

Srirama Jayam

Srimathe Ramanujaya Nama:

Srimad Varavaramunaye Nama:

SHRI RAMA ANUYATRA (PART 1)

(Following on the footsteps taken by Seetha- Rama as they traversed the entire Bharatadesam and having darshan of the holy kshetras (pilgrimage places).

Book: Sri Ramayana and Details of Kshetras

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SRI:

## Sri Rama Anuyatra

### Introduction

Sri Rama, an avatar of Sriman Narayana, is the backbone of Bharatadesam. Valmiki Ramayana chronicling the History of Sri Rama is the basis for Indian history. Seetha, an avatar of goddess Mahalakshmi and Rama, walked through the entire country, all the way from Ayodhya in the North to Thirupullani in the Southern tip, while their soft-feet became all-sore. A significant outcome of their yatra is that it came as a blessing to the devotees scattered across the length and breadth of the country.

Anuyatra means trailing on the footsteps of Bhagawan. This Yatra has been organised with the primary aim of following on the footsteps of the Seetha–Rama couple and to behold the Kshetras (Holy-places) where their divine feet fell.

The slokas pertaining to each of these kshetras during the course of travel in this Anuyatra have been briefly explained. If one were to read these slokes prior to travel, one would enjoy following the same when the original text is read at each kshetra underlined therein, and the explanations would be clearer. The next part contains brief descriptions of the glory of the punya kshetras and the important locations therein. The reference page numbers marked therein may be cross referenced with the briefs on slokas mentioned in the previous part. Thus, one can simultaneously enjoy the sloka and the

kshetra referred therein along with description when one is at the kshetra.

The final part contains maps delineating the route taken in the anuyatra. This book is a small token offering from us to the participants of this yatra along with prayers to the lord that they will revisit these kshetras again and bring along others, who could not make it this time. May the divine couple fulfil our prayers in this regard.

We wish to express our gratitude to Thentirupperai Sri U.Ve Arvindalochanan swami and Sri Rajan of RNR Printers who have helped us to bring out this book.

Authors

Sri

Srimathe Ramanujaya Nama:

Sri Ramayanam

1. Sri Valmiki Ashram Bittoor (Kanpur)

### **First Two Sargams of Balakandam**

Valmiki asked Narada, “Who in this world is The ‘Uttamapurusha’? Sri Rama was the ruler of Kosala Rajyam at that point in time. Narada named Him as The ‘Uttamapurusha’ in answer to Valmiki’s query. Narada proceeded to briefly narrate Rama’s story that had unfolded until then. Narada then departed for Brahmaloaka after being venerated by the maharishi. Later, Valmiki accompanied by his disciple, Bharadwaja left for bathing in the **Thamasa river**. On the banks of the River, he saw a couple of courting Black Ibises. A hunter shot and killed the male ibis. Upon witnessing this, an enraged Valmiki uttered the Sloka Maanishatha....’ Meaning “O Hunter, you won’t live long!”. After bathing, he then returned to his ashram with his disciple Bharadwaja. That’s when Brahma arrived at his ashram. He blessed Valmiki, thus: “you will be able to visualise in your mind’s eye the complete story of Rama the past as well as the future, as it unfolds. Pen the story of Sri Ramapiran”. He then departed to return to his world.

## 2. Ayodhya

### Balakandam 16<sup>th</sup> Sargam

Ravana had received a boon from Brahma that no one other than a 'man' should be able to kill him. Hence the devatas (demi-gods) approached Vishnu Bhagawan and beseeched Him, to incarnate as a man and kill him. Bhagawan promised to fulfil the request and disappeared. Dasharatha performed the Putra-kameshti yagna. A purusha (man) appeared from the sacrificial fire and offered a vessel of payasam (sweetened milk dessert) to Dasharatha and asked him to give it to his wives for consumption. Dasharatha divided the same into four parts and gave a part each to Kausalya and Kaikeyi and the other two parts to Sumitra. The wives became pregnant upon consumption of the payasam.

### 18<sup>th</sup> Sargam

A year passed by. On the Shukla paksha Navami (tithi) Punarvasu asterism in the month of Chitra, Rama incarnated from Kausalya's womb. Next day, Bharata incarnated from Kaikeyi's womb. On the very same day, Lakshmana and Shatrughna incarnated from Sumitra. They were brought up and relevant rituals were duly performed for them until the age of twelve under the guidance and tutelage of Sage Vasishtha and others. Vishwamitra arrived at the Court of Dasaratha and requested him to send Rama with him. Initially, Dasaratha was reluctant but he then sent Rama and Lakshmana along with Vishwamitra upon Vasishtha's persuasion.

## Kamashramam (Baliya)

### Balakandam 23<sup>rd</sup> sargam

Vishwamitra first took them both to **Kamashrama**. This is where Rudra had burnt Kama (Manmatha) down to ashes. It is also known as **Punyashrama**. Rudra was meditating here when Manmatha engaged himself in certain acts to disrupt his meditation. Hence an irate Rudra burnt him down. Since Manmatha's body was burnt down, he came to be known as 'anangan'. The three of them spent their **first night** in that ashram. The confluence of River Sarayu and River Ganga is close to this Ashram. Kamashrama is located in Buxar (Baliya). The confluence of the rivers should have been at this place in times of yore. However, presently the confluence is near Chapra, a place that is quite far away from Kamashrama. Possibly, over the span of two yugas, floods might have caused the deposition of sand in the confluence of the past era. The course of the rivers might have also lengthened.

### 3. Thatakavanam (Buxar)

#### 24<sup>th</sup> Sargam

Next morning, the three of them left Kamashrama for Thatakavana. They got onto a boat, and crossed over to the other bank of the Ganga. Just when they were crossing the confluence, they heard the waters roaring. Rama asked Vishwamitra why the river was roaring thus. Vishwamitra replied: "Brahma created a lake in Mount Kailash. A river and



its tributary flows from that lake towards Ayodhya. One of them flows from the west of Ayodhya towards the north; The other flows towards the east and merges with the Ganga in Angadesha. Shiva's Ashram (Kamashrama) is located at the confluence of River Sarayu and River Ganga. Hence, at the confluence of Ganga and Sarayu where they were just crossing, River Sarayu on top, was falling down into and merging with the waters of River Bhagirathi which was flowing beneath and causing the roaring noise. The trio reached the **southern bank of River Ganga**. The forest on that bank is **Thatakavana**. Thataka along with her sons Mareecha and Subahu have laid siege in that area and are not allowing anyone there, thereby causing hardships to everyone. "Kill her, O Rama!" ordered Vishwamitra. Rama obeyed him and proceeded to kill her.

### **Siddhashramam (Buxar)**

Vishwamitra then escorted Rama-Lakshmana to his own ashram – **Siddhashrama**. He narrated the story of this ashram to them. After suffering defeat at the hands of Mahabali, Indra and other demigods approached and prayed to Mahavishnu to retrieve swarga for them. Bhagawan agreed and incarnated as the son of Aditi and Sage Kashyap bearing the form of a dwarf (Vamana). He begged Mahabali to offer three footsteps of land, grew in size to become Thrivikrama, measured all the worlds and despatched Mahabali to patalaloka. He then handed Swarga back to Indra. After narrating this story, Vishwamitra told them how Siddhashramam got its name. He informed them that it was now his ashram and that it was there that rakshasas entered and tormented them and asked

Him to kill them. Bhagawan agreed and requested him to please continue with the sacrifices. Vishwamitra prepared for the pre-sacrifice fasting. How Siddhashram got its name: After performing penance for a thousand years, Sage Kashyapa beheld Bhagawan in person. He beseeched Bhagawan: 'As a boon upon completion of my penance Thou should be born as my son. It is then that my penance will attain fruition (Siddham) and then this Ashram will be known as Siddhashram. Bhagawan acceded and came to be born as a son to him. The ashram of 'siddham' (fruition) came to be known as Siddhashram -meaning an Ashram that will yield fruit without fail is Siddhashram.

### **30<sup>th</sup> Sargam - Yagnarakshanam (Protection of the Sacrifice)**

Vishwamitra performed the sacrifice (yagam) for five days. Rama and Lakshmana went without sleep, guarding the sacrificial fire. On the sixth day, Thataka's son, Mareecha and Subahu along with other rakshas climbed on to 'akasha' (skies) and poured blood. Using ManavAstram (weapons), Rama pushed Mareecha into the sea and killed Subahu. Using Vayavastram he killed the other rakshasas too. Without further, Vishwamitra successfully completed the yagna (sacrifice) Vishwamitra acclaimed Rama's act.

## **6. Confluence of Ganga – Gandaki – Shona**

**(Chapra- Sonapur)**

**Sargam 31-35**

Vishvamitra said to Rama- “King Janaka is to perform a yagna in Mithila. Let’s go there.” The trio reached the banks of River Shona in the evening. The river is now known as Sone. The ruler of the land on the river bank was Kusha, the son of Brahma. His son was Kushanabha, whose son is Kadi. His son was Vishwamitra whose sister was Satyavati, who flowed as Kaushiki River. By the time Vishwamitra narrated these stories it was midnight, and then they all slept. In the morning they reached the **northern banks of Shona River**.

## **7. Journey to Mithila – Vishala Nagar (Hajpur)**

### **Sargam 35 -48**

Rama and Lakshmana walked down with Vishwamitra reached the banks of the Ganga in the afternoon and rested there. Vishwamitra narrated the story of the birth of Gangeyan or Subrahmanian and also how Ganga came down to the Earth. Next morning, they got into a boat and reached the northern bank of River Ganga. There they visited the city of Vishala. It was here that in a bygone era Sage Kashyap’s wife had meditated. Indra had served her there. Vishalan, the son of Ikshvaku, was a benevolent man. He had set up this city of Vishala in his name. Hemachandran was the son of Vishalan. His son was Suchandran whose son was Dhumrashwan. His son was Srunjayan. And his son was Sahadevan, and his son was Kushaswan, while his son was Kushaswan. His son was Somadatta. His son was Kakusthan. His son was Sumathi. He was the present ruler of the city of Vishala. Upon hearing of Vishwamitra’s arrival he came with his entourage and relatives to receive him. He greeted them warmly, “I am blessed and gratified by your visit.” He heaped praise on Rama-

Lakshmana. “These princes’ bravery is comparable to that of the Gods’. Their gait is like that of animals like the elephant, lion, tiger, and bull.”

### **King Sumathi’s Praise**

“Their broad eyes are shaped like lotus-leaves; they wield bows and quivers filled with arrows; are as handsome as Ashwinikumar; as youthful as their beauty, fortunate to have descended on the Earth from Devaloka. Very dazzling. Although they have been born as humans (prone to death) their form seems to be deathless. O, how did they trudge through the rough thorny terrain on their tender feet?”, wondered King Sumathi clutching his belly. “Whose sons are they? Why did these boys come here? They adorn this land just as the Sun and the Moon adorn the skies. Indication of sweetness = sweet smile, slight nod of the head etc gesturing at the thoughts in their mind. Pastimes = gait, speech, view etc. Personality = Body build, height, etc. Thus, superior and unparalleled in all respects. There can be no other person equal to them and thus are incomparable in all respects; are wielding the most superior of weapons. So, why have they traversed a long way to come here? Since they are princes, they must have come to alleviate the suffering of someone, but I would like to know the specific purpose of their visit,” said King Sumati.

## **8. Redemption of Ahalya’s Curse**

### **Sargam 48-49**

Then the King cordially invited the trio to be his guests. Maharishi Vishwamitra accepted the invitation and along with

Rama-Lakshmana spent the night there. The next day the trio departed for Sage Gautama's ashram. Indra had seduced Gautama's wife Ahalya. Ahalya had unknowingly submitted to his overtures. Hence Gautama had cursed both of them – "Indra! You should become devoid of your scrotum. Ahalya! You should lie in the soil of this ashram and suffer for thousands of years, only praying to the wind god, go without food and be invisible to any eye. Whenever Sri Rama visits here you will regain your pure form".

Although Valmiki clearly states: "(you will lie) invisible to others' eyes", one must be informed that the storyline 'redemption of the curse will occur only when Srirama's holy feet touch the stone' (curse of 'become a stone') has evolved in Puranic stories due to the actual redemption of the curse after thousands of years.

"Immediately upon redemption, you must receive and honour your guest Srirama with the same (invisible to others) form. Hence you will regain your normal form (form that can be seen by others) and reunite with me", said Gautama. He then left for the Himalayas for meditation. The gods felt bad for Indra who had lost his scrotum because of the curse. They were able to transplant the scrotum of a goat onto him with the help of the 'Pitru-devas'. These stories were narrated to Rama-Lakshmana by Vishwamitra. Bhagawan entered Gautama's ashram at the behest of Vishwamitra. With the redemption of the curse, Ahalya regained her former beautiful form and became visible to others. Sage Gautama also arrived there at that time. Ahalya together with Gautama, worshipped Srirama.

## 9. Seetha's (Incarnation) Birthplace (Seethamarhi)

### (Sri Vishnupuranam 4-5)

King Nimi was the son of Ikshvaku. He started performing the 'Sathram' sacrifice which takes a thousand years to complete. He beseeched Vasishtha to preside over the sacrifice. "Indra has already requested me to preside over his five-hundred-year-long sacrifice. Upon the completion of his sacrifice, I will come and preside over your sacrifice", replied Vasishtha. The king stood there, and did not speak after that. Vasishtha departed to perform Indra's sacrifice. King Nimi also started performing his sacrifice under the guidance of Sage Gautama and other sages. Upon completion of Indra's sacrifice, Vasishtha rushed down to begin Nimi's sacrifice. He found Gautama had taken his place and was presiding over the sacrifice. "Having requested me earlier to preside over the sacrifice, since this King has appointed Gautama in my place, without letting me know, may he become a 'videhan' (bodyless)." He cursed King Nimi.

"Since he did not come and speak to me after that, I didn't know that he would come, yet this bad guru cursed me. So, may his body also fall down" cursed back Nimi, before he lost his own body. After losing his body due to Nimi's curse, Vasishtha's 'thejas' (spirit) entered the 'thejas' of Mitra-Varuna. The Mitra-Varuna duo had once upon a time lusted for Urvashi. Their semen had spilt on the ground. Vasishtha got back his from it, that is, that semen transformed into Vasishtha. King Nimi's body too was preserved by Rithvik's application of medicated oils and therefore that body did not get damaged in any manner.

When the sacrifice was completed, each of the devas came to get their own share of the offerings. The sages at the sacrifice recommended to them to offer boons to King Nimi. The devas asked Nimi to seek a boon from them.

