke the bow of Siva that was no other than the mount Meru (the Axis of the world). Plainly, this places him above Siva. "When Mahadeva went against the Asuras of the Three Cities, the Earth was his car, Brahma his driver, mount Meru his bow, and Mahavishnu the point of his arrow."--*Sruthi*.

11. *May the Lord of Seetha protect my hands.* These two Manthras show us that Bala, one of the two Vidyas (occult sciences) imparted to him by Visvamithra, gave him unlimited physical strength.

12. *May he who put down Parasurama protect my heart.* Parasurama stored in himself the spiritual splendour of the Brahmana and of the Lord Vishnu. Rama put him down and destroyed the worlds won by his Thapas. This evidences what a mighty heart he had. Here is manifest the power of Athibala, the other Vidya, in that Rama was able to accomplish superhuman acts at once. (Manthras 9, 10, 11, and 12 teach that the third manifestation of the Lord is higher than Brahma, Vishnu and Siva).

13. *May he who slew Khara protect my trunk.* Khara and the other Rakshasas constantly meditated upon the Lord, though as their mortal enemy; hence, they stand higher than many who have never bestowed a thought upon him. The Lord fails not to reward each as he deserves. He slew Khara and his Rakshasas; and *that* was a blessing in disguise gave them a place in his world.

14. *May he, upon whom Jambavan leant as his stay and support, protect my navel.* Jambavan sought the feet of the Lord to save himself from his dire distress; his attitude

was one of love, and not of enmity. Hence, he stands on a higher level than Khara.

15. *May the Lord of Sugreeva protect my loins.* 'One good turn deserves another'. Sugreeva's relations with Rama savoured more of barter than of genuine disinterested friendship. Rama served his ends first; and Sugreeva and his monkey hosts were of use to Rama long after. Hence, he does not come up to Jambavan's altitude.

16. *May Hanuman's master protect my thighs.* Hanuman's devotion to Rama was unselfish to the extreme; humble service to his master and to the best of his might, was the only thing he prayed for. He stood nearest to the Lord's heart. As his favourite child, he sat upon his lap. He is the ideal Bhaktha (devotee). [The last four Manthras depict the four types of those that seek the Lord during his divine incarnations].

17. *May he, who threw the bridge over the sea, protect my knees.* The Lord is the shores of the ocean of Samsara (material existence), in that he keeps back its rolling waves and is the haven of those who toil in it. May he guard my knees that form, as it were, the feet of children when they crawl about. (This teaches us that the Lord is beyond the material vehicles. He who meditates upon him thus, is freed for ever from his vehicles).

18. *May he who destroyed the ten-headed Ravana guard my ankles.* The Lord is beyond the Sookshmasareera that works through the ten organs of sense and action. To the grown-up child the ankles form the chief help in locomotion; may He guard them. (He who thus meditates upon the lord is freed for ever from the Sookshmasareera and rests in the bosom of Prakrithi).

19. *May he who conferred all good and prosperity upon Vibheeshana protect my feet.* He opens the gates of Joy to him who escapes the jaws of Avidya

(Nesqience). May He guard my feet, the instruments of rapid locomotion. "This is the highest good. This is the highest wealth"—*Sruthi*. (This is the state of Emancipation, wherein all evil is annihilated and where supreme bliss is experienced).

20. *May Rama protect all my body*. The Lord, as the Almighty Ruler, is the monarch that shines on his Throne of Glory in the Audience Hall of the Universe. I earnestly seek to stand in his presence. May he purify my three vehicles. May he remove all obstacles and dangers on the eight-fold Path. May he, out of his grace, qualify me to find a place among the Elect.

The expression, 'Raghava,' in the first Manthra, symbolises the Universe as superimposed by Ignorance upon Brahman. The later Manthras remove this misconception. His collective and individual form is then described for purpose of meditation and Manthras 13, 18 lay down the process ; while Manthras 19 and 20 describe the destruction of evil and the realization of supreme bliss.

Hence, the Gayathri forms the germ of the Ramayana. Its 24 letters begin the 24,000 stanzas of the poem.

*The Vedas form the basis of the Ramayana*. Valmeeki's epic is but an amplification of the Truths taught in the Vedas ; and like the Vedas, it blesseth him that reads and him that listens to it. "The Supreme One whom the Vedas try to reach, came down on earth as Sree Rama, the son of Dasaratha ; so, the Vedas came down to where he was, as Ramayana, the child of Valmeeki's heart. So, my beloved, Ramayana is the Veda ; doubt it not, Parvathi."—*Agasthya Samhitha*.

"Valmeeki, the sage, chose the two royal youths Kusa and Lava out of many ; they were endowed with considerable

intelligence, had studied the Vedas, and their mysteries ; Ramayana, the record of Seetha's life, their mother, could not have a fitter exponent"—*V. R. I. 4.*

So, the Ramayana and the Vedic passages which it amplifies have a double aspect. The exoteric narrates the incidents in the life of Rama and Seetha. The esoteric unfolds the mystery of the Self. Let the intuitive student ponder over it. The Vedic Manthras are the deep pool, full to the brim with the Waters of Immortality. They flow through the channels of episodes on to the broad fields of Vidya, the Science of Self ; they that walk along the Path of Action, also drink of it by the way.

Now, let us take, for example, the following Manthra, to be recited in that sacrificial rite where the two Aswins are invoked. "As a dead man leaves behind him the wealth he accumulated in his life, King Thugra cast his son into the roaring deep. But, you were there, Aswins ! ; and with numerous boats saved him and his troops." This is how the man of action would like to have it interpreted. "All the Gods and all the hymns of the Rigveda are in Him, the Supreme Self, who shines by his own light and who ever remains. He, who cannot pierce to him through these garments of sound, has very little to do with them, even in their exoteric dead letter aspect." The above vedic text affirms that the Manthras do but seek to lift somewhat of the veil that is thrown over the Nameless, whose manifestations come down to us as the presiding deities of the senses. He that has no eye for the deeper meaning has no call to study the Holy Writ. Hence, it is but just that the above Manthra should have an inner meaning. "The Self, on whom bear the burden of the past, is thrown into the ocean of Samsara (embodied existence) by the Personality that clings to material objects. Inner Ruler ! Soothrathman (Thread-Soul) ! You extend your



grace unto it ; and in the guise of the Teacher save it through the Great Sentences (Mahavakyas), that sail through the Akasa in the heart and dispel the clouds of Ignorance.

*Q.* It seems that the Aswinee Devas are praised in the above Manthra. Transitory objects are spoken of and as such, give no colour to the view, that the Vedas in which they are found are not composed by man.

*A.* Grain and the other cereals are regarded as eternal, not individually but in the type ; so, every Kalpa (life-period of Brahma), sees the divine incarnation of Rama; and as a type symbolising a kosmic event, it is eternal ; the Devathadhikarana takes this view of it. The Chamasadhikarana holds that such Manthras, though narrating past episodes, do really aim at teaching the Science of Brahman. Take the Manthra—"Aja who is red, white, and black" ; here, if we give the words their natural meaning, the passage simply expresses facts of previous knowledge and forms no evidence of superphysical truths. Hence, the Teachers understand that *Aja* denotes Prakrithi (differentiated matter) to whom are given such names as Splendour, the Waters and Food. Similar instances would naturally suggest themselves, of Manthras with an esoteric narrative aspect and an esoteric spiritual one underlying.

The Vedic text—"All names do but point to him. All Vedas do but describe the Supreme State" makes it plain that Sree Ramachandra is the subject of all knowledge, Vedic or otherwise. Indra and like expressions are but His names ; in fact, all words do but express His infinite qualities. But, the passages yield a narrative meaning too, as suited to the context.

*Q.* How can we understand expressions that denote

other gods as pointing to Rama ? If the aforesaid interpretation is made to serve our purpose, the words have no meaning of their own.

4. The various lines or dots that stand for the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, are similar in form ; but, a difference of place makes them denote a unit or tens or hundreds or or thousands. Similarly, a word or a sentence can, by association with others or by difference of context, yield many meanings. The word *Amritha* denotes naturally the Waters of Immortality obtained during the churning of the ocean. But, in the following Vedic texts— ‘When this mortal man has his mind washed pure of all desire, even the least, then he becomes *Amritha* ; he attains Brahman even here ; ’ “ May we drink of Soma ; May we become *Amritha* ; ” “ That is man’s *Amritha* ; That is yours.” It stands for Emancipation, Godship, and offspring respectively. Or, take the text, “The Devas worship Yagna with Yagna.” Here, Yagna, the object of worship is the Supreme One ; the Jeeva is to be viewed by us as the Supreme Brahman. But, in the passage “They sprinkle the Yagna,” it means Indra, Agni and the other Devas. Again, the word denotes the sacrificial fire when it occurs in a passage about the churning of the fire. The *Adhyathmika*, the *Adhi-Daivika* and the *Adhi-Bhouthika* meanings stand in the relative order of their importance. The word *Indra* means literally “One who is endowed with superhuman powers ” Usage too lends its support to this interpretation. But, the passage that treats of the replacing of the Garhapatya fire uses the very same expression to denote the Garhapatya fire. Again, the expression *Akasa* can but denote naturally the material *Akasa* ; but in the passage “Whatever is seen springs from the *Akasa*”—it denotes the Supreme One ; the natural meaning is subservient to the conventional. So, we

conclude that narratives do often yield a spiritual meaning, and expressions denoting other deities do really stand for the Supreme Soul.

*Q.* There is a show of justice in interpreting such Manthras as do not lay down rules of sacrifice, to mean the Supreme Self, that they may not stand useless. But, what of the other Manthras that are connected with sacrificial rites? Do you contend that they too point to Rama?

*A.* Even so. Since the entire Vedas are devoted to that purpose alone, we have no right to except any portion of it.

*Q.* It is not reasonable to give such an interpretation to Manthras that are not found in sections treating of the Science of Self. Then, the passages about chopping off the branches of trees must also be interpreted to denote the Supreme Self. Then, the Karmakanda loses its value in the eyes of those who tread the Path of Action.

