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Ramáyana  
Book Three  
The Forest  
by Valmiki



Translated by  
SHELDON I. POLLOCK

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

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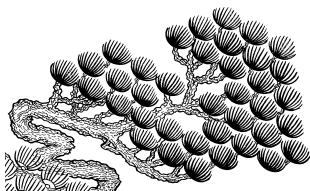
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41–47

SITA'S ISOLATION AND ABDUCTION

41.1 S Ā TAM SAMPREKṢYA su|śronī kusumāni vicinvatī  
hema|rājata|varnābhyāṃ pārsvābhyāṃ upaśobhitam  
prahr̥ṣṭā c' ān|a|vady' |āṅgī mṛṣṭa|hāṭaka|varṇinī  
bhartāram api c' ākrandal Lakṣmaṇaṃ c' āiva s'āyudham.  
tay" āhūtau nara|vyāghrau Vaidehyā Rāma|Lakṣmaṇau  
vīkṣamāṇau tu taṃ deśaṃ tadā dadṛṣatur mṛgam.

śaṅkamānas tu taṃ dr̥ṣṭvā Lakṣmaṇo Rāmam abravīt:  
«tam ev' āinam ahaṃ manye Mārīcaṃ rākṣasaṃ mṛgam.

41.5 caranto mṛgayāṃ hr̥ṣṭāḥ pāpen' ōpādhinā vane  
anena nihatā, Rāma, rājānaḥ kāmā|rūpiṇā.  
asya māyāvīdo māyā|mṛga|rūpam idaṃ kṛtam  
bhānumat, puruṣa|vyāghra, gandharva|pura|saṃnibham.  
mṛgo hy evaṃ|vidho ratna|vicitro n' āsti, Rāghava,  
jagatyāṃ jagatī, nātha, māy" āiṣā hi na saṃśayaḥ.»

evaṃ bruvāṇaṃ Kākutsthaṃ prativārya śuci|smitā  
uvāca Sītā saṃhr̥ṣṭā chadmanā hr̥ta|cetanā:

«ārya|putr', ābhirāmo 'sau mṛgo harati me manaḥ,  
ānay' āinaṃ, mahā|bāho, krīḍ" |ārthaṃ no bhaviṣyati!

41.10 ih' āśrama|pade 'smākaṃ bahavaḥ puṇya|darśanāḥ  
mṛgās caranti sahitās: camarāḥ sṛmarās tathā,  
ṛkṣāḥ pṛṣata|saṃghās ca vānarāḥ kinnarās tathā  
vicaranti, mahā|bāho, rūpa|śreṣṭhā mahā|balāḥ.

THE FLAWLESS beauty with full hips and a complexion of polished gold was picking flowers when she spotted the deer with his beautiful flanks of gold and silver hue. In delight she cried out to her husband and to Lákshmana, who stood armed and ready. Rama and Lákshmana, those tigers among men, glanced up in Vaidéhi's direction at her call, and saw the deer. 41.1

Seeing him Lákshmana at once became suspicious and said to Rama, "I am sure that deer is none other than the *rákshasa* Marícha. When kings who delight in the hunt enter the forest, Rama, this evil creature, who can take on any form at will, assumes this or that disguise and kills them. He knows magic, tiger among men, and this is the magic form of a deer he has taken on, as dazzling to the eye as a mirage. For nowhere in all the world, Rághava, master of the world, does there exist such a deer, sparkling with gems. I am certain this is magic." 41.5

But even as Kákutstha was speaking thus, bright-smiling Sita interrupted—the deception had taken her reason away—and said in great delight: "Dear husband, what an exquisite deer! He has stolen my heart away. Please catch him for me, my great-armed husband. He shall be our plaything. Here at our ashram many beautiful animals come wandering in droves: yaks and antelope, apes, herds of spotted gazelle, monkeys, and *kínnaras*. Lovely and powerful animals are always grazing here, my great-armed husband. 41.10

na c' âsya sadṛśo, rājan, dr̥ṣṭa|pūrvō mṛgaḥ purā  
 tejasā kṣamayā dīptyā yath" âyaṃ mṛga|sattamaḥ!  
 nānā|varṇa|vicitr'ân̄go ratna|bindu|samācitaḥ  
 dyotayan vanam a|vyagram̄ śobhate śaśi|sam̄nibhaḥ.  
 aho rūpam aho lakṣmīḥ svara|sampac ca śobhanā!  
 mṛgo 'dbhuto vicitro 'sau hṛdayaṃ harat' îva me!