“I wish to reside in the eyes of all the people. I don’t want to get back into this body of mine.” King Nimi asked this boon of the devas. The devas granted him the boon. So, he came to be present in everyone’s eyes. That’s why we, the people, blink our eyes. Since Nimi was childless, the sages were fearful that the land would become headless (without a King), and so started churning Nimi’s body with a small stick used for churning out fire. A baby boy was produced from it. Since the baby was ‘born’ (‘jananam’) out of the father’s body and not delivered by the mother, he was named Janaka. Since he was the son of the bodyless - Videhan, he came to be known as Vaidehan. Since he was born by churning, he got the name Mithi and therefore his land was Mithi + puri or simply Mithila. His son was Uthavasu whose son was Nandivardhana. His son was Suketu and his son was Devaradha. His son was Bruhadugdha. His son was Mahaveerya, whose son was Seethruthi. His son was Drushtaketu, and his son Haryashwa. His son was Maru whose son was Prathika. His son was Kritharatha. And his son was Devamida. His son was Vibhutha, while his son was Mahadhruthi. His son was Krutharadha, whose son was Maharoma. His son was Swarnaroma. His son was Hraswaroma. His son was Siradhwaja. He ploughed the land for sacrifice, as he wanted a son. That’s when Goddess Seetha incarnated from the land ploughed. The sacrificial-land

ploughed by Siradhwaaja (also known as Janaka), is the birthplace of Seetha.

## **10. Seetha Kalyanam (Wedding) – (Janakpuri, Nepal)**

### **Sargam 50-73**

Vishwamitra escorted Rama-Lakshmana to Mithila, Janaka's kingdom. Janaka came forward with his Priest Sadananda, to cordially invite Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra narrated Rama's story to him and told him that they would like to see the 'Sivadhanush' (Shiva's bow). Vishwamitra informed Sadananda that his mother Ahalya was now rid of her curse by Srirama and that was now reunited with his father, Gautama. Sadananda described Vishwamitra's life story in great detail to Srirama. (From 51<sup>st</sup> Sargam to 65<sup>th</sup> Sargam). Vishwamitra had undertaken penance in the South and become a Rajarishi. He had become a Maharishi after his penance in the Himalayas in the North. After undertaking penance in the East and after having been duly recognized by Vasishtha, he became a Brahmarishi. Sadananda who presided over Janaka's sacrifices narrated the same to him; Janaka worshipped him.

On the next day Vishwamitra requested Janaka to show the Rama-Lakshmana duo the Shivadhanush possessed by him. He also narrated the story of how he got that bow and how he got Seetha. "Devaradha was the sixth generation in our forefather Nimi's lineage. The Shivadhanush was deposited with him. At



the end of the Takshaka sacrifice, an irate Rudra who had not received the 'havirbhagam', addressed the devas who had got their share, and said in jest: "Since you all got your havirbhagam at Takshaka's sacrifice while I did not get it, I am going to chop off your heads using this bow. The devas humbly mouthed words to placate him. He was also placated by their words and gave them his bow. The devas handed over that bow to my forefather, Devaradha, for safekeeping. The same has been handed down through generations and reached me.

Now, let me tell you the story of how I found Seetha. When I was ploughing the land for a sacrifice, this girl was found in the land in the path made by the plough. The furrow (a deep line in the land made by the plough) is called 'Seetha'. Since she was found in the path, I named her Seetha. I have set a price for her – The one who is strong enough to string this 'Shivadhanush' and take aim wins her hand in marriage!

Said Janaka to Vishwamitra, "Several Kings came and tried to string the bow. But they could not even lift it. I will show the bow to Rama-Lakshmana too. If Rama can string The Bow, I will give my daughter, who was not from a lady's womb, in marriage to him." He then got his servants to bring the Bow and place it near Vishwamitra. Lord Rama took the permission of Janaka and Vishwamitra before proceeding to lift and string The Bow, that is, he took the bow-string from one end, pulled it and tied it to the other end of The Bow. Since it was strongly tugged at and pulled by the string The Bow got bent. Then, the Bow gave way, cracked in the middle and crashed down. Presently, this place in Nepal is known as 'Dhanusha'. After seeking Vishwamitra's consent, an ecstatic Janaka sent his

soldiers to Ayodhya to fetch Dasaratha. Dasaratha along with Vasishtha and other sages and kith and kin reached Mithila.

Janaka called for his younger brother Kushthwaja and kith and kin from the Kingdom of Sankashya. Dasaratha and his entourage came to Janaka's Court. Dasaratha prayed to his Kulaguru (family-guru) Vasishtha, to outline their lineage to Janaka starting with Brahma who was created by Lord Narayana. From him came Marichi, from him Kashyap, from him, Vivaswan (Surya/ Sun) from him Vaivaswathamanu, from him, starting with Ikshvaku down to Lord Rama.

Janaka also outlined to them his lineage starting with Maharaja Nimi down to himself. He offered Seetha's hand in marriage to Lord Rama, and his own daughter by birth, Urmila, to Lakshmana. He prayed to Vasishtha to fix the wedding for the third day from that day, on uttharaphalguni asterism. Vasishtha and Vishwamitra requested him to get his brother's daughters Mandvi and Shrutakeerti married to Bharata and Shatrughna respectively. Janaka happily accepted.

Dasharatha also performed the appropriate rituals and donations like cow-donation ('Godaanam') etc. The grooms led by Rama clad in wedding robes and finery, Dasharatha and Janaka entered the marriage-mantap (wedding-hall). Acceding to Janaka's prayers, Vasishtha started off the marriage rituals along with Vishwamitra and Sadananda. Janaka and his brother Kushadhwaaja recited manthras in front of Agni (the fire), sprinkled water and gave away their daughters to the

respective grooms. They too respectively took the hands of their brides, led by Seetha, in their own. Devas, Gandharvas, Apsaras showered flowers on them and sang and danced joyously.

In the most auspicious of 'Muhurthas', that heralded victory to all, Rama, himself, was well-adorned and bejewelled with the finest ornaments, had a 'kappu' (thread for protection) tied to his wrist, as he stood behind Vasishtha and other Maharishis, beside his father, flanked by his 'well-adorned, bejewelled brothers. Vasishtha said to Janaka:

"King Dasaratha, having tied the kaappus for his sons is expectantly waiting for you – the 'Daathaa'. Isn't it true that all the Goodness of the 'daanam' (offering) and 'pratigraham' (receiving) prevails, thanks to the good offices of the 'Daathaa' (Giver) and 'Pratigruhita' (Recipient)!! Fulfil your promise of performing 'Kanyadaanam' (gifting a bride) by conducting the weddings." Janaka, famed for his benevolence, replied, "Who is my doorman? He is none other than Dasaratha's doorman, isn't he?! Whose orders is he waiting for? Will anyone heSeethate to enter his own house? This entire kingdom is yours! I am 'sajjaga' (ready) to perform the wedding. I am expectantly waiting for thyself. Please conduct the same without hindrances. Why delay?" – so saying he organised the altars/seats (vedi) as per the rules(vidhi). He decorated them with sandal paste and flowers. He arranged the golden cups containing germinating seeds, kumbhams (holy pots) with holes, Shravas(broad mouthed clay vessels), Dhoop (Incense) receptacle, conch shaped vessels, ladles for spooning ghee

into the 'homam' (sacrificial fire), vessels brimming with puffed rice, 'arghya' water etc.

Then he beckoned Seetha, who was adorned in all types of ornaments, to come over to him. She was dazzling like lightning. She was broad-eyed with her head lowered. She was draped in red with a tinge of yellow. Janaka made her stand facing the Lord in front of the fire. He then said, **“Iyam Seetha Mama Sutha, Sahadharmachari thava | Pratheechcha Cha Enam Bhadram Thae Pannim Grihneeshwa Panina||”** (Meaning of this Seetha Kalyana Sloka follows). He now speaks of Seetha's attributes and qualities, her unparalleled **soundaryam** (beauty) and abhijathyam (royalty, blue-bloodedness) to demonstrate her eligibility as the bride by saying 'iyam'. 'Iyam' speaks of her immeasurable (beauty, flower-like tenderness, grace etc)

Seetha means furrow – path made by a plough. Since she was born in that path, she is Seetha. From Siddhashram till the Bow is broken, this Seetha has been the subject of delight and rapturous joy.

Janaka thought if Lord Rama felt that beauty (soundaryam) alone will not suffice for us, royalty by birth is equally important he clarifies that she is 'mama suta'. She is Janaka's daughter, hence of impeccable character, needless to say she is blue-blooded/royalty. Else, it could mean, she is truly eligible for you because she is my virtuous and disciplined daughter.

Should the question arise that while she might be great for 'bhogam' (sensual pleasures) alone, for practicing dharma should another girl be taken as a wife? Janaka answers, she is 'sahadharmachari'.

That means, not only is she there for sensual pleasures, she will be a great wife for practicing of dharma. Equal partner in practicing dharma – 'sahadharma'. One who practices sahadharma is a sahadharmachari. For protecting those who seek refuge (sharanam) in you, she will be an equal partner to you and practice the same dharma.

Janaka says - 'take her hand', just in case the lord feels that although she is beautiful and is of royal blood, and capable of practising dharma, how can I clasp her hand without seeking your consent as her father. Seetha is Mahalakshmi who cannot stay apart from Lord Rama even for a moment, so Janaka cannot give her away as a 'daanam'(gift). So, he doesn't say 'I will give'.

**'Bhadram te'** – She is brimming with good qualities of a youthful girl, meaning, if you take her hand, all Mangalam (good things) will befall you. Also, he means, if I permit you like this, you must marry her as 'brahma vivaham' only, not in a Gandharva style marriage, or Rakshasa style. **'Panim Gruhanishva'** means 'hold her hand'. When you are intimate you may hold her feet, but now hold her hand in your hand he says with the desire of witnessing the beauty of the couple when they are together – hand in hand.

## Sargam 73 (34-41)

She is a 'pativrata' (faithful to her husband), 'mahabhagyavati' (very fortunate, will bring good fortune). 'This Seetha will tail you like a shadow', says Emperor Janaka as he pours water in a steady flow to sanctify the marriage. When that water fell down, the devas and sages in the heavens hailed them. They played 'dundhubis', divine musical instruments and showered flowers on them.

After pouring pure water and giving away Seetha, Janaka joyfully called out, "O Lakshmana, come. May you be blessed (with 'mangalam'), I will give Urmila to you. Take her hand. Do not delay."

Then, Janaka said, "Bharata, clasp Mandavi's hand with yours. You are all beautiful. All of you uphold austerities. All Kakusthas! Please stand together, all of you. Don't delay." When they heard Janaka, all four clasped the hands of their respective wives. All the four grooms held the hands of their respective wives and circum-ambulated Agni (the fire), Janaka, and the sages. After that all four independently performed the vivaha homam by setting up individual agnis. After that each couple circum-ambulated their agnis thrice to complete the wedding rituals. Emperor Dasaratha eagerly watched the proceedings.

Later, all of them took leave of Janaka, defeated Parasurama on the way, and got back to Ayodhya. The people of Ayodhya welcomed them by playing instruments. Rama and His three brothers lived happily in their respective palaces with their

respective wives'. As per his father's orders, Lord Rama, started taking good care of their subjects, and lived happily with Seetha. Twelve years rolled by. Bharata's maternal uncle, Yuthajit invited him to his kingdom. Bharata took Shathrugna with him and went over to the **Kingdom of Kekaya**.

**End of Balakandam.**

## **11. Ayodhya Kadam**

**. Ayodhya**

### **Sargam 1 – Attempted Coronation (1-3)**

After contemplating on Sri Rama's 'kalyana gunas' (virtuous traits), Dasaratha called for a Meeting on whether He should be made the crown prince forthwith. He invited kings from various lands, and important personalities from towns and villages to his court.

### **Sargam 2**

In that Meet, Dasaratha started speaking about his proposition of crowning Sri Rama. Everyone who was present at the Meet, described Rama's good qualities and heartily gave their consent to Dasaratha's proposal.

### **Sargam 3**

King Dasaratha pleaded with the two maharishis, Vasishtha and Vamadeva, to gather materials for the rites and rituals. They set about ordering the servants accordingly. In compliance with the King's orders, Sumanthra escorted Sri

Rama to the Royal Court. The King advised Sri Rama about the good tidings.

#### Sargam 4

He advised him about the 'abhishekham' (anointment) that was to take place the next morning and other important matters and sent Him to **His chambers in the Palace**. Sri Rama went to Kausalya's chambers and informed her about the abhishekham that was to take place. He then spent some time talking to Lakshmana, and then proceeded to **his own chambers**.

#### Sargam 5.

Vasishtha called Sri Rama and Sri Seetha and got them to observe the fasting rituals by chanting the relevant mantras. He also informed Dasaratha about it. Dasaratha too, happily went to his chambers.

#### Sargams 6-11 – Kaikeyi's Boons

Sri Rama along with Seetha observed all the prescribed rituals and performed 'thiruvadaradhanam' (worship) for Sriranganatha, the Ikshvaku Family-Treasure-idol. The joyous city-folks (public) decorated the city. They thanked King Dasaratha. The villagers gathered at an appointed place in the city. When she heard the news about the imminent 'Ramabhishekam', Kaikeyi's maid, Manthara, who was a hunch back and was terribly bent forward, was very upset. She poisoned Kaikeyi's mind. Kaikeyi who heard the news of the Ramabhishekam from her, was thrilled to bits, presented her



with an ornament and offered to give her anything she cared to ask for.

Manthara again told Kaikeyi that the Rama's Rajyabhishekam would not be favourable to her. Kaikeyi described Rama's qualities and traits, in detail, and reiterated that it was befitting for Rama to become the crown prince. She again pointed out to Kaikeyi that it would be detrimental to Bharata's interests and created a 'differentiation' in Kaikeyi's mind.

Kaikeyi's mind was thereby poisoned and she left for her 'kopabhavana' ('anger -chamber').

Dasaratha who visited **Kaikeyi's chambers** was informed that she had left for the 'anger -chamber'. He went there to pacify her.

Kaikeyi reminded him about the two boons he had granted her during the Samprasura war and pressurised him to keep up his word. She insisted on redeeming the two pledges at that moment. With the first one she asked that Rama should spend forthwith fourteen years in exile in the forest.

### **Sargam 12 -19 – Send into Exile in the Forest**

King Dasaratha desisted, lamented, and berated Kaikeyi. He pleaded with her to desist from seeking such a boon.

Kaikeyi retorted that a King like him should remain steadfast on his promise, and held him to it. Vasishtha, who had come to the doors of the **Private-chambers**, sent Sumantra to the King. The King asked Sumantra to fetch Rama.

Sumantra went to Sri Rama's chambers. He informed Him that the King had called for Him. Sri Rama, after seeking Seetha's

consent, got into a chariot with Lakshmana, and left for **Dasaratha's private-chambers**, enroute, taking in the joyous public celebrations that were in progress to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

There, He found His father looking tormented. He asked Kaikeyi for the reason for this. Kaikeyi enlightened Him about the boons and told Him that He must go into exile to the forest for fourteen years.

Lord Rama accepted it. He went to Kausalya's chambers to take leave of her.

#### Sargam 20 -25 – Leave-taking from Kausalya

King Dasaratha and the other queens (350 of them) cried. Lord Rama informed Kausalya about being sent into exile to the forest. Kausalya fainted and fell down. Lord Rama revived her. She lamented to Sri Rama.

Lakshmana raged with anger. He advocated the use of force to retrieve the Kingdom. Lord Rama counselled His mother and brother that Dharma entailed keeping up His father's word.

Kausalya, who was lamenting, insisted on accompanying Lord Rama to the forest. He explained to her that serving one's husband was the dharma prescribed for a woman and thereby prevented her from accompanying Him. He then took leave of her.