*A.* Not so. The same fact is understood variously by various grades of intelligence. A rope lying on the road is taken for a serpent by one, for a stick by another and for a rope by a third. Brahma gave out that "The person who is seen in the eye is the Athman, is Fearlessness, is Brahman." Now, Virochana, one of his auditors, understood it that the embodied self was characterised by immortality and the other attributes; but, Indra, another of them, took it that the Self transcending the vehicles was meant. Difference of intelligence sometimes accounts for difference of interpretations. Now, we read in the Maha Bharatha that Indra slew Vrithra in the body with the invisible weapon Vajra (Aswamedha Parva). "When the universe was enveloped in ignorance, the Jeeva dispelled it by Divine Knowledge that transcends the senses"—this is how the most advanced will interpret it. The Vedic text describing the Wheel of Time is interpreted as follows, to suit the intellects of a low

order. The women mentioned there stand for the deities Dhatha and Vidhatha ; the black and white threads mean day and night ; the fortnight, the month, the seasons, and the year are similarly interpreted. Now, the more advanced would see that the six seasons stand for the six senses. Each of these is made up of two months ; each sense has Desire and Aversion as its poles. A month is made up of two fortnights ; Desire and Aversion have a double aspect, according as they are directed in the direction of Dharma (the Law) or against it. Each fortnight is made up of fifteen days through the movements of the Sun and the Moon. The sun is the Self ; the moon is Manas with her sixteen rays (Prana, Sraddha, Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Water, Earth, Senses, Mind, Food, Energy, Thapas, Manthra, Karma, Worlds and Name). During sleep, the mind withdraws into itself all the rays except the last, and is absorbed in the Self. It is Avidya (Nescience), whose very nature is absolute Thamas (Inertia). The New-moon day, on which the sun and the moon are in conjunction, symbolises this truth. Later on, the rays emerge from the Self, one after another, through the agency of Viveka (Discrimination) ; this is the waxing of the Moon of Wisdom. The Self and the mind are opposite to one another, when wisdom has dawned ; the full moon typifies the disjunction of the sun and the moon. This is the Wheel of Time, the result of Action. Thus, the Manthras yield a spiritual meaning to the wise, and but the traditional one to the less advanced.

Q. If such an interpretation is the right one, how is it that Sayana and the other commentators on the Vedas have never revealed it ? Further, the incidents of the Ramayana are nowhere mentioned in the Vedic texts, like the episode of the death of Vrithra. It is hard to believe that the Ramayana is based upon the Vedas, and that all Manthras have a spiritual significance,

A. But, it is even so. The Vedic commentators set themselves to interpret the texts that bear upon the Path of Action and that sing forth the praises of the gods, in such a way as to draw the hearts of the less advanced to Action, fully aware that in course of time it will lead them on to Wisdom. The deeper meaning is not called for, and finds no place. Now, it is simply unreasonable to declare that the Ramayana incidents find no mention in the Vedas. If a blind man knocks himself against a post, is it the fault of the latter ? If you care not to delve deep into the hidden mines of Vedic lore, how is Ramayana to blame for it ? It is not in vain that the Maha Bharatha exclaims, "The Ithihasas and the Puranas amplify the Vedas ; they reveal the inner mysteries thereof. The Vedas shun the man of little wisdom, and cry out 'Lo ! this one may more likely misrepresent me.' " A room and its furniture are reflected in each mirror in it ; even so, the Universe with all its ruling Powers are reflected in each God. Everyone of them forms the cause of the world ; every one of them is the effect of the others. Worship of them is worship of Rama. The Vedic commentator interprets the texts to suit the purposes desired. But, it does not prevent us from reading into them the episodes of the Ramayana, by the force of context and by other traditional methods. We cannot accept the exoteric interpretations as ultimate, since they but plunge one deeper into the mire of Ignorance. So, we can well conclude that the Manthras bear only the traditional meaning to the uninitiated, while the initiated see in them a direct reference to Sree Rama and the mysteries connected with him.

Q. The Manthras found in connexion with religious acts do but mention the Gods, the materials, the method, the objects, and the results. How then, can you twist them to yield an interpretation in support of the Ramayana ?

A. The Manthras are even so ; but, in addition, they are invariably based upon spiritual truths. Let us take the Manthra—"You entered the great trees in the form of Krishna. Hence, I gather you in two ways." Now, this reveals the fact that the Brahman evolved the Universe and pervaded it ; and the sacrificial fuel is to be regarded as one of Its manifestations. This episode we find in the Brahmanas and is but repeated in the above text. "You, as Krishna the Supreme Brahman, evolve the universe, animate and inanimate ; and later on, pervade it through and through. You are one with it ; hence, you are even this sacrificial fuel. I now gather you thrice seven times." Again the Manthra—" We gather the earth thrown up by him, who dived into the Waters after this Earth, that lay hidden therein." The incarnation of the Lord as the Boar is referred to, the Earth that he dug up is very sacred and should be gathered by us. Again the Manthra—" For the essence of Food and Strength,"—is used when we chop the branches of trees. The Initiate understand it to mean—" Lord of the universe ! you shine forth even in this branch you have made. I chop you off to attain supreme bliss and the level of Virat—Brahman as pervading the universe ; and I have attained to you." Texts that relate to inanimate objects should be similarly interpreted; for, *food* symbolises *Virat*, and the *Essence of food* denotes the Supreme One. ("Verily he is the Rasa, the Essence; having attained that essence, one enjoys bliss."—*Sruthi*). Besides, such vedic texts as "All this is Purusha;" "All this is the form of Brahman;" "That state which is hinted at by all the Vedas;" "That whom all these attain;" "The hymns of the R̥gveda in the splendour of the changeless " are our authorities for so interpreting the Vedas. And this is possible only in the case of a careful student of the Ithihasas and the Puranas, who has

mastered their inner meaning; while the less advanced sees no other meaning than the praise accorded to the gathering of the material earth and the sacrificial fuel. He who worships the physical Boar is not very spiritual nor bright; but, he who sees Sree Krishna through the veil and tries to reach him is the Initiate. However, the Vedic commentator has given an exoteric interpretation to the passage as referring to the physical food and its essence ; *that* is meant to attract those whose temperament fits them for the Path of Action. But, nothing prevents the Initiate from understanding it according to his own light.

*Q.* We should explain the Manthras in consonance with the religious rites in which they are to be used. But, if that meaning does not fit in with the particular act, is it not better to abandon it ?

*A.* No. The Manthra—" Mahavishnu crossed the three worlds in three paces"—is used in the silent recitation laid down as a penance for breaking the vow of silence, as also in the oblation of ghee as a general penance. The greatness of the Lord is the only meaning we can see here ; but, nothing authorises us to interpret it in consonance with the subject in hand. He who does not acquaint himself with the Boar and the Dwarf incarnations of Vishnu cannot explain the texts solely by their context and use. Since the Vedic commentaries aim only at attracting to the Path of Action men whose temperament lies that way, we cannot expect the episodes of the Ramayana to find a place therein. But, there is not the least shadow of doubt that the epic of Valmeeki is based upon the Vedas, since it but amplifies the truths taught in them. Men of little knowledge may find it difficult to pierce through the veil, but to the Open Eye of the Initiate it is transparent. The Ramayana and its original, the hymns of the Rigveda, narrate the incidents in the life of Sree

Rama ; but, there runs an under-current of spiritual meaning all through. Each Manthra should be explained in relation to the sacrificial rite, to the incidents in the Ramayana and to the Science of Self. (*Manthra Ramayana*).

### XII.—How to read the Ramayana ?

There is current a quaint saying of the wise. "You cannot spend the day better than by studying the records of the gamblers in the forenoon; the stories of women and their doings form a fit theme to while away the afternoon ; and the early hours of the night form a lovely background to the adventures of the thief." Now, no one takes the above literally ; but, understands it to mean that the Bharatha, that narrates the gambling of the eldest of the Pandavas and the evils that resulted therefrom, should occupy the forenoon. The Ramayana of Valmeekee, whose theme is Seetha, the ideal woman, and her sorrows, is to be recited and listened to when the day draws to a close ; while, the Bhagavatha, that records in symbols the incarnation of the Supreme Purusha, Sree Krishna,—the thief who steals away our hearts—and his work among men is the best prelude one could desire to a peaceful and calm dream-life.

Valmeekee has enjoined the royal youths, Kusa and Lava, to recite just twenty chapters a day, neither more nor less. (*V. R. VII. 93*). It gives extreme pleasure to the Fathers to hear it recited, when the anniversary rites are performed in their name. Gifts of cloths cattle and gold should be made to him that reads it (*Ib. id. III*). The Coming of the Lord, the marriage of Seetha, the Installation of the Sandals, the coronation of Sugreeva, the Surrender of Vibheeshana and the coronation of Sree Rama are fitting occasions when the reciter and the expounder should be honored with liberal gifts.



XIII.—*How does it benefit us ?*

“ This record of Rama’s life purifies the heart of men, destroys their sins, and confers supreme merit. Hence the wise hold it in equal reverence with the Holy Writ ; and he who reads it with a devout heart, is freed from sin of every kind. A long and happy life is his portion in the world of men ; and when he goes away from it, he is a welcome guest in the world of Gods and is held in high honour among them, yea, his kith and kin.

Should a Brahmana read it, gift of speech is his meed, and wisdom equalled by none. Should one of the warrior race read it, the wide Earth and all it contains owns his sway. Should a Vaisya read it, merchant princes pay homage to him , nay, should a Soodra happen to hear it read, he shall win honor and glory among his kind.”  
(V. R. I. 1).

Later on, we find (*Ib. id.* 2) that Brahma conferred upon ValmEEKI the Open Eye of the Seer and said, “ Nothing that relates to any of the actors in that great world-drama shall escape thy all-seeing eye—Rama, Lakshmana, Seetha, men and monkeys, Gods and Rakshasas, their acts, their words, nay, their very thoughts, known or secret. Nothing that comes out of your mouth, consciously or otherwise, shall prove other than true. Sing you a poem that shall charm away the hearts of men, perfect in its rhythm and melodious in its flow. The cloud-capped mountains, the swift-coursing rivers, and all created things shall pass away and be has naught. But, your noble song shall outlive them and never fade from the hearts of men. And as long as the record of Rama’s life holds sway over the hearts of men, so long shall you sit by me in my highest heaven.”

“ A rare and noble epic this, the Ramayana of honeyed verses and faultless diction, beautifully adapted

to music, vocal or instrumental and charming to hear ; begun and finished according to the best canons of the art, the most exacting critic cannot praise it too highly; the first of its kind and an unapproachable ideal for all time to come ; the best model for all future poets ; the thrice-distilled essence of the Holy Scriptures ; the surest giver of health and happiness, length of years and prosperity, to all who read or listen to it." (*Ib. id.* 4.)

"This epic confers on kings long life, fame, victory and every other blessing desired. Do you desire offspring from your loins? You fail not to get it. Is wealth your object? You have it as much as you wish. The king triumphs over his enemies and rules the lord of the Earth. The woman that listen to this holy narrative with a heart full of devotion, rejoices in her length of days and wealth of children and grand-children, even to the seventh remove, like unto the queens of Dasaratha, who saw the Lord himself come down unto the earth as children of their loins and rejoiced in everything that this world can give and the next. Anger and her sister passions find not a place in the heart of him who listens to the words of Valmeeki. He puts away all misery behind him for ever. The wanderer in strange lands is restored to the bosom of those that love him. Sree Rama is ever ready to gratify his requests. The Shining Ones are delighted beyond measure. The evil Powers that may infest his house become his very friends and benefactors. Young women do bring forth excellent sons to gladden their hearts. Those of the royal race that listen to it with a devout heart from some good Brahmana, are ever blessed with wealth unbounded and offspring numerous. In short, an evergrowing circle of kinsmen, abundance of wealth and corn, faithful and devoted wives, perfect health, long life, fame and upright heart, spiritual splendour, good brothers and every thing that the human heart can wish for—all this

and much more form the meed of him who studies, with a pure heart and devout, the noble epic of Valmeeki."—(*Ib.* VI. 131).

"The sages that frequent the world of Brahma requested permission of him to go back to the audience-hall of Rama and listen to the remaining chapters of the Ramayana."—(*Ib.* VII, 98).

"The Omnipresent Lord and his glory form the subject of the Ramayana. Hence, the Gods, the Gandharvas, the Siddhas and the Sages ever listen to it with hearts overflowing with joy. A single chapter of the poem confers the merit accumulated by thousands of Aswamedhas, Vajapeyas and other holy sacrifices. Pilgrimages to Prayaga, Naimisa, Kurushethra and other holy spots, Ganga and the other sacred rivers—all the merit accumulated thereby is his, who listens whole-hearted to the recital of the Ramayana. The gift of untold wealth to deserving Brahmanas at Kurushethra during sacrifices confers no greater merit. The Divine Hero fails not to lift his devotee even unto his world, nay, he becomes one with the Lord."—(*Ib. id.* 111).

#### XIV.—Other Ramayanas

We have reason to believe that the life of Rama was sung by many others besides Valmeeki, even during the life time of the Divine One. "Chyavana, the sage, sang the Life of Rama. But, Valmeeki, who came after him, obtained immortal fame" (*Aswaghosha's Buddha Charithra* VII. 48.) The Ramayanas of Bodhayana, Bharadwaja and many other Rishis are not now extant.

#### *Ananda Ramayana*

The Lord Mahadeva narrated the life of Rama unto his beloved, Parvathi. It forms a portion of the Original Ramayana in 100 crores of stanzas. It is divided into 9

cantos of 109 chapters and 12,252 stanzas. The Sarakanda goes over the same ground as the Ramayana of Valmeeki. The Yathrakanda gives an account of the pilgrimage undertaken by Rama. The Yagakanda describes the horse sacrifice conducted by Rama, as also his 108 sacred names.

The Vilasakanda depicts Rama's government, the prayer known as Ramasthavaraja and the Deha Ramayana (the inner meaning of it). The Janmakanda tells us about the putting away of Seetha, the birth of Kusa and Lava, their fight with the army of Rama and the coming back of Seetha to her lord; as also the Ramaraksha. The Vivahakanda is an account of the marriages of the scions of the house of Ikshvaku. The Rajyakanda recounts the 1000 holy names of Rama, the bringing down of the trees from the heaven of Indra, the destruction of the Asura Moolaka, the conquest of the seven Dweepas and the past births of Valmeeki. The Manoharakanda contains the Laghu Ramayana (the Summary given to Valmeeki by Narada) and the Kavachas (protective manthras) of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, Sathrugna, Seetha and Hanuman. The Poornakanda relates the genealogy of the Lunar Race, the battle between the kings of the Soorya and Chandravamsas and the Passing of Rama.

### *Adhyathma Ramayana*

It is generally held that this forms a part of the Brahmanda Purana and the printed editions confirm it. But, internal evidence shows that it was related by Visvamithra. Bhavishya Purana (III, 19) tells us that "The Lord Sankara, having thus gratified the wishes of Ramananda, vanished from the place. Later on, the holy man sought out Sree Krishna Chaitanya and served him faithfully for twelve years, subsisting solely upon milk. The Master enjoined him to compose the work known later on as the Adhyathma

Ramāyana". Hence, neither Valmēeki nor Vyasa can be claimed to be its author.

As usual, Mahadeva recounts it to Parvathi. The incidents of the life of Rama are described at length, with many ethical and spiritual episodes illuminating the exoteric events.

### *Abbhutha Ramayana*

Valmēeki narrates it to his disciple Bharadwaja. It is in 27 chapters and forms a portion of the Original Ramayana. The greatness of Seetha, the events that brought about the human incarnations of Rama and Seetha, and the episode of the thousand-headed Ravana are described at great length.

### *Agnivesya Ramayana*

I have come across only some stanzas giving the chronology of the incidents of the Ramayana.

### *Sangraha Ramayana*

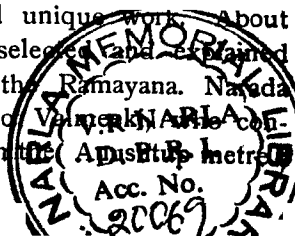
A modern work by Narayana Panditha, a follower of Sree Madhwacharya.

### *Yogavasishtha Ramayana*

Valmēeki narrates to Bharadwaja what took place in the audience-hall of King Dasaratha when Vasishtha initiated Rama into the Science of Brahman. The teachings lean more towards the Adwaita philosophy of Sree Sankaracharya.

### *Manthra Ramayana*

By Lakshmanarya—a rare and unique work. About 156 hymns of the Rigveda are selected and explained as the basis of the incidents of the Ramayana. Narada taught these very same texts to Valmēeki. He converted them later on into stanzas in the Anushtubh metre.



it is a summary of the epic, and forms its first chapter—the Samshepa Ramayana. The author interprets each Manthra narratively and spiritually, while he refers the reader to Sayana, the standard commentator, for the current explanation.

### *The Puranas*

Every one of them narrates at some length the incidents in the life of Rama ; while the Padmapurana gives a comparative account of the same in a previous kalpa.

### *Raghuramsa*

By the famous poet Kalidasa. In 19 chapters he relates the prominent incidents in the lives of the Solar Kings from Dileepa down to Agnivarna

### *Bhatti Kavya*

By the poet Bhatti, who lived about the time of King Dharasena, of ruler Balabhi. Every one of the 22 Chapters of the work is built of words which illustrate some one important peculiarity in Sanskrit grammar.

### *Kamba Ramayana*

By Kamban, the inspired Tamil poet. Night after night he listened to the various Ramayanas and the Puranas expounded by the ablest men of his time ; and the next day he sang them in melodious stanzas. He is the Milton of Tamil literature and his Ramayana is the Indian Paradise Lost.

### *Ramacharithramanasa*

By Tulasidas, the famous saint of Northern India. He was the son of Athma Rama, and was born at Delhi in 1575 A. D. He was warmly patronised by Shah Jahan, the Magnificent, and spent his life at Benares. In 1624 A. D. he went back unto Sree Rama, whose Life he

sang. He divides his work into 7 cantos like the Ramayana of Valmeeki, but the Balakanda is the longest of them. The Uttarakanda deals at length with the episode of the Crow-sage Bhusunda, and of Devotion in its manifold aspect.

It was thus the Ramacharithra came down to him. In a former kalpa, in a dark age of it, there lived a Soodra in the kingdom of Kosala. He was a bigoted worshipper of Siva and a bitter hater of other sects. A cruel famine drove him from his place to Ujjain, where a philanthropic Saivite took him in, relieved his wants and revealed to him the inner nature of Saivism and the fundamental unity of all religions. But, the past karma of the unfortunate man drove him on with irresistible force to the deeper depths of intolerent bigotry. Blinded with fanaticism, he came to regard his broad-hearted teacher as a heretic, and thought it his bounden duty to hold him up to criticism and ridicule. One day his master chanced to come into the temple where the misguided man was seated in devout meditation upon his God. Big with conceit, he rose not to salute him ; but, sat on with a look of pity and contempt upon his face. His teacher minded it not, so great was his heart and so full of pity for the erring one. But, the Lord Mahadeva could not pass over the open insult to his servant. "A serpent thou shall become" said he "and of unwieldy bulk." The Teacher, pained to the heart at this unlooked-for doom of dread, besought of the Lord to mitigate the severity of the sentence. "Nay" replied Siva "it can't be undone. But, your intercession shall preserve him from the blinding force of births and deaths. His course shall be unimpeded on earth, and he shall remember his past." Thus, the fanatic Saivite became an ardent devotee of Sree Rama ; and many were the houses of flesh he abode in. In one of them he was a Brahmana; and sought the lonely retreats of Mount Meru,

where he came upon the Rishi Lomasa. Our friend clasped his feet in reverence and prayed to be instructed in the Science of Brahman. Lomasa tried to draw his heart towards the Absolute, beyond all attributes, beyond all Name and Form. But, he felt himself out his death in it and prayed off to be initiated into the worship of Sree Rama. Again and again he crossed the sage, who, out of patience with him, cried out, "A croaking crow thou shalt become." (We should not jump to the conclusion that Lomasa, the sage of restrained self, could not keep his temper. Far from it. He was but the mouthpiece of the karma of the man, that came to a head at that moment). But, the Brahmana had now a clearer intellect and a calmer heart. He accepted with gladness the apparent curse as one more debt paid, as one more stone removed from the Path of Progress. Lomasa thereupon instructed him in the mysteries connected with Sree Rama and narrated unto him the Life-record of the Divine One, known as Ramacharithra Manasa. The crow passed beyond the portals of Death ; Time had no power over him. His vision was unclouded and saw far into the heart of things. Rama had not a more ardent devotee. He was the great Yogi, *Bhusunda*.