Kausalya wished Rama well during his exile and performed 'swastivasana'. Perumal prostrated before her and left for Seetha's chambers.

## **Sargam 26 -30 – Consent for Seetha to Accompany Him**

Lord Rama told Seetha that He had to go to the forest to carry out His father's orders. He then asked Seetha to stay back.

Seetha pleaded with Him to take her along.

Rama listed out the problems that would entail during the exile in the forest, and dissuaded Seetha from coming along.

Seetha put forth several arguments to reiterate that it would only be proper for Her to go along with Him.

Seetha adamantly compelled Him to take her along. When He negated her pleas, She cried and lamented. Seeing this, Perumal permitted Her to go along to the forest with Him. He asked Seetha to donate their belongings in the palace to Brahmins and others.

## **31<sup>st</sup> Sargam – Lakshmana's 'Saranagati' (total surrender)**

Lakshmana used the good offices of Seetha for recommendation (purushakaaram) and also firmly clasped Perumal's divine feet and begged Him to take him along to the forest. "Please treat me as your follower (devotee). There is no 'adharma' in that. I will feel that I have been of some use. Thou too will have achieved 'purushartham' (goal/ objective). Thou and Piratti can enjoy in the hills and plains of the forest. I shall perform all 'kainkaryams' (service) for you and serve you, both when you are asleep and when you are awake. Rama relented finally when Lakshmana pleaded with Him in ever so many ways, and agreed to take him along to the forest.

Rama asked (Ilayaperumal) Lakshmana to go back to Ayodhya to protect Kausalya and Sumitra in case they faced problems

from Kaikeyi. He refused to do so, saying that for him and Seetha there could be no life without Perumal. Ultimately, Perumal agreed to his coming along.

### **Sargam 33-45 –Tearful Farewell from Dasaratha after adorning bark-robos.**

Lord Rama along with Seetha and Lakshmana listened to a multitude of outpourings from the devastated public as they made their way to meet His father in Kaikeyi's palace-chambers.

Dasaratha was surrounded by his three hundred and fifty wives. Rama, accompanied by Seetha and Lakshmana went to see him and seek his permission for leaving for the forest. The King was tormented. He fell unconscious. Rama consoled him. Dasaratha embraced Rama. He again fainted.

Sumanthra gave Kaikeyi sane advice, several times. She did not relent. He condemned her. Yet she did not budge.

Dasaratha ordered that troops and wealth from the treasury be sent with Rama. Kaikeyi disallowed the same. Siddhartha, an elderly Minister, counselled Kaikeyi, but to no avail. The King announced, helplessly, that he would also go the forest.

Rama and Lakshmana put on bark-robos. All the ladies in the harem, Dasaratha's wives, were sorrowed upon seeing Seetha wearing bark robes. Vasishtha, the Guru, berated Kaikeyi.

Lord Rama pleaded with Dasaratha to take care of Kausalya Devi who was suffering the pangs of separation from Him.

King Dasaratha lamented. He ordered Sumantra to fetch a chariot in order to drop Rama off at the forest. He called upon the Treasurer in Chief to provide the most expensive clothes and ornaments to Seetha. He also obliged. Lakshmana carried

them all for Her. Kausalya counselled Seetha about serving her husband. Seetha accepted the advice. Rama pleaded with His mother not to find fault with King Dasaratha. He consoled all the other mothers too and sought permission from them to leave for the forest.

Seetha, Rama and Lakshmana circum-ambulated Dasaratha and bowed to Kausalya and the other mothers. Sumitra advised Lakshmana to enthusiastically perform service to Rama and not get floored by His handsome gait. Rama Seetha and Lakshmana **boarded the chariot and went towards the forest**. The general public, Queens and Dasaratha were devastated.

Everyone was reduced to tears because Rama went to the forest.

King Dasaratha fell on the floor, cried and lamented. Kaikeyi came to touch him. The King stopped her. He disowned her. 'Should Bharata eagerly take up the reigns of the kingdom, the 'pitru pindam' (rice-balls offered to the departed soul) given by him will not reach me", he said. With the help of Kausalya and the servants, he went to Kausalya's Palace chamber.

Kausalya lamented. Sumitra quietened her. Sri Rama pleaded with the people who followed them, to go back to the city and be loving towards Bharata and Dasaratha. The brahmins insisted on Rama getting back to the city with them. Rama went along with them to the **Banks of the Tamasa River**.

**Sargam 46 -49 – Crossing the Rivers**

Rama along with Seetha and Lakshmana, spent the night on the banks of the Tamasa River. After the countrymen had slept, Rama got into the chariot and asked for it to be driven towards the city for one muhurtham (2 nazhigai = 48 minutes). He then asked Sumantra to drive back to the forest again. Sumantra obeyed the orders because he felt that the old brahmins would see the chariot tracks and get fooled into believing that Rama had got back home. Rama went towards the forest.

In the morning, the citizens woke up to find Rama missing and lamented. They returned to the city – a disappointed lot. The women of Ayodhya lamented.

Lord Rama listened to villagers berate Dasaratha and Kaikeyi all through his journey to the forest. He crossed Rivers Vedashruti (Sloka 10), Gomati (Sloka 12) Mayurahamsam (Sloka 12) in the chariot.

## **12. Shrungibherapuram**

### **Sargam 50-53 Guhasakhyam (Making friends with Guha)**

Upon crossing the Kosala Kingdom border, Rama turned his gaze towards Ayodhyapuri and sought permission to go on exile into the forest. Then he reached the **Banks of the Ganga** and alighted from the chariot. He **made friends with Guha**, a hunter chief who came to meet Him. He completed His evening 'Sandhyavandana' (prayers), and slept all night on the ground. Seetha also slept beside Him. Sumantra, Lakshmana and Guha spent the night talking to each other.

Lakshmana lamented to Guha. Guha fetched the boat as per the orders of Sri Rama. Rama ordered Sumantra to get back to

Ayodhya. He sent messages to His parents. Sumantra pleaded with Him to allow him to go to the forest with them. Rama cited the laws and prevented him from doing so. Rama Seetha and Lakshmana stepped into the boat and sat down. Seetha offered prayers to River Ganga. **They crossed the Ganga and headed towards the Vatsa Kingdom.** They spent the night under a tree.

### **13. Bharadwaj Ashram**

#### **54<sup>th</sup> Sargam**

Rama along with Seetha and Lakshmana went to **Bharadwajashram located in Prayag**, at the confluence of Rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Sage Bharadwaj **excelled** in his hospitality towards his guests. Rama asked him if he could suggest some lovely place in the forest where they could stay. He recommended **Chitrakoot as a wonderful place** and showed them how to get there.a

#### **55<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Crossing the Yamuna**

Rama sought leave from him and left for Chitrakoot. Since they had to cross the Yamuna in order to reach Chitrakoot, they built themselves a boat, got into it and the trio crossed over to the other Bank. They then walked ten miles. They spent the night on a flat ground on the Banks of the River.

### **14. Entering Chitrakoot**

## 56<sup>th</sup> Sargam

They admired the scenery of the Chitrakoot forest enroute and **reached Valmiki's Ashram**. Lakshmana set up a cottage as per the directions of Rama. The trio entered the cottage.

## Sargam 57-70 – Dasaratha departs for Swargaloka

Sumantra returned to Ayodhya. The citizens lamented upon hearing Rama's decision from Sumantra's lips. Dasaratha and Kausalya fell unconscious. The other queens spoke in anguished tones

Dasaratha asked Sumanthra about what Rama and Lakshmana had to say. Sumantra related to him that even inanimate objects – including trees and ponds were extremely saddened by Rama's exile. Dasaratha lamented. So did Kausalya. Sumantra consoled her.

Apart from her lamentations, Kausalya Devi blamed the King. The devastated King consoled her with jointed palms. A repentant Kausalya fell at his feet and begged forgiveness. The King narrated to Kausalya an old incident wherein he had mistakenly killed Muni Kumar (sage's son) and incurred the wrath of the old parents, who had cursed the king that he would die of separation from his own son. He sobbed continuously, until he passed away, that very night.

In the morning, the servants came and sang Dasaratha's praise in order to wake him up. The queens lamented when they came to know that he had attained Swarga.



Kausalya lamented upon losing the King. She berated Kaikeyi. The ministers preserved the King's body in a casket of oil. Ayodhyapuri lost its lustre. The citizens went into mourning.

Sages like Markandeya and the ministers pleaded with Vasishtha to nominate a King lest the kingdom deteriorated badly.

Vasishtha sent five messengers to Kekaya Kingdom in order to fetch Bharata. There, Bharata had had a very horrendous dream.

The messengers handed over to Bharata's maternal uncle, the gifts sent by Vasishtha. They also passed on Vasishtha's message that Bharata should be fetched back to Ayodhya immediately.

### **Sargam -71-82 Bharata's State**

Bharata rushed back to Ayodhya in a chariot. He observed the lack-lustre appearance of the city before he entered the palace.

He entered Kaikeyi's chambers and prostrated before her. He heard from her own mouth about the demise of his father and also about the boon sought by her to banish Rama to the forest.

Bharata disowned Kaikeyi and was livid with her. He berated Kaikeyi. Bharata went over to Kaikeyi and reassured her. "If I have, intentionally, been the cause for Rama's exile to the forest, may I be consigned to whatever hells were prescribed for the multitude of sins" He swore to her to set things right on several counts and cheered her up.

Bharata performed King Dasaratha's last rites. He donated plenty of wealth and gems to Brahmins during the ceremonies. He went with Shatrughna to his father's samadhi to complete the final rites on the thirteenth day where both of them lamented. Vasishtha and Sumantra consoled the duo.

Shatrughna berated the hunchback, dragged her and pushed her to the ground. Then he let her go in deference to Bharata's orders.

The ministers pleaded with Bharata to accept the throne. But Bharata declined. He averred that only Lord Rama was entitled to the throne and ordered them to make arrangements to fetch Him back from the forest.

Bharata got a wonderful highway laid from Ayodhya till the end of banks of the Ganga and set up beautiful tents, wells and ponds alongside it. Get himself c

Bharata was upset with the practice of servants coming over in the morning and waking him up with musical instruments - a practice meant for the King of the land. He put an end to it. He sent messengers to fetch Vasishtha, the ministers and other prominent persons to the Royal-court.

In the court, Vasishtha advised Bharata to ascend the throne. He declined it. He asked him also to make preparations for fetching Rama back.

**Sargam 83 – 88- Bharata and Guha**

Bharata embarked on a journey to the forest. Along with the 'Chaturanga' army, he camped for the night in Guha's land, Shrungibheripuram.

When he sighted Bharata coming, Guha suspected his intentions, and ordered his kinsmen to guard the river and prepare themselves for a war, before taking articles to welcome a royal guest and approached Bharata and respectfully requested him to accept his hospitality. Bharata gracefully accepted.

Guha asked Bharata, "You haven't come here with an intention to harm Sri Rama in any way, have you?" These words struck Bharata like a whiplash. "Please don't suspect me! Raghavan is like a father to me. I have come, only to fetch him back home". He told him how tormented he was upon being separated from Rama'.

'Nishadaraja' (Hunter-Chieftain) Guha narrated to Bharata all the good qualities of Lakshmana. Later he answered all Bharata's queries regarding Rama's food and sleep at his place.

Bharata was saddened when he saw Rama's bed of darbha grass. He also donned bark-robies and matted locks and vowed to stay with him in the forest.

### **Sargam 89-93    Bharata and Bharadwaja**

Bharata crossed over the Ganga and reached Bharadwaja's ashram along with his army. Bharadwaja welcomed him.

“Have you come with the intention of harming the sinless Rama?” he enquired. Bharata was highly stricken. “If thou yourself suspect my intentions then I am heartbroken. I came over with the sole intention of pacifying Him and taking Him back with me.” Sage Bharadwaja was pleased and requested him to stay over at his ashram along with the army for the night. Bharata spent the night there.

Bharadwaja accorded Bharata and the army a warm reception.

Next day, Bharata took leave of him and asked him for directions to reach Rama’s ashram. He introduced his three mothers to him. He left for Chitrakoot from there along with the army. He then reached there.

### **Sargam 94 -97 Lakshmana’s anger – and embarrassment**

Rama admired the grandeur of Chitrakoot with Seeta and both of them enjoyed the setting. He described the beauty of the Mandakini River.

Just then the animals in the forest suddenly started running helter-skelter. Wondering what had caused this, Rama asked Lakshmana to find out. Lakshmana got onto a Sal Tree, saw Bharata’s army advancing towards them, misjudged him and reported to Rama that Bharata was coming along with his army to kill them.

### **Sargam 98 -102 – Baratha’s saranagathi**

Rama pacified Lakshmana who was seething with rage against Bharata. He described Bharata's present state of mind. Lakshmana felt ashamed of himself.

Bharata looked for and found Rama's ashram. He entered the hermitage accompanied by Shatrughna and others. He fell at Rama's feet. Rama lifted him and embraced him warmly.

In the guise of enquiring about everyone's welfare, Rama advised Bharata on State affairs, governance and politics. This is known as 'Kacchit Sargam'.

Rama enquired the reason for Bharata's visit to the forest. Bharata pleaded with Rama that he should accept the Kingdom. Rama did not relent. Bharata again begged Rama to rule the Kingdom. He conveyed the sad tidings of their father's demise.

Sargam -103 – 104 – Offering 'tarpan' (oblation) at River Mandakini

Rama was very distressed to hear the news. Seetha wept. Rama then offered 'jalanjali' (oblation by way of water and sesame seeds) to His father. He spread out darbha grass and placed berries along with oil cakes, got from the trees on it as 'pindams'.

Dasaratha's Queens who were seated in their chariots followed Vasishtha to the **Banks of River Mandakini**. There, when she witnessed the tiny quantity of oil cakes being offered by Rama, as pindam, to Emperor Dasaratha, who during his lifetime was used to eating royal platters, Kausalya

felt extremely saddened. Seetha, Rama and Lakshmana prostrated to the mothers.

### **Sargam 105 -111 - Arguments – Counter-arguments**

Bharata again pleaded with Rama to take on the reigns of the Kingdom. Rama spoke to him about the transient nature of this material world and explained to him that one should therefore work towards attaining the higher world (liberation). Keeping up the father's word is a good step in this direction, He advised.

Bharata pleaded with Rama yet again to accept the throne. Rama consoled him and asked him to return to Ayodhya.

Sage Jabali who had turned into an atheist intervened and tried using nihilist reasoning in a bid to get Rama to return to Ayodhya.

Rama outrightly rejected atheism and extolled the virtues of atheism (Dharma).

Vasishtha described the ikshvaku dynasty lineage thus far and pointed out that the eldest son rightfully should be the heir to throne. Therefore, Rama ought to return and reign The kingdom, he said.

When Bharata found that despite Vasishtha's advise, Rama did not budge from his earlier stand of keeping up His father's word, he resorted to going on a fast at Rama's ashram. Rama prevented him from doing so by explaining the rules of dharma. He ordered him to go back to Ayodhya.

## **Sargam 112 – 114**

The Sages who wanted Ravana killed, advised Bharata to obey the orders of Lord Rama and return to Ayodhya. Bharata pleaded with Rama to step onto the special 'paduka' (footwear) embellished with gold, which he had brought along for Him and hand over the same to him. Rama did it for him.

Bharata accepted those padukas and got into his chariot with the satisfaction that his 'paratantriya' (dependent) status had been protected. He sought the blessings of Sage Bharadwaja and then got back to Ayodhya.

Bharata witnessed the plight of Ayodhya and was saddened when he went into his private chambers.

## **115<sup>th</sup> Sargam (Coronation of the 'Padukas')**

He reached Nandigram and had the Padukas of Sri Rama coronated. Before taking up any official work, he placed the same on the padukas and only then discharged the kingly duties.

Sargam 116 -119 atri – Anusuya

Several sages felt that since the city-breds had visited the area, there was a likelihood of miscreants coming there. They and their head of the family, their gurus, therefore gave up their ashrams and left Chitrakoota for ashrams elsewhere.

'Ever since Bharata and the mothers visited and left, their saddened faces keep haunting me. So, let's leave Chitrakoota and move to some ashram elsewhere', said Rama and so they

departed from there. They went to **Sage Athri's Ashram**. He received them cordially. The Sage's wife, Anasuya, was very affectionate towards Seetha.

Seetha and Anasuya talked to each other for a long time. Anasuya lovingly gave Seetha clothes, sandal paste, and ornaments. Seetha told Anasuya all about her wedding because Anasuya was keen to know about it.

At Anasuya's behest, Seetha put on the divine clothes and ornaments presented by her and went to Rama. Rama spent that night at **Sage Athri's Ashram**. He sought consent from the sages living there to leave in the morning. The sages said, "Several rakshasas are inhabiting and wandering around this forest. The rakshasas take on various forms and are man-eaters. Several blood-drinking, menacing animals and snakes inhabit this forest too. They gobble up unclean or careless bachelor – ascetics. Therefore, you must kill them. This is the path taken by maharishis to fetch fruits. It is better you take this path".

Lord Rama, along with Seetha and Lakshmana, walked on the path shown by them.

**End of Ayodhya Kanda**

**3. Aranya Kanda.**

**15. Dandakaranya**



Lord Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana were accorded a warm welcome by the sages in the thick jungles of Dandakarnya.

A Rakshasa, named Virata, attacked both Rama and Lakshmana. ““Why did you come to this forest”?”, he asked angrily. He then carried them both on his shoulders and ran to another forest.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Virata Kund

Rama-Lakshmana chopped off his hands. He fell unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he pleaded with them to push him into a pit. He told them that he was a Gandharva, named Thumburu, and had been cursed by Kubera to become a rakshasa. “Lord Rama, you have redeemed me from my curse”, he said. “Sage Sharabhanga’s Ashram is located one and a half ‘yojanas’ away, please go and bless him”, he said. Lord Rama obliged Virata by pushing him into the pit. That is how rakshasas can attain salvation. **The pit wherein Virata was pushed into is Viratakund.**

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Sharabhangashram

Then Srirama went to Sharabhanga’s Ashram. Indra had come over to that Ashram. Sharabhanga welcomed Shrirama and worshipped Him. He then advised Him to go to Sutheekshana’s Ashram and grace him. He then immolated himself and attained Brahma Loka.

The sages who lived in Vanaprasthashram told Sri Rama about the atrocities committed by the rakshas, and pleaded with Him to protect them. Rama pacified them.

## **Sargam 7 -10 - Sudeekshana Ashram**

Bhagavan then went over to Sudeekshana's ashram and was duly welcomed there. He spent the night there. He left in the morning.

In order to find out, to what lengths Rama would go to be a 'shararanagata rakshaka' (protector of people who take refuge in Him), Seetha asked Bhagawan, "Why should we kill rakshasas who have not harmed us?"

"In order to protect the sages, I will kill the rakshasas", said Rama, thereby reiterating the steadfastness in His resolve. Seetha was delighted with His resolve.

## **11<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Agasthyashram Ashramamandal**

The trio spent a year in some ashrams and thirteen months in some and barely four to five months in others. Having spent ten years thus, they returned to Sudeekshana's ashram and spent some time there. Later, they took leave of him and then went to his brother **Agasthya's Ashram** too. (Sage Agasthya accorded Him a grand reception. He then presented divine arms and weapons like bow and sword, to Bhagawan.

## **Sargam 12 -13**

Maharishi expressed his happiness about their visit. He praised Seetha. Bhagawan asked him if he could suggest a suitable place for them to stay in the midst of thick jungles.

Sage Agastya suggested Panchavati, which was two yojanas (20 stanes) away from there as the ideal place for them to reside. Lord Rama then sought permission from him and left his place.

### **14<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Jatayu’s foresight**

Enroute to Panchavati, Sri Rama met Jatayu. He detailed his life-history to them. Garuda and Aruna were the sons of Vinatha. Sampathi and Jatayu were the sons of Aruna. Sampathi was the older of the two. Jatayu became Dasaratha’s friend. Jatayu said, “I shall be a companion to you in this forest. When you and Lakshmana are not there, I shall protect Seetha”.

### **Sargam -15 -16**

Lakshmana set up a lovely cottage at a beautiful spot in Panchavati. The three of them stayed there. Hemantharithu (pre-winter, Autumn) set in. Lakshmana described it. They talked about Bharata and praised him. The three of them bathed in the Godavari.

### **Sargam 17 -18 – Chopping off Soorpanakha’s ears and nose.**

Ravana’s sister Soorpanakha came to Sri Rama’s Ashram. She asked Lord Rama to tell her about Himself. He told her His whole life story - from the time of His birth till they came to the forest. She listened to the story and introduced herself as Ravana’s sister and asked Him to marry her.

Rama playfully told her to propose to Lakshmana instead. She went over to Lakshmana and asked him to marry her. He told her that since he was the servant of Lord Rama, she would also have to be their servant. So, it would be better to marry Rama, he advised playfully. She went back to Rama again. He did not budge from His stand. She inferred that it was because of Seetha that Rama was refusing to marry her, and pounced on Seetha. Complying with Rama's orders, Lakshmana caught hold of her, dragged her and chopped off her ears and nose and sent her packing.

### **Sargam – 19 – 30 – Slaying of 14000 rakshasas**

Soorpanakha fled from that forest known as **Janasthana** to go and plead with Khara, the younger cousin of Ravana. He first sent only 14 rakshasas to fight Rama. The Lord slayed them all.

Soorpanakha went and reported this to Khara. The Khara and Dhushana duo came to wage a war, bringing along with them Fourteen Thousand rakshasas. Rama left Lakshmana behind to guard Seetha and went single-handedly to battle the war. The rakshasas attacked Rama. Bhagawan killed the fourteen thousand rakshasas and their chief, Dhushana too. Next, a rakshasa named Thrishiras came. Perumal slayed him too.

Finally, Khara fought a gruesome battle against Perumal. Rama strongly rebuked Khara. He too abused Him with strong words. He then used his mace. Perumal shattered it with his arrows. He pulled out Sal trees and flung them at the Lord. He

shattered them too with His arrows. Later he slayed Khara. The demi gods and sages sang his praise.

Sargam – 31 – 41 – Ravana and Mareecha

In this battle, Perumal took pity on one sole rakshasa, named Akampana, because of his behaviour. He escaped Rama's arrows, and fled to Lanka. He reported the happenings to Ravana. Immediately, Ravana went to Mareecha and sought his help to abduct Seetha. Mareecha highlighted Rama's exploits and warned him that if Seetha was abducted, Lord Rama would annihilate the entire Rakshasa race. Ravana went back.

Soorpanakha went to Lanka. She rebuked Ravana for letting Rama go scot-free despite His slaying of all the rakshasas in Janasthana, a forest which belonged to him.

Ravana asked her about Rama. She described all three of them. She instigated him to get Seetha over and make her his wife. Ravana went back to Mareecha for that and again requested him to give a helping hand.

Ravana described to Mareecha all the 'faults' of Rama and told him that he was seeking his help to help him abduct Rama's wife Seetha only to punish him.

Mareecha described Rama's great qualities and said "Rama is the personification of Dharma. It is because of His aura that Seetha is protected. I have seen His greatness in person during Vishwamitra's sacrifice. Therefore, please drop the idea of abducting Seetha", he advised.

Ravana berated Mareecha. He threatened to kill him if he did not help him abduct Seetha.

Even then Mareecha did not give up. He warned Ravana again that Seetha's abduction would spell death for Ravana. Ravana turned a deaf ear to him.

Sargam 42 -45 – Maternal Uncle and The Golden deer.

Mareecha, Ravana's maternal uncle, had no other go but to finally relent and take on the guise of a golden deer. He went near Rama's ashram and frolicked around hither and thither. Seetha saw the deer and wanted it for herself.

She expressed her desire to Rama and asked Him to fetch it for her. Lakshmana had doubts about the fake animal. However, Seetha pleaded with Rama to fetch it for her as a plaything.

Perumal asked Lakshmana to take care of Seetha and set off behind the animal to fetch it for her.

Rama could not find the animal. It ran very far away. Perumal went chasing behind it. Finally, he aimed an arrow at it and killed it. Since the 'deer' was Mareecha in disguise, as he was about to die, he called out in a human voice – in Rama's voice - 'Ha, Seetha! Ha, Lakshmana!' His 'deer' form was gone and he regained his natural rakshasa form as he fell. Perumal was apprehensive when he heard him call out thus.

When Seetha heard Mareecha's pained voice, that too Rama's voice, she pleaded with Lakshmana to go and check out what

had happened. He said nothing would happen to Perumal. This was a ploy of the rakshasas he said. Seetha berated him with strong words. Lakshmana had no choice but to leave the place to look for Lord Rama.

### Sargam – 46 – 49 – Seetha’s abduction

Ravana came to Seetha in the guise of a mendicant (sanyasi). He pretended to be a person who had come to find out who she was. “Who are you, amma? You seem to be a goddess! You are living in a forest infested with rakshasa?” He asked. She treated him like a guest, invited him into the ashram and gave him a seat. She offered him hospitality befitting his stature – (water for) arghya, padya, achamaniyam.

Then she told him about herself and her husband Lord Rama and why they came to the forest. Ravana said, “I am Ravana, The Great, who is feared by the devas, asuras and humans fear. You shall be my Queen-consort.” Seetha berated him.

Ravana described his conquests and fame. Seetha insulted him. Ravana took on his natural form – gigantic figure with ten heads – grabbed her hand and carried her away in his hands. Seetha lamented. Jatayu saw them as they went past. Seetha pleaded with him to tell Rama-Lakshmana that Ravana had abducted her and was taking her away.

### Sargam 50 – 53 – Jatayu Kainkaryam

Jatayu asked Ravana to let go of Seetha. Since he did not obey, he invited him to battle. Jatayu was sixty thousand years old. “Even though I am so old, I will not stand by and permit you to carry away Seethadevi.” He said.

Jatayu and Ravana fought a gruesome battle. Jatayu broke Ravana's chariot. He killed the horses and the charioteer. Broke his bow. Pushed Ravana to the ground. However, finally Ravana took out his sword and chopped off his wings, feet and hands. Jatayu fell to the ground.

Seetha wept when she saw him fall. When the battle with Jatayu was taking place, Seetha was standing beside them. The battle was over. Ravana dragged her by her hair, and carried her away by air over the skies (akashamarga).

Seetha cursed Ravana, "You shall suffer several hells! After you are brutally slain by my husband, Lord Rama, you shall reach those hells."

### **54<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Showered divine-ornamental blessings!**

While she was being abducted by Ravana, five monkeys were sitting on the peak of Rishyamukha Mountain. Seetha tore a piece of cloth from the edge of her saree bundled up some of her ornaments and dropped the bundle in their midst; She thought they would inform Rama. Ravana, who was flustered, did not know about this. He took Seetha and kept her in his harem. He sent eight rakshasas to Janasthana to work as spies for him.



## **Sargam – 55 – 56 – Rama’s sadness and anger**

Ravana boasted to Seetha about Lanka, its Rakshasas, his harem and his greatness and belittled Rama and pleaded with her to become his wife.

Seetha placed a blade of grass between them as a barrier and kept him off. Declining his offer, she said, “I have no place in my heart for anyone other than for Lord Rama. You will be killed by His arrows,” she threatened. Ravana got rakshasis to take her to Ashoka Vana and intimidate her.

## **Sargam – 57 – 67 – Atri – Anasuya**

Lord Rama killed Mareecha who was in the guise of a golden deer and returned. The inauspicious occurrences made Him feel upset. Seeing Lakshmana on the way, further aggravated the ill feeling.

With very many thoughts haunting His mind enroute, He reached His ashram and looked around. Not finding Seetha there He became pensive.

He asked Lakshmana why He had left Seetha alone and come. “I tried telling her that nobody can defeat Lord Rama. She refused to listen to me and berated me with bitter words.

She said, “You must be an enemy too, who is hand in glove with Bharata. You must have tailed Him in the guise of a younger brother. You must be planning to attain me once He is killed. I couldn’t bear to listen to her harsh words and therefore left the ashram,” said Lakshmana. Lord Rama

scolded him. “Anger got the better of you and you disobeyed my orders and left her alone?”

Then, bereft of Her, He was engulfed in sorrow and He started lamenting. He asked the trees and animals if they had seen Seetha. He wept. He looked for Seetha again and again.

Rama-Lakshmana looked for Seetha everywhere. Rama lamented when she was not to be found anywhere.

Then some animals pointed to the sky in the Southern direction. So, the two brothers started walking southwards. Seetha’s broken ornaments and strewn flowers, and a broken bow indicated to Rama that a battle had taken place at the spot. A couple of Rakshasas must have fought over Seetha, He figured. “I am now going to destroy all three worlds. I will use my weapons until I spot Mythili”, He resolved.

Ilayaperumal (Lakshmana) spoke comfortingly to Him and pacified Him. We will look for Her in the Oceans, Mountains, forests, mountain caves, and in the world of Gods and Gandharvas, sadness and lamentations belong to this world. Even Vaidehi’s demise would not have called for this level of sorrow,” he said.

Rama-Lakshmana came upon a wounded Jatayu lying on the road. He told them about how he tried to prevent Ravana from abducting Seetha and about how his organs were chopped off. Lord Rama embraced him and wept.

## 68<sup>th</sup> Sargam - Jatayu Moksham

Jatayu passed away. Rama praised him. “One finds dharmacharis, valiant warriors, those who seek refuge, and sages. He can be counted as one amongst them, even though he was a bird by birth. He gave up his life for me. I will perform his obsequies. Bring the logs of wood,” he said and performed the last rites for him. “With my grace, may you attain in sequence the world attained by those who perform yagnas(sacrifices), by those who have laid the sacrificial fire (ahitagnis), by those who have not retreated from a war and by those who have donated land, respectively. After that, may you attain the supreme world (paramatma loka, vaikuntha loka) beyond which there are no superior worlds.” He granted.

## Sargam – 69 – 73 – Redemption of Kabandha’s curse and directions given by him

After that they walked **three ‘kroshas’** from Janasthana and reached a forest named **Krauncharanya**. There they got caught in the hands of a rakshasa named Kabandha. Both of them enquired of him and chopped off his hands. He was elated and asked them who they were. Lakshmana narrated their life-story to him.