When Rama was bound by the magic weapons of Indrajith, Narada despatched Garuda, the Divine Bird, to destroy them. Now, the messenger was seized with a cruel doubt—"If Rama be the Supreme Brahman, how could Indrajith or any other prevail over him ?" He prayed Narada to enlighten him on the point. Narada sent him to his Father Brahma who passed him on to Mahadeva, the supreme hierophant of the mysteries connected with Rama. But, Sankara transferred him to Bhusunda, the latest addition to the fold; and Garuda heard from the crow the Ramacharithramanasa, as also the deeper truths connected with the Lord's Illusion and doings.



One day Mahadeva happened to visit Agasthya ; and Parvathi went along with him. There they had the pleasure of listening to the life and adventures of Sree Rama as narrated by the sage. Mahadeva, struck with his extreme devotion to Rama, instructed Agasthya in the deeper mysteries of the Divine Incarnation. In the course of time, Mahavishnu came down on earth as Raghava, exiled himself to Dandaka, lost Seetha, and went in search of her with a breaking heart and woe-begone countenance. Sankara failed to meet him then, try as he would. Later on, his wishes were gratified. Bhavani, who was with him, could not refrain from exclaiming to herself, " And so this is Sree Rama—who bewails the loss of his wife like any countryman ? And this is what Sankara would persist in regarding as the supreme Brahman and the object of his worship ? Verily, Agasthya was a little too enthusiastic over his hero." Sankara warned her of her grievous mistake, and let her into the truth about Rama's incarnation. " How is it, my dear, you fail to see that all this is his delightful illusion ? He is a man now and a forlorn lover ; he cannot but play the part to perfection." But, Parvathi would not yield her point. Then, Sankara advised her to go by herself and subject Rama to any test she liked ; for, that is the only means of convincing an obstinate sceptic. Accordingly, Rudrani repaired to where Rama was and stood before him as Seetha. Lakshmana could not pierce through the illusion ; but, Rama quietly called out, " Greeting to you, sister mine ! Where have you left Sankara and what would you in these frightful solitudes ? " Parvathi was dumb-founded. Wonder, a smarting sense of defeat, shame at being found out and fear for the consequences overcame her. She went back to Paramasiva ; and Rama took the opportunity to mystify her still more. Wherever she turned, there she saw

Rama, Lakshmana and Seetha, adored by countless hosts of Gods, sages and Thrimoorthis (Brahma, Vishnu and Siva). But, when she looked back, lo ! it vanished. Sankara asked her with a smile, " Well, I hope you are satisfied. I am curious to know how you tested him." But, her evil hour was upon her still and she blurted out, "Nay, I thought better of it and tested him not. Your arguments were enough to convince me." Now, Mahadeva's heart was heavy with grief ; Parvathi could not withstand the illusion cast upon her by Rama ; and she could not keep her lips from a lie. Then, he bethought himself that she had, though for a time, assumed the guise of Seetha the Divine Mother. " No more in this incarnation shall I regard this woman as my wife ; she is a mother to me and sacred." The Gods sang his praises high, who testified his devotion to Rama by such a terrible vow. Sometime after, Parvathi came to know of it and prayed hard to be forgiven ; but Siva was in deep meditation and could not reply ; and she dragged on a miserable existence in that body of hers for about 87,000 years. At last Sankara arose from his Samadhi and the first thing he did was to recite the holy Names of Sree Rama.

Daksha's sacrificial rite, his insult to Siva, Parvathi's abandonment of her body, her re-birth as the daughter of Himavan, her prolonged austerities to become the wife of Sankara, her marriage to him, the blasting of Manmatha, and the birth of Karthikeya followed in due course. One day Parvathi reverted to the old topic and begged her husband to clear her doubt. And Sankara, out of the supreme compassion of his heart, narrated to her the Ramacharithramanasa, even as Bhusunda gave it to Garuda. The sage Yagnavalkya got it from the crow, Bharadwaja from Yagnavalkya and Thulasidas from one of his pupils.

*The Jaina Ramayana*

This forms the tenth chapter of the VIIth canto of the work, Thrishashti-elakapurusha-charitra, a work written in the Prakrith dialect by Hemachandracharya, the Jaina. There is very little in common between the Rāmayana of Valmeeki and the Jaina Ramayana. And that is excuse enough for my giving the readers a brief summary of it.

Bharathakhanda forms one of the nine portions of Jambhootheepa, the first of the seven globes that go to make up this Earth-chain. And at Vineetha, a lovely town in it, held sway King Sagara, of the royal line of Ikshvaku. Hunting was a passion with him, to which he sacrificed his kingdom and its cares. One day he chased a deer far, far into the woods, when his horse got out of hand and took him into a strange wood that he had never before been in. Suddenly it fell dead from exhaustion; and Sagara, faint with hunger and fatigue, trudged on wearily for a long time, until he came upon a lovely lake hidden within a thick grove. He threw himself down on its banks to rest, too tired to quench his burning thirst at the cool waters that lay to his hand. Soon he was conscious of some other presence near him, and casting his eyes in that direction, a vision of beauty dawned upon him.

A young maiden, in the prime of youth and loveliness, stood at a distance, gazing with curious eyes of fear and shyness upon the strange visitor. The grace that pervaded her form and her every movement, the dazzling radiance that enveloped her like a halo, and the stamp of nobility about her deprived him of every bit of self-control he claimed to possess; and there he stood staring at her, like any greenhorn fresh from his fields. But, the maiden was as much at a loss to account for the strange emotions that played over

her heart and rooted her feet to the spot, perforce to gaze upon the intruder with wonder-waiting eyes. It was a case of mutual love at first sight. All at once, a call from some one near broke into the lovely dream and like a flash, the girl vanished back into the grove. Sagara, who by that time had fairly lost all consciousness of where he was, or what he was doing, was rudely awakened to a sense of reality and closed his eyes to see if he was not the victim of some strange optic illusion. When he opened his eyes, there stood before him an aged man who wore the livery of a king upon him. He bowed to Sagara with the deepest reverence and said, "Lord ! I am entrusted with a message to you which I beg to lay at your feet. It might not be unknown to you that Sulochana, of the race, ruled at Gaganavallabha, hard by the Vidyadhara Mount Vaithathya. He had two children, a boy Sahasranethra and a girl Sukesi. Poornamegha, of the same race and lord of Rathanapura, was a suitor for the hand of the princess ; and as Sulochana would not favour his suit, the lover made war upon him, slew him in battle and annexed his kingdom. But, the God Chakrapani saved the lives of the children, and led them on to this forest, where they have lived ever since in disguise. It seems that Sukesi, the princess, saw you here. Her heart has gone out to you and she would give you her hand in marriage. Her brother (to whom you are not unknown by fame) looks upon it with supreme satisfaction and has sent me here to request you to repair to their lowly abode."

Sagara was overjoyed at this unexpected turn of events that promised to gratify the wildest hopes of his heart, and gladly followed his guide. He married Sukesi, and lost no time in leading an army against the usurper, whom he defeated with dreadful loss. Sahasranethra ruled over his father's dominions, and the lands of his foe.

Some time after, the friends made a pilgrimage to a famous shrine of Lord Jina, in a grove near the town of Saketha. As Fate would have it, Sahasranethra came upon Poornamegha, the murderer of his father and his son Ghanavahana. Blind with rage, he slew the father out of hand and was at the point of sending the son after him, when Lord Jina stayed his arm. Then, Sagara prayed of the Lord to lift the veil from the past. "What causes brought about such a deadly hatred between Poornamegha and Sulochana, between Ghanavahana and Sahasranethra? Why should myself and Sahasranethra be drawn towards each other by feelings of strongest affection?" Then, the Lord opened their eyes to the past, and said:—"There dwelt, of yore, at Adithyapura, a merchant by name Bhavana. He was away in other lands trading for a long time; when, he was seized with a fit of home sickness, and travelled back as fast as he could. He left his friends and fellow-travellers far behind, and came back to his home some time after midnight. In the anxiety of his heart, he knocked loud and vehemently for admittance. But, wonderful are the ways of Fate. His son Haridasa, thus rudely roused from his deep slumbers, mistook his father for some daring dacoit, least expecting his parent's arrival at that time. He rushed out in anger, and alas! struck him dead, his poor father at his own threshold, when his heart was beating high with the anticipated delight of meeting, after so long a period of separation, those whom he loved most. But, inexorable karma could not be stayed in its course; and they were born later on as Poornamegha and Sulochana, with the old fierce animosity still ablaze in their hearts.

"A devout ascetic you were in your last birth; and two disciples you had, Sasi and Avali. One day, they chanced to quarrel over something, and Sasi killed his friend in a fit of fury. They are no other than Ghanavahana and

Sahasranethra ; and their last thoughts still dominate their hearts. Avali was your favourite and is now your friend and kinsman."