He also narrated his story to them. “I had been cursed by Indra and acquired this Kabandha form. My breasts and head lay in

my stomach with a kabandha body. I asked Indra how I would feed. 'May your hands be one yojana long', he said. With my elongated hands I could catch creatures and put them into my stomach directly and eat them. Since my head was in my stomach, I could chew them with my teeth and eat. When I asked Indra about the redemption from the curse, he told me that it would happen when Rama-Lakshmana came here and severed my hands. That is what has just happened. If you set my body on fire, I shall become a celestial." He said. They set him on fire. He regained his form and then directed them to meet Sugriva, the monkey who was living in Rishyamukha mountain. "Make friends with him. He will help you find Seetha." He advised.

Kabandha showed them the route to Rishyamukhya Mountain and Pampa saras, and also told them about Mathanga muni's ashram and then departed from there in his celestial form.

## **74<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Sabari Moksham**

Rama-Lakshmana reached the **Ashram** of a hunter woman, **Sabari**, located in **Mathangavana** on the banks of the Pampa Saras. She afforded great hospitality to Lord Rama.

Sabari had utmost devotion for her acharyas. She was going through the motions of life, waiting only for the arrival of Rama in order to serve him as per the instructions of her acharya. Lord Rama who knew about this, released her, "Now, as per your wish you may attain moksha!" She entered agni (fire) and immolated her body received the divine ornaments, divine garlands, divine clothes, and attained moksha by adorning a 'divine form'. Bhagawan stood witness to her

attainment of Moksha only because of her devotion to her acharya (acharya nishthai)

After that, Rama-Lakshmana reached the banks of the Pampa saras talking to each other all the way.

### **End of Aranya kadam.**

## **IV. Kishkinta Kadam**

### **17. Sargam 1 – 12**

When Lord Rama's eyes fell upon Pampasaras, he was saddened. He described to Lakshmana, the beauty of the setting, the embankments which sparked off love etc but was terribly upset about being separated from Seetha. Lakshmana comforted Him. Sugriva and the other monkeys who watched the duo walk towards Rushyamukha mountain, suspected them of being Vali's men and were frightened.

In order to ascertain Rama-Lakshmana's intentions, Sugriva sent Hanuman to them.

Hanuman asked them the purpose of their visit to the forest. He gave them details about himself and Sugriva. Rama was amazed at his prowess with words wherein there was not a single wrong usage in the flow of the language, commended him by saying that he must be a well-read scholar who had mastered the three Vedas, grammar, and shastras, else he couldn't have spoken thus, He appointed Lakshmana to speak to him.

Lakshmana told him why Rama came to the forest, how they lost Seetha etc. He also told him that they were in need of help from Sugriva, to find Seetha. Hanuman reassured them and took them along with him to meet Sugriva.

A bond of Friendship developed between Srirama and Sugriva. Perumal vowed to kill Vali.

Sugriva brought and showed Sri Rama the ornaments belonging to Seetha. These were the ornaments which she had thrown in the midst of the five monkeys seated on Rushya mukha mountain, when she was being abducted by Ravana. Rama was saddened when he saw her ornaments. Sugriva pacified Sri Rama. He reassured Him that His mission would get accomplished

Sargam 8 -11 – Enmity with Vali

Sugriva told Him about the heartache he was facing because of his brother Vali. Perumal comforted him and enquired about the reasons for the problems he was facing with his brother.

Sugriva told Him the reason for the enmity with Vali.

He told Him that although he had surrendered to Vali and called for a reconciliation, Vali was unwilling to reconcile their differences, instead was chasing him all over the world and torturing him.

Sugriva described Vali's valour. "Before sunrise occurs, Vali can go to all the oceans in all the four directions and get back. Vali killed, the asura, Dundubhi and threw his body into Sage Mathanga's Ashram. That is why Sage Mathanga cursed him that if Vali were to enter this ashram his head would burst into smithereens. That is why I am residing here – a place where Vali cannot enter", he said. Then, in order to test if Rama had the valour to kill Vali, he pleaded with Sri Rama to shoot an arrow that would pass through seven trees. Rama kicked Dundhubi's body to a distance of ten yojanas with His big toe. He proved to Sugriva that He could shoot an arrow through seven trees.

#### Sargam 12 -16 – The Sugriva-Vali Battle

Upon Rama's reassurances, Sugriva came to **Kishkinta** and called Vali out for a duel. He lost the battle to Vali and retreated back to his hideout in Mathangavanam. There Lord Rama consoled him.

Since both Sugriva and Vali looked alike, He couldn't distinguish between the two of them, he said and made him wear on his neck a garland of 'gajapushpam' creeper and call out **Vali for battle** again.

Sugriva called him out to battle again. When Vali was leaving, his wife, Tara, tried stopping him and told him to extend a hand of friendship to both Sugriva as well as to Rama. He disregarded Tara and came out to fight Sugriva. **Rama, who was hiding, shot him down with a single arrow.**

#### Sargam 17 – 18 – Answering Vali

Vali condemned Lord Rama. Rama answered all the questions posed by Vali. I punished you for trying to kill Sugriva, who had sought refuge in you and for kidnapping his wife, Ruma. Vali accepted his fault and prayed forgiveness. Rama pacified him.

### **Sargam 19 -25 – Tara’s condition**

Tara came to Vali along with their son, Angada, and wept. Hanuman consoled Tara. Vali gave up his life. Tara lamented. Sugriva was devastated and sought permission to end his life. Tara begged Rama to take her life too. Lord Rama consoled her. Tara praised Rama to high heavens.

Rama got Angada to perform the last rites for Vali.

### **26<sup>th</sup> Sargam – Sugriva’s Coronation**

Hanuman prayed to Sri Rama to come to Kishkinta for Sugriva’s coronation. Since he was under Kaikeyi’s oath not to enter any city, Rama did not set step into Kishkinta. With His consent, Sugriva was coronated. Angada was named the crown prince.

Sargam 27 -28 – Four Months in Malyavan

Lord Rama and Lakshmana stayed in Prasaravanagiri. Since the monsoons had set in, they were residing on a peak of the Malyavan Hill and Rama was describing the monsoons to Lakshmana.

### **Sargam 29 – 36 – Lakshmana’s anger**

Sugriva took Rama’s advice, and ordered Nilan to consolidate their armies in one place. Rama had permitted Sugriva to indulge in gratification of the senses all through the monsoons



and after that they could go in search of Seetha. Even though the monsoons had ended, Sugriva had not yet come to see Lord Rama, Perumal sent Lakshmana to remind him.

Lakshmana went to the gates of Kishkinta and sent word to Sugriva through Angada. The monkeys were frightened when they encountered an irate Lakshmana.

Hanuman pacified Sugriva who was worried at Lakshmana's arrival.

Lakshmana who witnessed the splendour of Kishkinta, entered Sugriva's palace and angrily twanged his bow. Sugriva was terrified and sent Tara to pacify him.

Sugriva went to meet Lakshmana. Lakshmana condemned Sugreeva. Tara spoke intelligently and praised Lakshmana.

Sugriva begged for forgiveness, stating that while he was lowly and Lord Rama was so very great. Lakshmana praised him too and asked him to come along with him.

### **Sargam 37 – 47 – Monkey-army despatched to all four directions.**

Sugriva ordered Hanuman to despatch messengers to all the places to enlist 'vanaras' (monkeys) to form a part of the army. Upon hearing the official announcement, they all assembled in Kishkinta. The messengers who were sent to enlist them came back and reported the same to Sugriva.

Sugriva came along with Lakshmana to meet Rama and fell at His feet. Lord Rama embraced him. Sugriva apprised Him about the army formed by him. Rama was gladdened by the tidings.

The various monkey troops' commanders came with their armies.

As per Sri Rama's orders, Sugriva sent monkeys in the Southern direction to look for Seetha. He explained the places located in that direction.

He described the places in the South and despatched the most valiant monkeys in that direction.

Describing the places in the western region, he sent Sushena and others there.

Satabali and other monkey leaders were sent to the North after a briefing.

### **Presenting the Ring (anguliyaka) - (44<sup>th</sup> Sargam**

Lord Rama gave Hanuman His signet ring as an identification mark and sent him southwards.

The monkey-leaders appointed to go in different directions told Rama the words that would serve as encouragement for each of their contingents.

Rama, who heard Sugriva vividly describe the places in each direction, asked him how he knew about so many places. "When I was being chased by Vali, I ran to all these places. In all these places, Vali came chasing me so as to kill me. Since, these were the places I had run to, to escape his clutches, I am aware of them," said Sugriva.

The monkeys who were sent in the East, West and Northern directions, got back, disappointed as they couldn't spot Seetha.

## Sargam 48 -55 Hunting Down-South

The team of monkeys that went Down-South were also worried because they were unable to spot Seetha.

Both Angada and Gandhamadanan kept encouraging the monkeys to keep up the search. The monkeys who were in the throes of hunger and thirst entered a cave. There they saw a divine tree, a lake and a few mansions and an elderly lady ascetic too. Hanuman asked her to introduce herself.

The ascetic, named Swayamprabha, introduced herself thus: A glorious conjuror (mayavi) named Mayan created this Kanchanavanam (Golden Forest). Mayan who was previously Vishwakarma created this Kanchanabhavan (Golden mansion). Vishwakarma performed penance for a thousand years and received from Brahma the gift of craftsmanship, implements for creation, and the knowledge of Shastras for creation. These are collectively known as Ausharasadhanam'. After he completed this creation, he lived here for some time. He lived here with his lady-love, an apsara, named Hema. Indra killed him during a war using his Vajrayudham. This daughter of Mayan's happens to be Ravana's wife, Mandodari. Mayan was killed by Indra because of his secret relationship with Hema. After he died, Brahma gifted Hema this Kanchanavanam. I am her dear friend. She gave this to me as a grant, and I am taking care of this place. My name is Swayamprabha. My father's name is Merusavarni.

She gave the monkeys plenty of fruits, vegetables and water. They ate to their heart's fill. She then asked the monkeys how they arrived there. They also gave their story and told her that

they were on the look-out for Seetha. Later with her help, **they came out of the cave and left for the seashore.**

Since the time-limit set by Sugriva for finding out Seetha's whereabouts and reporting back, had elapsed, and since they were still clueless, they were scared that Sugriva would mete out severe punishment to them. Angada and others therefore decided that they should go on a fast unto death.

Hanuman pacified the monkeys and asked them to come with him. Even then, several monkeys joined Angada and embarked on a 'prayopavesham' (fast ).

### **Sargam 56 – 63 – Sampathi's directions**

Just then, Sampathi, a vulture-king, reached the mountain where the monkeys were fasting. The monkeys experienced a death threat because of him. "I have gone without food for a long time now. I shall now feast on these monkeys and fill my stomach", he announced. He was Jatayu's brother. When Angada heard his words, he told Hanuman, "See? we are now actually facing death. We haven't completed our task for Sri Rama. "We have heard about how Jatayu gave up his life in the line of duty to Rama. Just like him, we who are born in the animal kingdom should give up our lives for Lord Rama. We should give ourselves up to him as his feed." Sampathi had not heard any news about his younger brother Jatayu in a very long time. His wings had been scorched by the sun's rays and so he couldn't fly. So he had been residing on these mountain peaks for several years. When he heard Angada say that Jatayu was dead, he wanted to climb down from the mountain peak.

Since he was unable to do so, he asked the monkeys to help him come down. He wanted to hear in full about his brother's death.

The monkeys helped bring down Sampathi from the peak and told him the story of Jatayu. They also detailed the friendship between Rama and Sugriva and Vali's slaying and that since Seetha was yet to be found, they had decided to go on a fast unto death.

Sampathi told them how his feathers had got burnt and how Ravana had **imprisoned Seetha in Lanka**. With the help of the monkeys, he went to the seashore and performed jalanjali (water-offering rites) for his brother Jatayu.

### **Sampathi narrates tale to Jambavan.**

Jatayu's brother, Vulture King, Sampathi, was singed by the rays of the Sun and had lost his wings. His son, Suparshwan, used to fetch food for Him every day. One day, although he left at sunrise, he got back empty handed in the evening. Sampathi scolded him a lot. Suparshwan said as follows, "Father, I was waiting atop the Mahendragiri hill, blocking the skies, waiting to catch any bird that might try to fly across. Then, a man flew down bringing along with him a lady who was as bright as the rising sun. I had decided to kill them and fetch them as food for you. He requested me 'softly' (with 'saamam') to give way to them. Since even the lowly folks will not stoop to kill a 'saamayukta', I just let them go. After they had left, the 'siddha-purushas', who were there, told me, "The man you let go was Ravana; The lady he was abducting was Seetha, the wife of Lord Rama." That is why I couldn't fetch

food for you.” Sampati had narrated this tale about what his son, Supashwawan, said to him, to Jambavan.

Sage Nishakaramuni, had told Sampathi that his wings would grow back when he performed service (kainkaryam) to Lord Rama. Since he had ‘performed kainkaryam’ to Rama by giving information about Seetha, he sprouted wings. He flew away from there.

### **Sargam 64 – 67 – The greatness of ‘Divine Feet’.**

Angada pacified the monkeys who were aghast upon seeing the vast expanse of the sea. He questioned each of the monkeys about the strength each of them possessed. Each of the monkeys took turns to come up with their capabilities. Jambavan had a discussion with Angada. Jambavan went over to Hanuman in order to galvanise him.

Jambavan narrated the story of Hanuman’s birth to him and conveyed to him that only he was capable of crossing the ocean in its entirety to reach Lanka located on the southern shore and getting back too.

Hanuman conveyed his eagerness to cross the ocean. Jambavan praised him. Hanuman climbed to the top of the Mahendra Hill in a bid to cross speedily. He took on a huge form and crossed.

**End of Kishkinta Kandam**

## V. Sundara Kandam

### **Sargam 1 – 15 – Looking for Seetha**

Hanuman crossed the ocean to reach Lanka by night. There he took on a small form. He was stunned by the beauty of Lanka. He conquered the Rakshasi who was standing guard at the gates of Lanka and entered Lanka. He searched for her in Ravana's harem. He was pained because he could not find Seetha.

He looked for Seetha in Ravana's and other rakshasas' palaces. He saw Ravana's pushpak vimanam (aircraft). He saw thousands of beauties asleep in Ravana's palace. He saw several women and his wife, Mandodari, sleeping close to Ravana.

'Was Seetha probably dead?' his mind was fleetingly perturbed. But, again, resumed the search, elsewhere, enthusiastically. He went to Ashoka Vana to look for her. There he found a sorrowful lady surrounded by rakshasis, under an Ashoka Tree. He decided that she had to be Seetha.

### **Sargam 16 – Seetha's advice and problems**

Ravana came to Ashokavana along with his other wives. Ravana spoke at length about himself in order to impress Seetha and convince Her about his prowess.

Seetha gave sane advice to Ravana. As compared to Sri Rama, he was a mere baby-rabbit, an upstart, she said.

Ravana gave her two months to succumb to his overtures. Else, he threatened to kill her. Seetha condemned him. Ravana asked the rakshasis to put good sense into her and left for his palace.

The rakshasis explained to Seetha. When she did not listen, they berated her. Seetha lamented.

Seetha was preparing to end her life. Thrijata had a dream. In the dream, she saw, the rakshasas were annihilated while Perumal wins. She narrated the same to the rakshasis. Mythili is the only one who can save us from disaster.

**Sargam 28 – 31 Sri Rama -The mrut- sanjeevani (One who brought to life)**

**The lamenting Seetha tied her tresses in a manner suitable for hanging herself and came near the tree. She saw auspicious signs. Hanuman sang Rama katha to give himself time to think and prevent her from taking the extreme step.**



### **Sargam 32 – 35 Identification mark**

When Seetha heard this, she saw Hanuman on the branch and was amazed at his humility. She wondered if this was true or a mere dream. When she had concluded that this was real, she started worrying, what if the sleeping rakshasis were to find out about the monkey. In this chain of thought, She thought of Rama -Lakshmana and started weeping. Hanuman climbed down from the tree and stood in front of her. Seetha told him about herself, the reason for Her presence here, and how Ravana abducted her.

She pleaded with Hanuman to talk about Ravana's characteristic traits. Hanuman obliged by describing them and ensured that she trusted him.

### **Sargam 36 -38- Anguliyam (ring) – Presenting the Choodamani**

Hanuman presented the ring sent by Perumal to Seetha. Seetha asked him when Lord Rama would come to take her back. Hanuman offered to take her back immediately if she would sit on his shoulders. Seetha declined. In order to prove to Rama that he had indeed met her, she narrated an **incident relating to Kakasura that took place in Chitrakoot** which was known only to her and Rama. Then she gave Hanuman her Choodamani and asked him to tell Rama that she would not live beyond one more month.

## **Sargam 38 – 57 – Hanuman's valour**

Hanuman reassured Seetha and left. He destroyed Pramadhavana. Upon hearing of this, Ravana sent his servants there. Hanuman killed them. Next, he destroyed 'Chaithyaprasada' (Mansion of the Rakshsas' family deity). He killed the guards stationed there. He slayed Brahadtha's son, Jambumali who came there to fight him. He killed seven ministers.

He killed five of Ravana's commanders. He killed Ravana's son Akshkumar. Later he allowed himself to be bound by the Brahmastra used on him by Indrajeet and also be taken to Ravana's court. He introduced himself to Ravana as Rama's messenger.

He described the greatness of Lord Rama and warned him that enmity with Him would be disastrous for him. Ravana wanted to kill Hanuman. His brother told him that killing a messenger would be improper. So, Ravana set fire to his tail and let him go alive. Hanuman set fire to Lanka with his tail on fire. Then he visited Seetha once again before leaving Lanka, crossing the Ocean and reaching the seashore where Jambavan, Angada and others were waiting for him.

## **Sargam 58 – 63 – Monkey mischief!**

Hanuman gave a detailed account of his Lanka yatra to the monkeys. "Let us conquer Lanka, and take Seetha back to Lord Rama," said Angada. Jambavan rejected the proposal.

All the monkeys then entered Sugriva's orchard, Madhuvana, and feasted on the honey and fruits over there. When Sugriva's maternal uncle, Dadhimuka, who was guarding the orchard tried to stop them, they pushed him down.

Dadhimuka and the guards rushed to Sugriva and complained to him that the monkeys were destroying Madhuvana. Upon hearing this, Sugriva guessed that the monkeys had succeeded in their mission and was thrilled.

### **Sargam 64 -66: Lord Rama laments on seeing the Choodamani.**

After that the monkeys came to Kishkinta. Hanuman prostrated before Lord Rama and submitted that he had met Seetha. He gave an account of Seetha and handed over the Choodamani that she gave him for the Lord. When Rama saw it, it brought memories of Seetha and He lamented.

Hanuman, then, praised Perumal, and gave him Seetha's message asking Rama and Lakshmana to kill Ravana and retrieve her and take her back with them.

He then told Him that he had reassured her that the valiant monkeys, Rama and Lakshmana would definitely come to Lanka, slay Ravana and rescue and take her back with them. After completing the exile in the forest, Lord Rama's coronation, with her alongside Him, would take place soon.

## **End of Sundarakandam**

## **VI. Yuddha Kandam**

## **Sargam 1 – 5 – The Monkey Army's Journey**

Rama praised Hanuman and embraced him. He deliberated on the means to cross the ocean. Hanuman gave Rama details of Lanka's strongholds, Army strengths etc.

### **Lord Rama Leads the Monkey Army from Kishkinta to the Seashore**

Rama told Sugriva that they could depart during the Abhijit muhurtham which is conducive to victory. "Ravana who took away Seetha from me cannot escape alive. Today is Uttara phalguni asterism(utthiram star). " This day in the month of Panguni with pournami (full moon) tithi. This day will prove to be victorious for me. Let's leave today itself from here."

"Let Neelan lead the army from the front and show the way. Rishaba can be on the right. I shall come on Gandhamadana on the left. Lakshmana can be hoisted by Angada on his shoulders and come with me."

### **Travel to the seashore**

"The trio of Jambavan, Sushena and Vegadarsi, and the valiant Ruksharajan as the fourth, can form the vanguard and protect the army from the back. You can get into a palanquin and come beside us", Rama had told Sugriva who followed the same orders to a T. Then Lakshmana and Sugriva praised Rama, and then they set off –southwards along with monkey army.

The army wended its way and came upon the 'sahya' mountain – a mountain that was as long as 100 mountains put

together. The moving army made a roaring noise as loud as the roar of the seas as it made its way through forests rather than through cities, towns, and villages as per Rama's orders.

Keeping in mind the fact that Seetha should be freed as soon as possible, the monkey army marched ahead speedily, and did not even take in the natural beauty of the terrain but trudged along.

The monkey army moved along looking at the scenery **in the forests in the Sahya and Malaya mountains**, crushing the branches of the trees like champa, thilaka, dinish, gravira, Ashoka, kadamba etc. and taking in the sweet smell emanating from them as they passed by. After crossing the Sahya and Malaya mountains, Lord Rama led the army to the Mahendra mountains. He climbed on its peak, and saw the ocean replete with fishes and tortoises. Then He came down and reached a great forest named Velavana. After reaching, Rama told Sugriva that they should stay there and resolve how to cross the ocean. The monkey army stayed there and watched the huge ocean. The skies and ocean seemed to be all one. The monkeys watched in awe as the waves, hit by the winds, seemed to rise to the skies. Off and on Rama thought of Seetha and lamented.

(Note: Kamban says that the monkey army reached the seashore within twelve days of leaving Kishkinta. )

### **Sargam 6 – 14 – Ravana's discussions**

Ravana discussed with his ministers about how to win the war with Rama. Commanders including Prahastha, Durmukha, Vajradamshtara, Nikumba, and Vajrabahu assured Ravana

that they would be able to defeat the enemy's army. Vibhishana told them that Lord Rama was undefeatable. Kumbhakarna condemned Ravana for his act. The rakshasas had become apprehensive because of his act. Yet, they said they would overcome the fear with their strength and defeat the enemy. Rama by no means can be defeated. It would be better to surrender Seetha to Hi advised Vibhishana.

### **Sargam 15 – 18 – Vibhishana's saranagati (total surrender)**

Indrajit berated Vibhishana. Ravana insulted Vibhishana and threw him out. Vibhishana also berated Ravana, and along with four rakshasas climbed to the skies. In the same muhurtham, they crossed the ocean, and reached the place where Rama and Lakshmana were camping. He said they had decided to seek refuge in Rama, the Protector. He told the senior monkeys there to quickly go and tell Him that they had arrived there to seek His protection. Lord Rama discussed the same with the senior monkeys. They did not want to entertain him. Perumal explained to the monkeys the significance of protecting the refugees, his responsibility of being a 'sharanagata rakshakan' (Protector of anyone who seeks refuge) and accepted Vibhishana.

### **Sargam 19 – 24 Lord Rama's sharanagati**

Vibhishana told Rama about Ravana's strength. Perumal pledged to kill Ravana. He got Lakshmana to fetch some sea water and performed abhishekam for Vibhishana as the ruler of Lanka. Acting upon Vibhishana's advice, He spread darbha

grass on the seashore, lay down on it and fasted for three days. That was the sharanagati performed by Him. The Lord of the ocean, Samudraraja, did not appear before Him. So, He used some arrows to disturb the ocean. These incidents took place in the holy land of Thirupullani 'divyadesam'.

### **Sargam 22 -25 – Bridging the Ocean (Sethu bandhan)**

Then, Samudraraja appeared. He told them to build a bridge over himself with Nalan, a monkey, in the lead. Lord Rama followed his advice and with Nalan in the lead started building the bridge. Nala started building the bridge in the middle of the ocean. The monkeys brought boulders and threw them into the ocean. They threw in mountain peaks and boulders into the ocean. They pulled out trees and threw them in. They tied them together with creepers. They gave support to the boulders wherever it was necessary. Since they were all hurled into the sea, loud noises were heard. On the first day, they built a bridge of 14 yojana length. On the second day they built the next 20 yojanas length. On the third day it was 21 yojanas. On the fifth day they built a length of 23 yojanas.  $14+20 + 21 + 22 + 23 = 100$  – a total of 100 yojanas (approximately 900 miles). Thus, it took a total of five days to build the same.

Then the devas, the gandharvas, siddhas (ascetics) and sages came to see the bridge. The width of the bridge was ten yojanas (approx. 90 miles). The Monkey-army walked across on the bridge. Lord Rama who was carried by Hanuman on his shoulders and Lakshmana atop Angada's shoulders, led the army from the front. When they had crossed over to the other shore, they camped in a forest replete with fruits and root-vegetables. The devas and siddhas came and sang Rama's

praise. They greeted Him such that He may conquer Ravana and the enemies, rule this world inclusive of the oceans for a long time and protect it. Ravana sent two rakshasas, namely Suka and Sarana to spy on the Monkey army and gauge their strength. They infiltrated this army in the guise of monkeys. Vibhishana caught them and produced them before Rama. Lord Rama took pity on them, freed them and sent them back to Ravana. He Himself demonstrated their strength to them.

### **Sargam 26 – 37 – ‘Mayasran’**

They went back to Ravana and gave him a detailed Report on Rama’s strength, the headcount of monkeys, the great strength of Jambavan, Hanuman and other stalwarts.

Ravana condemned them and sent them packing. He got a mayavi (sorcerer) named Vidyujihva to create Lord Rama’s head, and carried it to show it to her. She saw it and lamented. Ravana went to his court and held discussions about the impending war.

A rakshasa, named Saramai, cheered up Seetha by explaining to her that it was a fake head not real. Ravana’s maternal grandfather, Malyavan, advised him to make friends with Lord Rama. Ravana disregarded him and started deploying rakshasas to protect the city. Lord Rama appointed Monkey-commanders to attack the Gates of Lanka.

### **Sargam 38 – 41- Angada as messenger**

Rama had a meeting with the important monkey leaders atop Suvel Mountain and thereafter spent the night there. He



surveyed Lanka from there. Sugriva, suddenly flew out and pounced on Ravana, who was looking out from his fort, and held him to a fist fight without arms. He pushed down the crowns from all his ten heads. Ravana who was indulging in 'maya' fight, flew down to stand beside Rama. Lord Rama sent Angada as His messenger to Ravana, one last time. Angada warned him that if he did not restore Seetha to Rama, all this wealth would go to Vibhishana. He was angered at this and called for tying him up. Angada pushed off the rakshasas who came to tie him up and flew back to Lord Rama.

### **Sargam 42 – 102 The Great War**

The monkeys attacked Lanka. The monkeys and rakshasas fought duels. The rakshasas lost in them. Fights continued at night. Angada defeated Indrajit. Indrajit used his illusory powers to remain invisible, used his Nagastra and bound-up Rama-Lakshmana. Garuda flew down untied and freed Rama-Lakshmana.

Ravana sent Doomraksha to fight. Hanuman killed him. Next came Vajradamshttra with his army. Angada killed him. After that Akampanan came to wage war. Hanuman killed him. Next, Bruhastan came along to fight. Neelan killed him.

After that Ravana himself came to fight. He succeeded in making Sugriva fall unconscious and Neelan faint. He used a weapon named 'Shakti' to make Lakshmana too fall unconscious. Later, Lakshmana regained consciousness. Rama fought Ravana. Ravana lost and fled to Lanka.

Ravana, who was upset by his defeat, woke up a sleeping Kumbhakarna. The monkeys who saw his gigantic figure trembled.

Angada enthused the fleeing monkeys to get back. Lord Rama killed Kumbhakarna. Ravana lamented when he heard the news. Next, Ravana sent his brothers, Yuddhonmatthan and Matthan, his sons and other relatives to the warfield. Angada and other Monkeys killed them. Angada killed Narantaka. Hanuman killed Devantaka and Trishiras. Rushabha killed Mahaparshwan. Lakshmana killed Adhikaya.

Indrajit came to fight. He used the Brahmastra to make Rama-Lakshmana and other monkeys to fall unconscious.

Hanuman went to the Himalayas, upon orders from Jambavan, dug-up a mountain which had divine medicinal herbs and brought it. The monkeys and Rama-Lakshmana were revived by the smell of the divine medicinal herbs. The monkeys set fire to Lanka. A gruelling battle ensued between the Rakshasas and the monkeys.

Angada killed Kampa and Prajanga. Dwiivata killed Sonita. Maintha killed Kshyupaksha. Sugriva killed Kumbha. Hanuman killed Nikumbha. Lord Rama killed Makaraksha. Indrajit came and fought a fierce battle. Rama-Lakshmana discussed with each other about how to kill him.

Indrajit killed an illusory Seetha. The monkeys were terrified upon seeing him and ran helter-skelter. Hanuman enthused

them and brought them back together. Indrajit went to a place called Nikumbhila and started performing a yagna (sacrifice).

When Rama heard about Seetha's killing, He fainted. Lakshmana revived Him and re-enthused Him. Vibhishana told Rama about Indrajit's illusory powers and assured Him that Seetha was very much alive. He invited Lakshmana to come to Nikumbhila. Due to Vibhishana's entreaties, Sri Rama goaded Lakshmana to kill Indrajit. Lakshmana therefore accompanied Vibheeshana to Nikumbhila.

The monkeys and rakshasas fought the war. Hanuman slayed the Rakshasa Army. Seeing this Indrajit came to fight.

When he saw Vibhishana, Indrajit was angered and he condemned him. Vibhishana retorted in kind. Indrajit engaged in a battle with Lakshmana. Both of them engaged in a battle of words before fighting each other. Lakshmana killed Indrajit's charioteer. The monkeys felled his horses. Indrajit and Lakshmana fought a fierce battle. Finally, Lakshmana killed Indrajit.

When Lord Rama heard about the slaying of Indrajit, He asked the Monkey-doctor, Sushena to treat the wounds of Lakshmana and others.

When Ravana heard that Indrajit had been killed he was distressed. He thought of killing Seetha. His minister, Suparshwan, warned him against the act and so he held back.

Lord Rama slayed the Rakshasa Army. Rakshasis lamented the death of their husbands. Ravana came to the battlefield along

with his Ministers and army and displayed his valour. Sugriva routed the Rakshasa army. He slayed Virupaksha too. Next, he killed Mahodara. Angada killed Mahaparshwa. The battle between Rama and Ravana became fiercer.