This marvellous story, this page from the past, was listened to with deep wonder and surprise by every one present. But, none drank in the words of the Lord with greater avidity than Bheema, one of the door-keepers and a Rakshasa by descent. All at once he rushed from his place to where Ghanavahana stood, fell upon his neck with tears of joy, and cried, "In my last birth I was Vidyuthnethra, the king of Kanchanapura, and you were Rathivallabha, the son of my heart. The great gods have restored you to my arms after so long a time. But, full well do I know that my days are over, and I must quit this body. So, receive from me this diamond necklace and the arts of illusion of which I am a master. I crown you king of Lanka in the Rakshasadweepa, as also of the Pathala Lanka, six Yojanas deep below the Earth. May you live long and happily to perpetuate on earth the line of Rakshasas."

Accordingly, Ghanavahana became the ruler of the Rakshasadweepa. His son was Maharakshasa, who begat Devarakshasa. His son Keerthidhavalala took to wife Devi, the daughter of Sreekantha, who ruled over Vaithathya. Thatithkesa succeeded him in the sovereignty of the Rakshasadweepa.

Meanwhile, Pushpoththara of the Vidyadhara race, and ruler of Rathanapura, had long contemplated an alliance between Devi and his son Padmoththara; but, as her father would not hear of it, he resolved to revenge himself upon him. Now, Padma his daughter, had long loved in secret Sreekantha ; who, coming to know of it, carried her away in his aerial car. Pushpoththara was beside himself with rage and was at the heels of his foe,

vowing dire vengeance upon him. But, Keerthidhavalā interfered, and reconciled them ; whereafter, they became fast friends. Pushpoththara installed Sreekantha as the ruler of Vanaradweepa, where the latter made Kishkindha his capital. His son was Vajrakantha, who begat Dadhiratha.

Once, Sreechandra the wife of Thatithkesa, requested her husband to take her out for a pleasure trip in the aerial car. They went to Vanaradweepa, and had a very pleasant time of it ; when, a monkey tore at Sreechandra with his claws. Thatithkesa was so much enraged that he struck him dead on the spot. A devout follower of Jineswara the Lord of Compassion, he felt supreme remorse for having taken the life of a living thing. An ascetic happened to pass by, and the king questioned him as to his unwitting crime. The holy man's exhortations were so powerful as to arouse in his heart supreme indifference to the things of the world. He installed his son Sukesa on the throne and donned the orange-ropes of the Sanyasi. Dadhiratha, the ruler of Vanaradweepa, had a similar turn of mind and entrusting his kingdom to his son Kishkindha, renounced the world.

Meanwhile, a great Swayamvara was announced at Adithyapura, ruled over by Manthramalī. On that occasion, his daughter Sreemala threw the garland of flowers around the neck of Kishkindha of the Vanaradweepa and thereby choose him out as her partner in life. Asanivega of Rathanapura resented it as an insult to himself, fought with the successful lover and drove him out of his kingdom. Sometime after, Sukesa underwent a similar fate at his hands, when the two companions in misfortune retired to Pathalalanka with their followers, and lived a happy life there and fearless. There Indrani, the wife of Sukesa, gave birth to Malī, Sumalī and Malyavan ; while Sreemala begat Adithyarajas and Riksharajas.

Mali somehow came to know that his ancestral Lanka was in the hands of the ruler of Rathanapura ; he repaired thither, drove him out of his new conquests and regained his kindom. Later on, he marched upon Rathanapura and its ruler. Indra was then the king. His mother Chithrasundari was possessed of an evil spirit, that filled her with a strong passion for Indra, the Lord of the Celestials. Her husband came to know of it, and gladdened her heart by assuming the form of the object of her love. A son was born unto her, whom she named Indra. But, the boy did not stop there; he imitated his great name-sake in his weapons, retinue, vehicles and other signs of royalty and ruled long and well. Mali, the Rakshasa, fell in battle with him. Thereupon, the conqueror made over Lanka to Vaisravana, the son of Visravas and his wife Samseka. Then Sumali and Malyavan hid themselves in the Pathalalanka and led the life of ascetics. But, Sumali never despaired of restoring the fortunes of his house; so, he took to wife Kekasi, the daughter of Vyomabindu, by whom he had three sons Rathnasravas Bhanukarna (Kumbhakarna), Vibheeshana and a daughter Soorpanakha. The boys were endowed with extraordinary strength and might and stood over sixteen and a half bows-length in height. Rathnasravas, the eldest, one day came upon a necklace of gems that belonged to his father and lightly placed it round his shoulders. Now, its might was such that none could so much as move it an inch ; thousand deadly serpents guarded it day and night. Sumali watched that wonderful feat of his son and, struck with the reflection of the face of the boy in the nine gems, named him Dasamukha (ten-headed).

Sometime after, the young man came to hear from his mother how their house had been rulers of Lanka and the Rakshasadweepa, how they were dispossessed of it, and were leading a hole-and-corner existence down there



as sanyasins. The spirit of his ancestors was upon him ; and he retired to the depths of Bheemaranya, from which he returned master of a thousand magical arts. He married Mandodari, the daughter of Maya of the Vidyadhara race, and had by her a son Indrajith. Six thousand Gandharva women became his wives later on. He attacked Vaisravana, drove him out of Lanka and held sway over the Rakshasadweepa with great pomp. One day, he came to know through Pavanavega that the sons of Kishkindha, the old friend of his house, was thrown into hell by Yama, a descendant of Indra of Rathanapura. He proceeded to where they were, relieved them from their misery, drove Indra from his kingdom and made Adithyaraajas the ruler of Kishkinda's dominions, while Riksharajas was placed over Rikshapura in the Vanaradweepa. Adithayarajas took to wife Indumathi, by whom he had two sons Vali and Sugreeva. Riksharajas married Harikantha, who bore him Nala and Neela.

Reports of the mighty strength and prowess of Vali reached Dasamukha's ears ; and he proceeded forthwith to Kishkindha and his army with him. But, Vali could not understand this unprovoked attack ; so, he simply caught up the Rakshasa and placed him in durance vile. Dasamukha had ample time for reflection and repentance ; he frankly confessed to Vali that he had miscalculated and had caught a Tartar ; he prayed hard to be set free, and vowed deathless friendship and gratitude. Vali, for all his strength and valour, seems to be a good soul and soft-hearted ; and he allowed Rayana to go back in peace. Some time after, Vali installed his brother Sugreeva in his place and retired to the charming solitudes of Mount Meru to lead a life of quiet meditation. Sugreeva gave his daughter Sreeprabha in marriage to Dasamukha and celebrated it with extraordinary pomp and splendour.

Long afterwards, the Rakshasa monarch fell in love with Rathnavali, a goddess of Nithyaloka and went thither in his aerial car. All at once its course was checked; and looking down, he saw that it was Mount Meru and Vali seated there plunged in profound meditation. Fired with wrath at this insult to his majesty, he attempted to root out the mountain and Vali along with it. The monkey smiled in pity and, not disposed to be too hard upon the fool, pressed down the mount ever so much with his toe. Dasamukha could not free his hands from between the mountain and the earth. Long did he howl in his agony; and heart-rending were his prayers and protestations to Vali, who, tired of it all, let him go. This incident gave the Rakshasa a fresh epithet—the Howler (Ravana).

Sometime after, he won the grace of Jineswara and was allowed to obtain from Dharna, the serpent, the magical art known as Sakthi. Now, the ambition to rule over the broad earth and the kings on it caught him in its grip; and, with Sugreeva to aid him, he started on a campaign of conquest. On his way, he broke his journey at the banks of the river Narmada to bathe and rest a while. He was engaged in devout worship of Jineswara on the pleasant sands of the river, when Sahasramsa, king of Mahishmathi, kicked away the dam that kept back its waters. The rolling torrent came upon Ravana all too soon and washed away his image and the articles of worship. Ravana, beside himself with rage, attacked Sahasramsa and took him prisoner; but, set him free at the earnest request of his father Sathabahu. Sahasramsa never recovered from the blow; he made over his kingdom to his friend Anaranya, and took holy orders. But, the contagion spread to the new ruler, who placed his son Dasaratharaya on the throne and became a sanyasin.

During his travels, Ravana came upon king Marutharaya, who was engaged in a grand sacrifice. Countless sheep and cattle were tied to the sacrificial posts, patiently awaiting the hour of their death and deliverance. Ravana, as a true follower of Jineswara, could not bear to see this wanton cruelty, this hecatomb of innocent animals, with no words to voice their misery but a cry. In a fit of fury, he made sad havoc of the sacrifice. Narada, who set on Ravana to this act of mercy, came there, praised the Rakshasa and his piety, and said to the assembled crowd, "There lived of yore a great teacher by name Ksheerakadamba. His son Parvathaka, the prince Vasuraya, son of Abhichandra of Sukthimathu and myself the third, were disciples under the holy man. One day, he gave us each a bird made of flour and told us to kill it where there were none present. We took different directions. The others came back after a time and described how they killed their birds and where ; but, I came back to the teacher and said, 'Reverend Sir ! Try as I would, I failed to find a place where there is none ; and further, I hold that harmlessness to all sentient beings is the highest virtue. The master was mightily pleased with me and condemned the others to long periods of life in hell. But, Parvathaka his son, wanted to know the why of it and argued the point with me. "The Vedas enjoin on us the sacrifice of *Aja*. Now, the word has no other meaning in good honest Sanskrit than a sheep or a goat.' 'But' cried I 'the same word has been understood to denote that which is not born. Now, what can it mean, in the name of common sense, but grain that has been kept over three years ; for, then, it is useless as seed. The Vedas, ever intent upon putting down every tendency to harm any sentient being, declare that all sacrifice should be made with such grain ; that is how *Aja* should be interpreted.

Grain having the power of reproduction in it is, in a way, a sentient being ; and it must not receive harm at our hands. How absurd to apply the passages to authorise sacrifice of animals, so much higher in the scale of evolution than grain!' But, Parvathaka was hard to convince ; so, I referred the matter to Vasuraya as the umpire. He too decided it in favour of my opponent. But, the Gods, who are ever by us, were incensed at his unjust decision and condemned him to hell." The assembled multitude were loud in their praises of Narada for the masterly and lucid manner in which he had solved a very vexed question and let light upon it. Maruththaraya paid no heed to the ruin of his sacrifice ; he placed to heart the words of Narada and bestowed his daughter Kanakaprabha in marriage upon Ravana.

The Rakshasa king next proceeded to Mathura and was the guest of Madhu, who was the envied possessor of a trident given him by God Chamarendra. A warm friendship grew up between the two, and Ravana cemented it by giving his daughter Manorama as a wife to Madhu. News reached him through his spies that Nalacoobara was ruling his subjects with a rod of iron ; and Ravana proceeded there in all haste to punish the tyrant as he deserved. But, his wife Uparambha, a good woman and virtuous, interceded for him and promised that he would turn over a new leaf ; whereupon, Ravana left him in peace and turned his arms against Indra of Rathanapura. Now, Indra had for long years kept his name untarnished, and had jealously guarded his title of 'the Invincible.' But Fate fought against him in the shape of Ravana ; and he drank of the bitter cup of defeat. Nirvanasangama, his teacher, reminded him of a past evil deed of his, when he insulted Ahalya, the wife of a holy man Anandamali ; his defeat might be, in a way, an expiation of the sin, Indra was consoled somewhat.

Thus, Ravana ranged over the earth, now winning hard victories over some and anon suffering shameful defeat at the hands of others. On his way back to Lanka, he was met by Ananthaveerya, the sage, who said to him, "Dasamukha, my son ! you have incurred much sin by violating the wives of others. A heavy punishment is in store for you through the Lord Vasudeva. You will lay violent hands on his wife, and he will be your Fate." Now, Ravana's heart sank within him, at these words of evil omen. "Well" he said to himself, "let the dead past bury itself. No use of crying over spilt milk. Henceforth at least, I shall keep my heart away from those who place not their affections on me."

There was a king, by name Mahendra, who held sway at Mahendrapura, near mount Vaithathya. He had a wife Hridayasundari and a daughter Anjanasundari. Countless were the princes that sought her hand in marriage, and sent their horoscopes and portraits to her father. Mahendra consulted with his ministers, and chose Vidyuthprabha and Pavananjaya as the best of the lot. Now, Vidyuthprabha was the master of unbounded wealth, was extremely proficient in all the arts and sciences of the time, and was gifted with marvellous beauty; but, the stars promised him a very short life. Pavananjaya, the son of Prahladaraya, who reigned at Adithyapura, was not endowed with such excellences as his rival; but, the astrologers guaranteed him a very long life.

Naturally, the father chose the latter as a meet husband for his girl, fixed the day of marriage and sent word to his friends and kin that he would celebrate it at a town near the holy spot Manasatheerthha. Well, they assembled there in due course, and the preliminary rites were conducted with magnificent pomp. Pavananjaya was no fool. He knew very well that the choice fell upon him not because he was

a more eligible party than his rival, but because his life was an unusually long one. He could not repress the natural curiosity to know how his affianced took it, how the king and his people viewed it. He managed to conceal himself in the apartments of the princess, with a view to hear for himself what they thought of the match. Anjanasundari and her two friends touched upon various current topics for a time; when, one of the girls turned to the other and said, "I cannot, for the life of me, make out why our master should pass over Vidyuthprabha, the most beautiful and wealthy of all the princes we know, and pitch upon Pavananjaya as a husband for our princess. May be you are in the secret." "Nay, nay" replied the other "there is nothing in it to make a secret of. Vidyuthprabha has but a short life before him; and Pavananjaya has an unusually long one. At least that is what the astrologers give out. That is all." "What a pity!" rejoined the first "Better a short life and sweet than a long one and dreary. A cup of nectar and—death the next moment, is what I would prefer to unending draughts of poison and—a lease of life, longer if possible than that of Father Time.'

But, Anjanasundari quietly listened to it as became a dutiful daughter. Her face was as inscrutable as a sphinx; nor did she chide her maids for taking that extraordinary liberty with her and the object of her father's choice. Pavananjaya unfortunately jumped to the conclusion that the princess accepted him not for his own sake; his only recommendation was that the astrologers guaranteed him a very long life. He was the last man to make a scene. His friends, his kin and the guests shall never come to know the great sacrifice he made for their sake. He would go through the affair as if he were the most ardent of lovers; but, Anjanasundari must be a stranger to him for the rest of his life. Well, the marriage came off as grandly as any one could wish.

Pavananjaya took his bride home to his capital, gave her a splendid suite of apartments, numerous retinue and every comfort that heart could desire ; but, he never set his eyes upon her.

Ravana the Rakshasa, sustained shameful defeat at the hands of Varuna and sent word to his friend Prahladaraya to come and lead his troops against the foe. Pavananjaya caught at the opportunity to escape from a cheerless home. His parents and wife did their very best to detain him ; but he heeded them not. He travelled far during the day and encamped at night on the shores of Lake Manasarovara. It was insufferably hot and sultry. Nature seemed to hold her breath in pain. Pavananjaya rolled on an uneasy bed, listless and too tired to sleep. A swan sent up from somewhere near a doleful wail, calling upon her mate that came not. It aroused in the prince a train of thought, that unconsciously led him to reflect upon the life of happy couples, of love-matches, and of the course of true love that did run smooth. His mind had been under a cloud, and his heart warped and unnaturally perverted. What a brute he had been ! And what an angel of goodness and patience his wife had proved herself ! His unbounded self-conceit had certainly misconstrued her maiden modesty and silence, into a loveless heart and utter apathy. Well, he was glad that he had found out his mistake before it was too late. Not a moment should be lost in making ample reparation, even to the fullest. So, he took horse at once, and, before midnight, was at the gates of his palace unknown to any. He sought the presence of his wife ; and, to her great surprise and bewilderment, confessed everything frankly and honestly, and besought her to pardon him and forget the past if possible. They had a very happy time of it that night ; and in the small hours of the morning

Pavananjaya took leave of his wife, promising to be back as early as possible. As a sign of his visit to her that night, and to silence any scandal in case she conceived and bore him a child, he gave her his signet ring and rode back in all speed to the camp.

Anjanasundari did conceive and it came to the ears of the king and queen. They would not listen to any explanations. They would not bestow a glance at the signet ring she produced. They would not heed the advice of their prudent minister to take no action until their son should come home. The unfortunate girl was made to leave the capital the very next day. Her parents were, if possible, more stupid and pig-headed. "You do not want us to believe that they are fools enough to punish an innocent girl. *Here* is no place for you."

Now, the princess had a very dear friend of hers, by name Vasanthathilaka. She sought her out and requested shelter and help from her when her hour of pain and misery should come upon her. For once, the tie of friendship was stronger than the tie of blood. A loving heart saw more clearly than Age and crabbed Prejudice. She consoled the heart-broken girl and assured her that she would see her through at any cost. They left the abodes of men far behind and repaired to the wild woods, travelling by easy stages, and subsisting on the kindly charity of those they came across. At last they reached Hanupura, a sort of oasis in the midst of a dense forest, and put up for themselves a sort of cottage near the hermitage of Amithagathi, a holy man. One morning Vasanthathilaka approached him and asked, "Holy sir! What will become of my poor friend? The child in her womb—has it happy days before it?" And to her replied the sage, "In her last birth this lady was Lakshmeevathi, one of the two queens of Kanakaratha. She



hated her rival, and in sheer spite, stole the image of Jineswara that she worshipped, and threw it on a heap of rubbish. But, repentance came upon her soon. She brought back the image and prayed to the Lord to pardon her sacrilege. That is why she was hounded out by her kith and kin. Her timely repentance will bear ample fruit, in that a son would be born unto her; and great will be his fame in all the worlds. The cloud that now darkens her fair name will soon pass away and she will be taken back with joy and honor by the very people who have discarded her."

Shortly after, Anjanasundari gave birth to a son. It was a Sunday in the month of Chaithra and the constellation Sravana ruled the day. *Hanumantha* they called him, from Hanupura, where he was born. Mighty were his feats and marvellous his deeds even as a child; and the fame of his strength and prowess flew far and fast. One morning he saw the rising Sun and mistaking it for a nice plaything, sprang into the air to bring it down. But, he found out his mistake and alighted on mount Sreesaila, which was shattered to pieces through the shock.

Meanwhile, his father Pavananjaya made war upon Varuna, routed his army and delivered from captivity Khara and Dooshana, the brothers of Ravana. Thereafter, he returned to his kingdom, covered with glory and loaded with honors and presents by the Rakshasa king. A terrible shock awaited him at home. His wife, his new-found love, was mercilessly driven from the town by his own parents, who ought to have known better—and all because she had born in her womb the happy pledge of their reunion after long years of desolate misery. They might have at least waited for him to come back; *he* had a voice in the affair; *he* had more vital interests at stake. He called the people together and related to them how he had cruelly misunderstood his innocent wife, how happy Fate

brought them together, how he provided against that very contingency and how his parents were obstinately blind to the truth and had perpetrated an unheard-of cruelty. His house was left unto him desolate. His heart was far away and with his wife. He had no call to remain where the persecutors of his wife abode. He would go out into the world and search even to the remotest corners of it, even if the search should end with his life. Long did he wander and far did he roam, until at last one happy day he came upon them at the outskirts of Hanupura, living all humbly. He clasped his dear wife and dearer child to his breast. Vasanthathilaka, a mother to the poor girl when her own flesh and blood cast her out with scorn—he could not thank her enough nor think of any return of gratitude, except humbly praying her to live with him all her days and continue to be a mother to himself and his wife. They came back to his kingdom and lived there long and happily.