Ravana hit Lakshmana with a weapon called Shakti and got him to fall unconscious. This really enraged Rama who hit him badly with arrows. Ravana could not cope and fled the battlefield.

Rama lamented when he saw the unconscious Lakshmana. Sushena revived Lakshmana and treated his wounds and cured him using Visalyakarani, Santanakarani, Savarnakarani and Sanjeevakarani, the herbs brought by Hanuman.

### **Sargam 103 – 111 – The Slaying of Ravana**

Indra sent his chariot to Lord Rama. Mathali, Indra's charioteer steered the chariot. Rama got onto the chariot and fought Ravana. Lord Rama's arrows hit Ravana and he fell unconscious. His charioteer steered him out of the battlefield.

When he regained consciousness, Ravana scolded his charioteer thus: "When I was enjoying the valour of Rama, you took me off the battlefield for safe cover and made a coward out of me!" The charioteer calmed him down and brought him back to the battlefield.

The gods came to witness the Rama-Ravana battle. When Rama saw that despite his weariness, Ravana was back in action, He wondered how He could defeat Ravana without

showing His supernatural powers. Just then, Agasthya who had come along with the Devatas, taught Rama a stotram in praise of the Aditya antaryami, Sriman Narayana, which would give men the strength to ensure victory over enemies. Rama was very happy to hear this. He did achamanam thrice, and took His bow in His hand, and came back again to fight Ravana. (Govind rajiyam)

When Rama saw Ravana's chariot, He asked His charioteer Mathali to drive the chariot swiftly towards him. There were many auspicious signs to indicate Rama's victory.

A fierce battle ensued between Rama and Ravana. Lord Rama aimed His arrows on Ravana's chest and felled him. That arrow tore his chest and killed him. While some say the Ramayana war lasted seven days, others say it was for nine days. Only until life ebbed out of Ravana could he be our enemy. Only until he was alive, he could stop me from doing good. He can't stop it anymore. So, go and perform his last rites which will be good for him," Rama told Vibheeshana.

All the wives of Ravana came and lamented. Mandodari also came and lamented. She praised Rama and called Him 'Paramapadanathan'. Vibhishana performed Ravana's last rites.

### **Sargam 112 – 113 – Vibhishana's coronation**

The rakshasas and monkeys together got Vibhishana coronated. Rama witnessed it and felt elated. He sent word to Seetha about His victory through Hanuman. Hanuman went and conveyed the news to her.

## Sargam 114 - 120

Rama told Vibhishana to have Seetha bathed and decked up and brought here. He went and conveyed the messages to her. I want to show this unbathed body to Him, she said. Vibhishana refused to listen to her, and not understanding Perumal's mind, gave more importance to his words, and compelled her to bathe and come. Seetha bathed, decked herself up and then came to see Perumal.

Her adorned body hurt Him just as a lamp would cause more suffering to a person suffering from eye pain. She may live wherever she pleases He said. He spoke these words, just so that, before any of the others said that He had not verified her chastity before He accepted her, He should Himself pretend to be doubting Her.

“While Perumal saw the lowliness and femininity of my human birth, He did not see me as the daughter of a Mahajnani like Janaka or that I was not born from a human womb but was born to Bhoomi. He did not check out the bhakti (love) and discipline which made me follow Him all the way”. Seetha agonised and showed it by asking Lakshmana to light a fire and leapt into it. All the three worlds, the gods, Gandharvas, demons stood witness to this. Loud noises of ‘ha, ha’ were heard from the monkeys and rakshasas alike.

All the gods congregated in the skies. Brahma said, “Lord Rama, thou art Narayana! This whole world is your body. You were earlier Thrivikrama, who had measured all the worlds. In order to kill Ravana, you have entered this human body. Those

who tell your story will never face defeat.” Brahma proclaimed.

Lord Agni appeared in his original form and brought Seetha to Rama. Agni vouched for her chastity clearly. Agni directly stands witness to the papa-punyas of the worldly beings. He stated: “This Vaidehi does not have any faults – by speech or eyes or mind. She possesses good character, and has not crossed the boundaries of a character expert like you in any way. (Even though You know very well that this goddess is blemishless, yet just so that a word of suspicion should not be uttered by worldly folks, you made her enter Agni (fire)).” an ecstatic Agnideva hailed Rama as an “Expert on character!” “Although she was subjected to so many temptations and threats by Ravana, she had lost herself to you, and never even thought of him. Therefore, please accept her as a pure, sinless person.” Said Agnideva and submitted her to Him. Perumal also gladly accepted “Janaka’s daughter, Mythili, pure in all three worlds. Inseparable from me, just as the sun’s rays are inseparable from the sun”.

Dasaratha came from the heavens and appeared in the skies before them. Rama bowed to him. He blessed his sons and Seetha and went back to heaven.

### **Sargam 120 -127 – Travelling in the Pushpaka vimanam**

Honouring Rama’s request, Indra infused life into all the monkeys who had died fighting. The Devas departed. The monkey army took rest.

Rama wanted to return to Ayodhya at the earliest. Vibhishana brought the Pushpaka Vimana ('aircraft') for them.

As per Rama's orders Vibhishana also got into the Pushpaka vimana and accompanied them. It took off towards Ayodhya.

Rama showed Seetha all the places enroute. When they were at Kishkinta, Seetha pleaded with Rama that they could take the she-monkeys too, along with them to Ayodhya, Rama brought down the Pushpaka Vimana and picked them up before proceeding to Ayodhya.

They alighted at Bharadwajashram and prostrated before the sage. The sage asked them to stay there for a day.

Since Bharata would be awaiting their arrival, He sent word through Hanuman about their impending arrival. Hanuman went and stopped Bharata, who was preparing to immolate Himself in the fire by informing him that Rama was staying over at Bharadwaj Ashram. An elated Bharata promised him a reward for bringing the good tidings.

Hanuman gave Bharata a detailed account of Sri Rama, Lakshmana, and Seetha's exile. All the citizens of Ayodhya joined Bharata and came over to Nandigram. Rama reached Nandigram too. He met up with Bharata-Shatrughna and the people of Ayodhya. He then sent the Pushpaka Vimana back to Kubera.



## Sargam 128 – Sri Rama's Coronation

Bharata handed back the kingdom to Rama. All four of them gave up their matted locks. Under Shatrughna's directions, Sumantra fetched a lovely chariot. Rama climbed into it and came to the City of Ayodhya. The Monkeys, dressed up as humans, who were seated atop nine-thousand elephants, followed Rama. Rama asked Bharata to give his palace chamber to Sugriva during his stay there. Bharata asked Sugriva to bring the waters of oceans from all four directions. Sugriva sent competent monkeys to all four directions and had them fetch divine waters.

*abhyaṣiñcannaravyāghraṁ prasannēna sugandhinā |  
salilēna sahasrākṣaṁ vasavō vāsavaṁ yathā ||*

Eight Sages including Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Jabali, Kashyapa, Katyayana, Suyajna, Goutama and Vijaya performed Abhishekam for Lord Rama with the pure and scented waters, much in the same way as the ashtavasus did for Indra.

Then Rama presented gifts to Angada, Sugriva, Hanuman and others who had been invited for His Coronation. He presented Vibhishana His Family Treasure Sriranganathan idol along with the Sriranga vimanam. He ruled His Kingdom well for Ten Thousand years. He performed hundred Ashvamedha yagams during His reign. In His kingdom, not a single lady became a widow. There was no fear from snakes or disease. No thieves. Elders did not have to perform last rites for their children. Everybody lived a happy and full life of goodness.

*kuṭumbavṛddhiṃ dhanadhānyavṛddhiṃ  
striyaśca mukhyāḥ sukhamuttamaṃ ca |  
śṛtvā śubham kāvyamidaṃ mahārtham  
prāpnōti sarvāṃ bhuvī cārthasiddhim ||*

There are additions to the family and it thrives, flourishes with wealth and grains, and the important persons, as in, the women (capable women); supreme happiness is attained by all those who listen to this very auspicious and meaningful piece of poetry.

It will lengthen the listener's life span, promote good health, get one praise, promote love, one's intellect and 'thejas'. This auspicious story ought to be listened to in a disciplined manner by those who want to progress spiritually.

**End of Yuddhakandam.  
Subham.**

XX

## **Places of Darshan during the Yatra**

### **1. Bittoor**

Located on the banks of the Ganga, at a distance of 30km from Kanpur (turn off at Kalyanpur on the Kanpur to Kanouj road).

**Darshan Places:**

1. **Valmiki Ashram:** The place where the Ramayana was written. The place where Seetha stayed during her pregnancy. During Rama's Ashwamedha Yaga, the place where Lava - Kusa caught the horse and then fought the battle. When Rama was in Chitrakoot Valmiki was there too. He is likely to have shifted to this place after that. It is mentioned in the Uttarakandam that when Shatrughna went to kill Lavanasura, both on the onward journey from Ayodhya to Vadamathura and on the return journey he is said to have stayed here and had darshan of Sage Valmiki.
2. **River Ganga:** As per Rama's orders, it is on the Southern Bank of this River that Lakshmana dropped off Seetha and left.
3. **Thamasa River:** As is mentioned at the very beginning of the Ramayanam (Refer Page 6), when Valmiki was returning to his ashram along with Bharadwaja after bathing here, he saw the hunter kill one of the (pair of) kraunja birds and uttered the curse and the sloka starting with 'manishat'.
4. **Seetha Rasoi:** Seetha devi's Kitchen **Brahmavarttam:** At the time of Creation of the world, Brahma did penance and created Swayambhuva manu, who had two sons, namely, Priyavardhan and Utthanapadan. Of them, Uthanapadan's son Dhruva was born. He performed penance and had Bhagavan appear before him. This place is also known as Dhruvakila.

## 2. Ayodhya

The city is located on the Southern Bank of the Sarayu river. The place got its name because no one could fight it and hence it has no enemies (invincible). Sriman Narayana gave Ayodhya,

as a representation of Vaikuntha, to Swayambhuva Manu, who gave it to Manu who established the city on the banks of River Sarayu. It is the first amongst the seven mukti (Liberation) kshetras. It was the Capital city of the Suryavamsi race beginning with King Ikshvaku. Since it was the birthplace of Rama, it got its name 'Saketam'. Rama ruled the kingdom for 11000 years, and when Rama left for Srivaikuntham, He took even the grass and ants from here with Him thereby leaving the place empty. The city was later re-established by His son, Kusa. A total of thirteen songs were dedicated to this place by five azhwars. The Srirangam pranavakara vimanam that exists today along with Periya Perumal was established and worshipped here as the family-god by Ikshvaku and his descendants till Rama.

### **Places of worship**

1. Sriram Janmabhoomi: Rama incarnated here in Treta Yuga. Invaders had destroyed the ancient temple located here. Today there is a small temple and idol here. In a year or two, the construction of a huge temple for Lord Srirama will be completed here. (Construction is in progress at a rapid pace).
2. Palaces: Palaces of Dasaratha and Kausalya, and the 'kopabhavan' where an enraged Kaikeyi lay. (Refer Page - 25) There is also a Darshaneshwar Mahal.
3. Kanakabhavan: Seetha-Rama's private chambers. Darshan of Seetha-Rama's ancient small idols and big idol on the simhasan (throne).

4. Bharatabhavan: Place where Dasaratha performed the Putrakameshti Yagna. (Page 7). Today also one can see the homa-kundam there.
5. Lakshman Ghat: Lakshmana departed for Sri vaikuntham from here.
6. Gupthar Ghat: On the banks of River Sarayu (Gopradar theerth) located about 15 kms. from Ayodhya. Rama departed for Srivaikuntham (taking with him even flora and fauna to the higher realms) from here.
7. Dasaratha Theertham: On the banks of the Sarayu, the place where Dasaratha's obsequies were performed. (Page 32)
8. Hanuman Gadhi: A small hill temple for hanuman with sixty steps leading up to it.
9. Sarayu: The sacred river is renowned world over for performing 'Go daanam' (Cow donation). Its story is narrated by Vishwamitra in the Balakandam (refer Pg. 14).
10. Valmiki Bhavan: A huge mandapam with idols of Valmiki and Lava-Kusa, and the 24,000 slokas of the Ramayanam written there.
11. Ammaji Mandir: Rama Temple built by Srivaishnavas from South India.
12. Nandigram (Bharatakundam): Located approx. 25kms.south of Ayodhya on the road to Allahabad. Bharata ruled the Kingdom from here for 14 years. Hanuman met Bharata here and embraced him here after giving the good tidings of Rama's arrival shortly by the pushpaka vimanam. One can 'witness' the scene (in the form of a realistic sculpture) here. Rama arrived here and

had his matted locks removed and before he entered the city.

### **3. Siddhashramam (Buxar – Bihar)**

Vishwamitra requested Dasaratha to send Rama-Lakshmana with him for protection of Yagnas and took them with him. During this sojourn, they travelled for fifteen days and visited Kamashram, Tatakavan, Siddhashram, Ganga, Sonanadi, Visalanagaram, Goutam Ashram and Mithila. On the first day, they walked on the Southern bank of River Sarayu (approx. 25 kms.) and stayed the night at a place. Next morning, this is where Vishwamitra sang “Kausalya Supraja Rama....” as Thirupalliyezhuchi (‘wake-up-from-bed’ song) for the princes, walked them down to reach Kamashram by evening.

Kamashram: Siva burnt down Kamadevan in this place. Located in Ballia, in U.P., it is at a distance of 35 Kms. on the Buxar -Gazipur route. One can read the history of this place in Pg. 8 in this book. They spent their second night here. Next morning, they departed and crossed the Ganga in a boat. At that time the thunderous noise on the East that they heard was from the confluence of the Ganga and Sarayu, said Vishwamitra. Now, the confluence is not there. It is near Chapra. (Page8). They crossed the Ganga and reached Thatakavan.

Thatakavan (Page8): It is located at a distance of 2 Kms. from Buxar. It was here that Thataka was killed and they spent their third night here.

Next day they left in the morning, and reached Siddhashram.

Siddhashram (Page9) This place is in Buxar, on the banks of the Ganga. They stayed here for 6 days. This is the punya-bhoomi where Vishwamitra performed the sacrifice (yagna). They stayed here until the tenth day of their voyage. They say the 'Suprabhatam' was born at a place close-by. A beautiful Sri Vaishnava temple is located here. At a distance of 4kms. from here, on the banks of the Dora River, Vamana's Ashram (presently jail premises) is located.

#### 4. Visala Nagar (Hajipur – Bihar)

On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> day, they departed for Mithila. They walked towards the North Eastern direction for one full day and reached the western banks of River Shona in the evening. There they met several sages and when they rested for the night on the Twelfth night, Vishwamitra told them several stories. (Pg. ....). Next day they crossed the Ganga (east of Patna), they saw Visala City on the Northern bank. There, King Sumathi, welcomed them and sang their praise. On the thirteenth day, they stayed overnight there. In this place, in Ramchauda, a small mountain, one can have darshan of Rama's divine feet. They left on the fourteenth night and reached Janakpuri on the fifteenth night.