Hanumantha rendered signal service to Ravana the Rakshasa, who, out of a heart full of gratitude and delight, gave him to wife his daughter Sathyavathi. His sister Soorpanakha was not less grateful and bestowed her daughter Ananthakusuma upon him. On his way back, Sugreeva and Nala invited him to stay with them, and coming to know of the great service rendered by him to their old friend Ravana, gave him their daughters Padmaraga and Harimalini to wife.

King Vijaya ruled at Ayodhya. Himachooda was his wife and he had two sons Vajrabhahu and Purandara. The elder took Manorama to wife ; but, after a time, they entered the order of the monks. The younger came to the throne, and after him, father and son, Keerthiratha, Kosala, Hiranyagarbha, Nahusha, Saudana, Simharatha, Brahmaratha, Chathurmukha, Hemaratha,

Satharatha, Vathayapritha, Varidhara, Indudhara, Adithyatharatha, Mandhatha, Veerasena, Prathimanya, Prathibandhu, Ravimanyu, Vasanthalethaka, Kuberadaththa Kumku, Sarabha, Dwiratha, Simhadasava, Hiranyakasipu, Punjasthala, Kakuthstha, Raghuraya and Anaranya. His son Dasaratha reigned at Ayodhya long and happily. King Janaka of Mithila was his contemporary and faithful friend.

One day Ravana met Narada, and asked him in a spirit of banter, "Now, tell me when I am to die and by whom?" To whom Narada replied, "The son of Dasaratha, King of Ayodhya and the daughter of Janaka of Mithila are your Fate." Ravana was dumb-founded at this unexpected turn of the conversation. Narada had taken him all too seriously and had spoken out a very unpleasant prophesy. But, he would cheat Destiny and give the lie to Narada; he would make it utterly impossible for Dasaratha and Janaka to have any children at all; he would lay them out as corpses and there was an end of it. So, he sent his brother Vibheeshana to make away with them; but, they had word of it before hand and were far away by the time their enemy was upon their city. Vibheeshana executed the orders of Ravana upon the life-like images that the kings had left on their throne and reported to his brother that the objects of his apprehension were no more.

Meanwhile, Dasaratha travelled a long way and settled in the Magadha country with his wives Aparajitha, Sumithra, Kaikeyee and Suprabha. In a battle with an enemy who attacked him wantonly, Kaikeyee rendered him signal service and in return got from the king two boons, which she reserved for some future occasion to ask. Dasaratha had four sons. One night Aparajitha, his eldest wife, saw in her dreams a lion, an elephant, the sun and the moon. The astrologers interpreted it that she would give birth to a son whose fame would

spread over the whole world. Shortly after, a son was born to her, as beautiful as the Goddess Lakshmi who dwells in Brahmaloaka. He was an incarnation of one of the gods. They named him Padma, from the lotus on which Lakshmi sits; Rama was another of his names. The second wife likewise dreamt of a lion, an elephant, the sun, the moon, the fire, the ocean God and Lakshmi. A son was born to her, blue in hue, overshadowed by Mahavishnu. They called him Narayana and also Lakshmana. The third wife, Kaikeyee, begat Bharatha, and Suprabha was the mother of Sathrugna. About the same time, Janaka married Vaidehi and had a daughter, Seetha by name.

Later on, Atharangama, the Mlechcha king over Mayuramala, the capital of Barbaradesa, north of mount Kailas, attacked Janaka, who requested his friend to assist him. Rama obtained permission to go instead of his father and defeated the enemy. This induced Janaka to give him his daughter Seetha to wife. Now, Narada came to hear of the extraordinary beauty of the princess and repaired to the house of Janaka to have a sight of her. But, Seetha was horribly frightened at his monstrous ugliness and would not come forth. Stung to the quick, Narada induced King Bhamandala to abduct Seetha. But, his father Chandragathi stopped it and sent word to Janaka to give Seetha in marriage to his son. "What a pity!" exclaimed Janaka "I have already promised her hand to Rama." But, Chandragathi would not drop the matter there. 'Such a gem of a woman shall never be the prize of pure luck ; worth, merit and valour must have a voice in it too I will send you a famous bow, Vajravarta. Should Rama succeed in so much as bending it, Seetha shall be his.' Janaka acceded to the proposal and invited Rama to fulfil the conditions. It was but child's play for the hero ; and Seetha became his wife,

Lakshmana married eighteen maidens of the Vidyadhara race ; and Bharatha married the daughter of Janaka's brother.

Thereafter, Dasaratha was enabled to regain, through the grace of Jineswara, his lost kingdom of Ayodhya. But, the snows of age chilled his heart and he resolved to install Rama in his place. It was then that Kalkayee came forward and requested him to fulfil his promise unto her. "With the greatest pleasure" replied Dasaratha "Then," said Kalkayee "send away Rama to the distant forests and place my son Bharatha on the throne." Dasaratha, whose heart knew no deceit, whose lips were never soiled by an untruth, bowed his head in sorrow and consented to condemn to long exile the darling of his heart. Bharatha went on his knees to Rama and besought him to remain at Ayodhya and accept the throne as his lawful right. But, Rama took an example from his father and was bent upon going away from the kingdom. The old monarch had, without a moment's hesitation, sacrificed his life and every thing that it could offer him on the altar of Truth and Duty. Would he, the son of such a noble father, tarnish by his weakness for power the bright fame of his ancestors that shone far far into the illimitable past ? His father's promise, of which the price was his life, should be kept in full.

Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana travelled long and far, and at last entered the dense forests of Pariyathra. They passed by mount Chitrakoota and many days' journey from it, came upon a town where they found no living soul. Rama called unto him a hunter that stood by, and asked him the reason of it "Lord!" said the man "this is or this was the famous town of Dasanga. Vajrakarni, a petty ruler, governed here with great fame and justice. He was a devout follower of Jineswara; he cut his image on his signet and vowed

that he would never bow his head to any other, god or man. This reached the ears of Simhadasa, his lord and master, who came down upon him with a large army, drove him and his subjects from the town and reduced it to the state you now see it in." Rama was extremely pained to hear it. He directed Lakshmana to punish Simhadasa for his wanton injustice and brought about a better understanding between him and Vajrakarni. This enabled the latter to devote himself heart and soul to the worship of Lord Jina.

Thereafter, they dived deeper and deeper into the dark woods and one day came upon a lovely princess wandering about in man's attire. They consoled her and came to know that her father king Valakhilya was defeated and kept in prison by Kaka, a hunter-king. Rama sent Lakshmana to slay Kaka and free Valakhilya from bondage

Another day, they travelled far and suffered much from heat, hunger and fatigue. A large banyan offered them a welcome refuge under its pillared shade. A Yaksha, who had made the tree his home, came down and offered reverent worship to Rama and through his magic, a beautiful town arose on the spot, where the exiles lived for a time.

One day, Rama reached the town of Vijayapura and was sauntering through the lovely gardens on the outskirts, when he saw a beautiful girl about to put an end to her life. He ran to her and succeeded in thwarting her purpose. "My good sister! How could you ever think of going into the presence of your Maker unbid and before your time?" "Lord!" replied the maiden, in accents of bitter despair, "doubtless you rejoice in having saved my life and regard it as a great benefit done to me; but, if you knew what misery I was trying to escape from, you would have been the first to kill me out of sheer pity"; and she burst into a flood of tears, Rama

blamed himself for having caused her useless grief and resolved to lighten her load of sorrow, if that were in his power. "Grieve not, my child! Tell me what your heart yearns after; and you *shall* have it." Then she took heart and said, "He who stands by your side, your brother Lakshmana, is the cause of all my woe. Mine is a hopeless love unreturned. Better dark death than a life of dire misery, a living hell. Now, see you not that your promise is beautifully fulfilled?" and she laughed out of very bitterness. Rama turned to Lakshmana and said, "My dear, you see that this lady is endowed with no ordinary attractions of mind and body; she has set her heart upon you; and I have passed my word to see her happy—which you never knew me to break. So, it would give me infinite pleasure to see you take this worthy maiden to wife." Lakshmana, to whom his brother's word was law, raised the poor girl from the depths of hopeless despondency to the highest pinnacle of joy and delight. She was to remain with her parents until they came back to take her to Ayodhya.

On their way, they came to know that Athiveerya, king of Nandavatha, was working up a conspiracy against his master and over-lord Bharatha; and Rama punished him as he deserved.

Another time, they stayed at a town named Kshemanjali, where Lakshmana married princess Jithapadma. Two Brahmanas that lived in the mountain valleys sought his feet and were raised by him to the highest heavens.

Then, they came to the Dandakaranya, so named after Danda, the king, who took birth there as a bird to expiate his sins. Rama took pity on the poor creature and transformed him into Jatayus, a sacred bird.

Sambooka, the son of Khara and Soorpanakha, was undergoing severe austerities in a bamboo grove on the banks of

the Krounchapa. The famous sword Chandrahasa, of magical powers, was what he wanted to get. Lakshmana decided that his success would considerably endanger the safety of the world, and slew him with the very sword he was trying to get. Soorpanakha was inexpressibly pained to hear of it and complained to Rama in no mild terms. She came more than once on that errand. Rama's divine beauty enslaved her heart and she overcame a woman's sense of modesty to beseech him to marry her. But, Rama spurned her away from him as a loathsome thing, whereupon, she set her husband upon Rama and Lakshmana, who she swore had offered her deadly insult. Khara, blind with jealous rage, came upon them with a large army. Lakshmana asked Rama to take care of Seetha while he went forth to fight the Rakshasa hosts. Then, Ravana took the opportunity to do his sister Soorpanakha a favour. He concealed himself behind the hermitage of Rama, and called upon him in the voice of Lakshmana to save him from death at the hands of his enemies. Seetha at once concluded that Lakshmana was in deadly peril. She lost not a moment in sending Rama to his assistance. Finding her alone and unprotected, the Rakshasa king pounced upon her and carried her to his island home in Lanka, where he placed her in the Asoka grove under the guard of fierce-visaged Rakshasis. He tried all his arts of persuasion; he threatened her with horrible tortures and a lingering death too painful to conceive; he offered her his untold wealth and unbounded power; his wife Mandodari was induced to plead for him with all a woman's logic. But, Seetha grew more and more bitter towards Ravana and openly scoffed at him, his barbarous splendour, his wild ways, and his unbounded wickedness. Vibheeshana tried his utmost to save her from his persecutions. But, Ravana turned a deaf ear to all remonstrances and well-meant advice.



Rama and Lakshmana annihilated Khara and his forces and returned to their hermitage, intending to have a good laugh at Seetha for her wild fears for the safety of Lakshmana. But, they found their home desolate; search as they would, they came not upon Seetha, nor could anybody thereabouts give them the least news about her.

King Viratha complained to Rama and Lakshmana of the cruel treatment he had endured from Khara and Dooshana; Lakshmana freed him for ever from his tormentors and gave him the kingdom of Pathala Lanka to rule. He, out of the great gratitude of his heart, sent messengers faithful and cunning, north and south, east and west to bring him news of Seetha—but all in vain.

Sugreeva, king of the Vanaradweepa, had a wife, Thara by name, of matchless beauty and intelligence. Sahajathi fell in love with her and taking advantage of the absence of her husband, assumed his shape and proceeded to her apartments. But, as Fate would have it, the real Sugreeva came upon the scene all too unexpectedly. There was a terrible fight between Sugreeva and his counterfeit, in which the latter had the best of it. Sugreeva took refuge with Rama and laid before him his tale of wrong and suffering. Rama divined the truth in a moment, slew out of hand the pretender and restored Sugreeva to his kingdom and to his wife. The grateful king vowed never to rest, until he had discovered the whereabouts of Seetha.

Viratha and Bhamandala sent word to their friend Rama, that the wife of his heart was kept in durance vile at Lanka by the infamous Ravana. Sugreeva sent his monkey hosts to Lankadweepa to search it through and through. Hanumantha was entrusted with Rama's signet to watch over Seetha in her hour of peril; and the ring was to be his credentials.

The valiant Hanumantha crossed over to Lanka, interviewed Vibheeshana and through his help, managed to penetrate into the garden Devaramana, where Seetha was kept in close confinement. She was there, seated under an Asoka tree, her heart sore with grief and her thoughts full of Rama, whom she expected every moment to come to her. Hanumantha declared himself unto her as a trusted messenger from her lord, produced the signet and acquainted her with the whereabouts of Rama and what he passed through on her account. Joy illumined the heart of the poor forlorn wife. She kissed over and over the priceless ring that was to her an embodiment of her beloved; blessed Hanumantha as her deliverer from a fate worse than a thousand deaths; and gave him in return her own crest-jewel to be taken back to Rama, with an oft-repeated prayer to come on the wings of speed to Lanka and free her from the clutches of the vile Rakshasa.

Now, Hanuman would not go back without giving Ravana some tangible proof of his having been at Lanka, something to remember him by; he managed to destroy a large section of the royal army and finished up with sending Aksha, the favourite son of Ravana and a very famous general, to where his forefathers had gone before him. But, something remained to be done. He must meet the woman-stealer face to face, and have it out with him after his own way. So, he allowed himself to be bound by the magical serpent-bonds, and was taken before the king. There he brake them as so many wisps of straw; roundly rated Ravana for his evil life and his countless iniquities; and in the end, shattered to pieces the diadem of the proud monarch. He sprang away over the heads of those that stood around him, destroyed many of the fortifications of the town and was back to the mainland, leaving Ravana

and his Rakshasas utterly dazed with fear and confusion. He laid before Rama a harrowing tale of Seetha's woe, of her fortitude, of her brave defiance of Ravana and his might, of her oft-repeated prayer to be freed from that den of crime ; and produced Seetha's crest-jewel to confirm his statements.

Rama, Lakshmana, Sugreeva, Hanumantha, Bhamandala and the monkey hosts marched upon Lanka in hot haste. Samudra and Sethu, two friends of Ravana, barred their way, whom Nala and Neela put to rout. Suvela and Hamsadhara met with no better fate when they tried to oppose their march. At last they approached Lanka and beseged it. Meanwhile, Vibheeshana after one more hopeless attempt to turn Ravana's feet from the path of wickedness, went over to Rama with his army and promised signal assistance during the coming battle. Then, the two armies closed in deadly fight. Ravana sent forth his magical serpent-weapons to bind the monkey host, and render Rama utterly powerless. But, Lakshmana thought of his conveyance, the bird Garuda, who speedily appeared upon the scene, and made short work of the serpents. Rama caused a dreadful carnage among the Rakshasa hosts, and victory was almost within his reach. Now, Ravana came upon the battlefield, and recognising that Lakshmana was the most powerful of his foes, hurled upon him a magical weapon, Sakthi by name, that he had reserved against his dread enemy. Lakshmana respected the convention that the Sakthi ought not to be fought against ; he quietly allowed himself to be bound and lay as one dead. But, Bhamandala divined his purpose ; and in a flash, he was off to mount Drona, from where he brought the Waters of Life. Rama dashed it over his brother, who rose as from a deep sleep. Then, Lakshmana, who had all along been waiting for the moment

that would end the life of Ravana, mentally called unto himself his Discus. It came, and severed the head of the Rakshasa king from his body. Vibheeshana begged hard of Lakshmana to accept the sovereignty of the Lanka-dweepa; but, in return, he himself was crowned king of it by his noble benefactor. Kumbhakarna, brother to Ravana, and Indrajith, his eldest born, were made rulers of other kingdoms.

Sixteen days they stayed at Lanka, most hospitably entertained by Vibheeshana, whose joy and gratitude knew no bounds. Thereafter, they travelled back to Ayodhya in the famous ærial car Pushpaka. Bharatha and Sathrughna met them some way from the capital; and a touching sight it was to see the brothers meet again after so many years of separation, danger and trouble. Bharatha formally and with a full heart made over the kingdom to Rama, its lawful ruler, of whom he was, as he declared, but the faithful Viceroy. "He had had enough of worldly life" he said and passed away into the silent woods, there to hold communion with the Supreme. Kaikeyee, who had ample time for reflection and repentance, was heartily ashamed of her meanness and followed her son to his calm retreat. Rama was duly installed on the throne of Ayodhya. He placed Sathrughna over Madhurapuri; gave the Rahshasadweepa to Vibheeshana; Sugreeva was to rule over the Vanaradweepa; Hanumantha held sway at Sreepura, Viratha was rewarded for his faithful service with the vast dominions of Pathalalanka; Hanupura, where Hanuman was born, was placed in charge of Neela; Vaithadya and Rathanapura fell to the lot of Bhamandala, the true friend. Thus, Rama remembered those that had befriended him in his adversity and stood by him through peril and danger. They were loaded with honors and presents, and went back to their respective kingdoms in great joy.

Rama ruled over Ayodhya long and well; and Seetha, Prabhavathi, Rathinibha and Sreedama were his queens. Lakshmana divested himself of all cares of state, and lived a peaceful life of domestic felicity in the company of his wives Visalya, Rupavathi, Vanamala, Kalyanamalika, Rathnamalika, Jithapadma and Manorama and the two hundred and fifty children born unto them.

*Dasaratha Jathaka.*

It forms one of the Birth-stories of Lord Buddha and is written in Pali prose. It confines itself to the first part of Rama's adventures, and his wanderings in the forest and ends with his marriage to Seetha. But, the most curious thing about it is that Rama is represented as the brother of Seetha. A verse from chapter 128 of the Yuddhakanda is found in it.

OTHER WORKS ON THE SUBJECT

POEMS

1. *Sethu-bandha* —A poem written in the Prakṛitha dialect by Pravarasena. Dandi refers to it in his *Kavyadarsa*, I, 34.

The central episode is Rama's laying a bridge across the sea that separates Lanka from the mainland.

2. *Champu Ramayana* :—in five cantos by Bhoja Raja. It is a prose work interspersed with beautiful poetry.

3. *Raghava-bhyudaya*

4. *Raghava-pandaveeya*.—by Kavi Raja. It is so worded that it may apply equally well to the adventures of Rama or the Pandavas, being in fact an epitome of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

5. *Raghava-vilasa* :—by Visvanatha, the author of *Sahithyadarpana*.

6. *Rama-vilasa*:—by Ramacharana.

7. *Ramavilasa*:—by Harinatha. It is written on the model of the *Geetha Govinda* of Jayadeva.

8. *Ramachandra-charithra-sara* :—by Agnivesa.
9. *Raghunatha-bhyudaya*.
10. *Raghava-nashadheeya* :—by Hara-daththa-soori.
11. *Ramayana-manjari* :—by Kshemendra.
12. *Ravanarjuneeya* :—by Bhatta Bheema.

## DRAMAS

1. *Mahaveera-charithra* and *Uttara Rama-charithra*—by Bhavabhoothi, dealing respectively with the incidents in the Poorvakanda and the Uttarakanda of the Ramayana.

2. *Hanuman-nataka* or *Maha-nataka*.—It is said to have been composed by Hanuman, who wrote it on rocks. Later on, Valmeeiki sung his marvellous poem ; and lest it should be thrown into the shade, the faithful devotee of Rama cast his stanzas into the sea. Long long after, in the reign of Bhoja Raja, some portions of them were recovered and arranged by Damodara-misra. It is written in fourteen acts, and some of the stanzas are veritable gems of Sanskrit literature.

3. *Anargha-raghava* —in seven acts by Murari.
4. *Prasanna-raghava*.—by Jayadeva.
5. *Abhirama-manu* —in seven acts by Sundara-misra.
6. *Bala-ramayana* :—by Rajasekhara.
7. *Udaththa-raghava*.
8. *Unmaththa-raghava* :—by Bhaskara kavī
9. *Chalitha-rama*.
10. *Doothangada* :—by Subhata.
11. *Janakee-charana-chamara* :—by Sreenivasacharya.
12. *Janakee-parmaya* :—by Ramabhadra Deekshitha.