Confluences : (Bihar).

Rivers and confluences are very important aspects of the History of a nation.

1. Ganga- Sarayu (ghagra) – As mentioned earlier, it was in the West. Now it is close to Chapra in a place known as Reval Ganj.

2. Ganga – Shona \_ This lies between Chapra and Sonapur.
3. Ganga – Gandaki – This is located near Patna and Sonapur. It is said that Gajendra Moksham took place on the Western Banks of the Gandaki, in Sonapur. Whenever any river joins the Ganga, thereafter it is known as Ganga only.

Gautam Ashram (Page ....): It is located at the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Sarayu, on the road to Chapra from Buxar. However, according to the Ramayana, the redemption of Ahalya's curse by Rama took place just before he entered Janakpuri. Today that place is 20kms. South of Janakpuri and is at a place called Kamdhaul. It is possible that Sage Gautam's Ashram was near Chapra and the place where his cursed wife lay in the form of a stone was just before Janakpuri.

## 5. Seethamarhi

The expanse starting North of Visala, Seethamarhi in Darbhanga district in Bihar, till Janakpuri in Nepal, (from Champakaranya to Gandaki) was known as the Kingdom of Mithila. Please see details on Page .... Within the kingdom, Seethamarhi is said to be the birthplace of Mother Seetha. It is located at a distance of 58kms north from Muzaffarpur on the Darbhanga -Raxaul Railway Line.

Places for darshan

1. Seetha-Rama Temple
2. Seetha Kund – Seetha's Bath



3. Yagnabhoomi – The Yagasala where Janaka found Seetha.

5. Janakpuri (Nepal)

If one crosses the Nepal border from Seetamarhi at Bittampur (48Kms.) one can have darshan of this beautiful quaint place. The Kingdom of Mithila was earlier known as Theerabukti. The name has transformed over time and is today known as 'Thirhooth'.

Darshan places:

1. Sri Janaki Mandir: Since the old temple was dilapidated, a new huge mahal was built in its place and it is known as Sheesh Mahal ('Mirror palace').
2. Sri Rammandir : This is the Golden mandap where the Seetha – Rama marriage took place.(Page.....)
3. Ratna Sagar Mandir: The Treasury where precious stones and wealth was kept ready for the Divine Wedding.
4. Dhanushsagar: The Shivadhanush was kept here.
5. Gangasagar -It was here that

King Nimi's body was churned and the First Janaka was born.  
(Page .....

6. Dhanusha : Located at a distance of 20 Kms from Janakpuri it was at this place that Rama had broken the

Shivadhanush. It is said that even today pieces of the Dhanush can be found here.

7. Kamdhaul: As mentioned earlier, place where Gautama Ashram is located.

## 7. Shrungibherpuram

(Short Prelude to the story: At the end of Balakandam, when they were returning after the Rama Seetha wedding, Parasurama's ego is crushed by Rama enroute to getting back to Ayodhya. The distance between Janakpuri and Ayodhya is approximately 380 kms. First, when Janaka sent word to Dasaratha through his messengers about the Seetha - Rama wedding, they travelled at lightning speed on horseback to reach in 3 days! The wedding procession from Ayodhya led by Dasaratha took 5 days to reach. After the wedding, when the wedding party departed, it took them about 15 days to get back to Ayodhya. Rama was 12 years old and Seetha was 6 years old at the time of the wedding. They lived happily in Ayodhya for 12 years after wedding. Now let us take a look at their travels after Kaikeyi sought the boons.)

With Seetha, Lakshmana and citizens of Ayodhya tailing Him, Rama left Ayodhya, walked down South and spent the night on the Banks of the Thamasa river. Then he left, without the knowledge of his subjects, crossed three Rivers Vegashruti, Gomati and Syantika and reached Shrungibherapuram (Page ...) This place is 32 Kms. north east of Allahabad on the Raebareli railway line, near

Ramchaura Road Railway station, on the northern banks of the Ganga. This place belonged to Guha, the Hunter-chieftain. 'Shrungi' means deer. 'Bhera' means body. The place got the name since Guha hung up the bodies, of the deer he hunted and killed, all around the place. Or else, this was the place where Sage Rishyashruna and his wife Shanta devi, lived. That could also be the reason for the name. Rama made friends with Guha and spent one night here. Next day, Guha helped Rama cross over the Ganga in his boat.

Darshan Places:

1. Gomathi River: One of the rivers crossed by Rama when He went to the forest.
2. Rishyashruna, Shantadevi Temple.
3. Vibhandaka Kund : The place named after Rushyashruna's father
4. Ram Snanghat : Place where Rama and Seetha bathed.
5. Ram Shayya : Small mound of sand on which Rama and Seetha slept one night.
6. Banks of the Ganga : Place from where Rama alighted the boat to cross the Ganga.

### **Bharadwaj Ashram – Prayagraj**

Prayagraj is the King of all 'Teerthams'. It is the confluence of three sacred Rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and the 'antarvahini' Saraswati, flowing underneath. These three rivers are the three plaits of hair of Sri Mahalakshmi. Plait of hair in Sanskrit is 'veni'. Hence it is called Triveni Sangamam. Rama crossed the Ganga and reached Vatsa Kingdom on the Southern Bank.

From there He reached Prayag and went over to Sage Bharadwaj's Ashram. ( Page....)

Darshan Places:

1. Triveni Sangam
2. Madhav Sannidhi: A total of 12 'Madhavs' give darshan here. Bindu Madhav is on the Banks of the Ganga.
3. Bharadwaj Ashram: The place where Rama met the sage and asked him for directions to Chitrakoot. He spent a night there. Even when He was returning to Ayodhya after completing his exile he stayed here.
4. Patalapuri Temple: Rama is said to have worshipped the idols in the fort as well as Akshaya Vatam here.
5. Shyam Vatavruksha: The Akshayvatam worshipped by Rama.

## **9. Chitrakoot**

Sage Bharadwaj recommended Chitrakoot as the best place for Rama to stay and directed Him to walk 10 kroshas (32 kms.) southwest. Rama first reached the Yamuna and crossed over in a catamaran. Today, it is in a place called Mavo. Then He proceeded South-west and reached the beginning of the Chitrakoot Range. They walked further, about 100kms. from Prayagraj and reached Chitrakoot dham (near Karvy) . This place is located on the banks of the Mandakini River on the U.P.-M.P. border.(Chitra-Picturesque , Koot – Peak) (Page....)

Darshan Places:

1. Yamuna Ghat/Tulasidas Ashram: Place where Rama crossed the Yamuna and the place where Tulasidas started writing the Balakandam.
2. Kamadagiri: The mountain that gives what one wants. Everyone respects its holiness. So no one steps on it, instead circum-ambulates it.
3. Ram Ghat: Rama did Pindapradanam here upon hearing the news of the sad demise of His father Dasaratha. (Page....)
4. Janaki Kund: Place where Seetha bathed
5. Bharat milap: Place where Bharata met Rama.
6. Spatik Shila: Place where Kakasura Jayanth pecked at Seetha and lost his eye to Rama's Brahmastra.
7. Bharata Temple: Place commemorating 'Paduka daanam'.
8. Hanuman Dhara: A small stream of water flowing out of an idol of Hanuman atop a small hillock
9. Seetha Rasoi: Seetha's kitchen atop the same hillock.
10. Gupt  
Godavari: Water flowing through two deep caves in the mountain. It is said that River Godavari secretly flows here to worship Rama but is scared of Ravana.
11.  
Valmiki Ashram: Before Rama entered Chitrakoot, He paid His respects to him, sought his permission and then came. (Page .....). Later Valmiki is said to have moved to Bittoor and then to Naimisharanyam.

12. Tulsid  
as Ashram: The great man who wrote Ramcharitmanas  
lived here.
13. Viswa  
mitra Temple : It used to be Vishwamitra's ashram.
14. Atri –  
Anusuya's ashram: It is located 12 Kms South of  
Chitrakoot. When Rama left Chitrakoot to go into the  
forest, He came here to pay His respects to the Sage.

Rama stayed here for a long time during His exile. He met several great sages (Maharishis) here and had discussions with them to His heart's content. Aranya Kandam has been introduced in the Ramayana only to show that interaction with sages or learned men is of utmost importance. After Bharatha's visit to Chitrakoot, Rama felt that if they stayed here any longer, there would be frequent visitors from their kingdom. So he decided to move down south and went to Atri's Ashram. He then took leave and moved deep into the forest. Dandakaranyam extends from Panna on the northern border of M.P. to the southern border (North of Nagpur), to Nasik-Panchavati in the West and to Buxar (Bihar) in the East.

Dandan was King Ikshvaku's youngest son. He was a bad character who misbehaved with his guru Sukracharya's daughter, Araja. The sage cursed him and the place where he lived became a forest - Dandakaranya. Later on several sages who wanted solitude chose to stay in the forest to do penance. (Uttarakandam 79<sup>th</sup> Sargam) . Upon entering

Dandakaranya He first encountered Virata, then met Sharabhangha, Sutheekshna and several other sages, and again offered His respects to Sutheekshna and Agasthya and finally as directed by Agasthya reached Panchavati.

In this, Agasthya's Ashram is located in three places:

1. At a distance of 65kms from Satna
2. At Ramtek, which is 50kms. north of Nagpur
3. Near Nasik-Panchavati

Because of this, although it might be difficult to trace the path taken by Rama, one can more or less guess the same. Several opinions have been expressed on this:

1. First Viratakund: (Page ...) – It is located at a distance of 8Kms. from Atri's ashram. That is where, Rama killed Virata. Since this is in a dense forest, it is inaccessible and one cannot go there.
2. Sarabhangha Ashram: (Page...) While it is 15kms. south of Viratakund through forests, if one takes the road through towns / villages, it is 25kms away from Chitrakoot on the road to Satna. Rama took the advice of this sage, walked on the banks of the Mandakini river and reached Sutheekshna's Ashram. After Rama had paid his respects to him and showed him the way, The sage attained heavenly abode. Here, there is a confluence of Sharabhangha and Mandakini rivers.
3. Sutheekshna Ashram : Sharabhangha's path is testified by the following slokas :
  1. imAm mandAkinIm ..... (3.5.37) (Walk westwards on the banksof the Mandakini).

2. aha RAma mahA tEjA ... SuthIkshno nama...(3.5.35) ( A sage named Suthikshna dwells in this forest. ) Next, what is said about Rama's travel
3. tE gatvA.....vipulam sailam (3.7.2) (They crossed several rivers and then saw gigantic mountains.

First opinion: If you see 1 &2 together, it looks as though a short distance away on the West of Sharabhangas Ashram, is Sutheekshnas Ashram. Thats how we will have darshan of Sutheekshnas Ashram which is about 10kms. away to the west of Sarabhangas Ashram. However, it does not gel with the third sloka which says they walked 'far'. For that if one can split the Sanskrit Sloka as 'tE gatvA adUram...' it means short distance which tallies. This is the opinion given by the Text editor Govindaraja.

Second opinion: According to the third verse cited, it is true that He walked a long way. Hence, Sutheekshna Ashram should have been south of Sharabhangas ashram, far away from it, and north of Ramtek. East of this on the Chattisgarh border, Rama seems to have and should have stayed for ten years in an Ashram Cluster which is not to be seen today.

Rama took leave of Sutheekshna and spent about ten years in several other sages' ashrams and again returned to Sutheekshnas ashram and asked to be directed to Agasthya's Ashram. Sutheekshna directed Him to go southwards for 5 yojanas (80kms.). Today we can have darshan of Agasthyashram at that point.



4. Agasthyashram : According to the first opinion, it is near Satna and as per the second one it is near Ramtek. Rama has given a lot of importance to meeting Agasthya. Agasthya himself has directed Rama to walk two yojanas (32 Kms.) to reach Panchavati . This does not tally with the first opinion because Nasik Panchavati is very far away. As per the second opinion, Panchavati should be at a distance of 32 kms. due south of Ramtek. Today such a place does not exist. Probably the reference could be for the 'very far away' Bhadrachala Parnashala. But there happens to be an incongruity. When Ravana carried Seetha away from Panchavati, she bundled up her ornaments and threw them down in the midst of Sugriva and others who were in Rushyamukha mountain. If one travels by air from Bhadrachalam to Lanka, Hampi- Rushyamukha in Karnataka will not be enroute. Whereas, it will be enroute on the air route from Nasik- Panchavati to Lanka.

Agasthyashram in Nasik Panchavati and near Manmad don't match the distances given in the Ramayana.

Like this, in all opinions, there is some truth. It is better for bhaktas not to debate on such matters and agree and believe that Rama's divine feet fell on all the places.

Ramagiri Ramtek (Nagpur)

This place is about 45kms north of Nagpur. A very beautiful Rama Temple is atop a hillock there. There is an idol of

Agasthya in the temple. It is said that his ashram was located in the forest adjoining the hillock. Here also there are two opinions.

First opinion: As we have seen earlier, if Sutheekshna's ashram were to be north of Nagpur, Agasthya's ashram should have been located about 80kms due south of it. That Ashram coincides with this one. Thus, Rama must have come here and stayed, and lived for about ten years in the ashram-cluster due east of this place and then went towards Panchavati. Rama and Seetha have bathed in the tank located here. Panchavati should have been located 32 km due south of this place.

Second opinion : He travelled in the South westerly direction from the Agasthyashram near Satna, and reached Nasik Panchavati. He did not go via Ramtek. But then, on another occasion, after His coronation, Rama is said to have killed Sampuka for his heinous acts, and met Agasthya immediately thereafter and received a jewel here. This incident is mentioned in the 75<sup>th</sup> and 78<sup>th</sup> sargams in the Uttarakandam. This has been cited by Kulasekara Azhwar in Perumal Thirumozhi as 'serithava sampukan thannai sendru kondru, sezhmaraiyon uyir meettuthavathon eenda niraimanipoon aniyum konu....."

## 12. Panchavati (Nasik)

Seetha-Rama stayed in a beautiful green hermitage built by Lakshmana amidst a cluster of five banyan trees. (Page....). This place is on the banks of the Godavari. On the northern bank is Panchavati and Tapovan and located on the southern

bank is Nasik town. Nasika means nose. Since Soorpanakha's chopped-off ears and nose fell here it got the name Nasik (hearsay).

### Darshan Places

1. Panchavati : Five banyan trees are there. This is the place where the hermitage was located. Closeby is the place where Lakshmana stood guard.
2. Tapovan: About 3kms from Panchavati. Here, Kapila, a small river, merges with the Godavari River. Sage Gautama and Sage Kapila's ashram are located here. It is here that Lakshmana chopped off the nose and ears of Soorpanakha and flung them onto the southern bank of the Godavari. Here, there are three tanks bearing the names of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, which are all waterless. They are all interlinked underneath. Close to them is Agnitheertham. It was here that Rama had hidden Seetha with agni and kept Maya Seetha beside Him. She was the one whom Ravana carried away.(This is not featured in the Ramayana.
- 3 Kalaram Mandir: Ancient Seetha Rama temple
4. Seetha Gumpha : It seems Ravana had abducted Seetha from here. Located at a distance of 10kms. from Nasik on a hilltop, it is also said that Ravana abducted Seetha from Ramashayya.