41.15 yadi grahaṇam abhyeti jīvan̄n eva mṛgas tava  
 āścarya|bhūtaṃ bhavati vismayaṃ janayiṣyati.  
 samāpta|vana|vāsānām̄ rājya|sthānām̄ ca naḥ punaḥ  
 antaḥ|pura|vibhūṣ"ârtho mṛga eṣa bhaviṣyati.  
 Bharatasy' ārya|putrasya śvaśrūṇām̄ mama ca, prabho,  
 mṛga|rūpam̄ idaṃ divyaṃ vismayaṃ janayiṣyati.

jīvan na yadi te 'bhyeti grahaṇam̄ mṛga|sattamaḥ  
 ajinaṃ, nara|śārdūla, ruciraṃ me bhaviṣyati!  
 nihatasy' âsya sattvasya jāmbūnadamaya|tvaci  
 śaṣpa|br̥ṣyām̄ vinitāyām̄ icchāmy aham upāsitum.

41.20 kāmā|vṛttam̄ idaṃ raudraṃ strīṇām̄ a|sadṛśaṃ matam  
 vapuṣā tv asya sattvasya vismayo janito mama!  
 tena kāñcana|romṇā tu maṇi|pravara|śṛṅgiṇā  
 taruṇ'āditya|varṇena nakṣatra|patha|varcasā  
 babhūva Rāghvasy' âpi mano vismayam̄ āgatam̄.»

evaṃ Sītā|vacāḥ śrutvā dr̥ṣtvā ca mṛgam̄ adbhutam  
 uvāca Rāghavo hr̥ṣṭo bhrātaraṃ Lakṣmaṇam̄ vacāḥ:

But never before have we seen an animal such as this, your majesty, none so brilliant, tame, and radiant as this magnificent deer. His body sparkles with different colors and is speckled with chips of precious stones; he illuminates the entire forest, shining like the hare-marked moon. What coloring, what beauty, what sweet sounds he makes. He has utterly stolen my heart away, this amazing, sparkling deer.

If you can catch him alive the deer will be a thing to marvel at, a source of wonder. And when our sojourn in the forest has ended and we are back in the kingdom once again, this deer will adorn the women's quarters. The heavenly form of this deer will be a source of wonder for Bharata, my brother-in-law, and for my mothers-in-law as well, my lord. 41.15

But if you cannot catch the splendid deer alive, tiger among men, then his hide would be a source of great pleasure to me. Were the creature to be killed, I should like his golden skin to be stretched over a cushion of straw, to make a seat. You might think it willful, heartless, or unladylike of me, but I am so filled with wonder at the beauty of this creature. Even the mind of Rághava is lost in wonder at the sight of him; with his golden hide and horns of precious gems, he shows all the brilliance of the morning sun, all the luster of the starry heavens." 41.20

When Rághava heard these words of Sita's and looked at the amazing deer, he addressed his brother Lákshmana in delight:

«paśya, Lakṣmaṇa, Vaidehyāḥ spr̥hāṃ mṛga|gatām imām,  
rūpa|śreṣṭhatayā hy eṣa mṛgo 'dya na bhaviṣyati.  
na vane Nandan'|ôddeśe na Caitraratha|saṃśraye  
kutaḥ pṛthivyāṃ, Saumitre, yo 'sya kaś cit samo mṛgaḥ!

41.25 pratilom'|ānulomās ca rucirā roma|rājayaḥ  
śobhante mṛgam āsritya citrāḥ kanaka|bindubhiḥ.  
paśy' āsya jṛmbhamāṇasya dīptām agni|śikh" |ôpamām  
jihvām mukhān niḥsarantīm meghād iva śata|hradām.  
masāra|galvarka|mukhaḥ śaṅkha|muktā|nibh'|ôdaraḥ.  
kasya nām' ānirūpyo 'sau na mano lobhayen mṛgaḥ?  
kasya rūpam idaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā jāmbūnadamaya|prabham  
nānā|ratnamayaṃ divyaṃ na mano vismayam vrajet?

māṃsa|hetor api mṛgān vihar'|ârthaṃ ca dhanvinaḥ  
ghnanti, Lakṣmaṇa, rājāno mṛgayāyām mahā|vane.

41.30 dhanāni vyavasāyena vicīyante mahā|vane  
dhātavo vividhās c' âpi maṇi|ratna|suvarṇinaḥ.  
tat|sāram akhilaṃ nīṇām dhanam nicaya|vardhanam  
manasā cintitaṃ sarvaṃ yathā Śukrasya, Lakṣmaṇa.  
arthī yen' ârtha|kṛtyena saṃvrajaty a|vicārayan  
tam artham artha|śāstrajñāḥ prāhur arthyāś ca, Lakṣmaṇa.

etasya mṛga|ratnasya par'|ârdhye kāñcana|tvaci  
upavekṣyati Vaidehī mayā saha su|madhyamā.  
'na kādalī na priyakī na praveṇī na c' âvikī  
bhaved etasya sadṛśī sparśanen' êti' me matiḥ.

41.35 eṣa c' âiva mṛgaḥ śrīmān yaś ca divyo nabhaś|caraḥ

“Just see how Vaidéhi longs to have this deer, Lákshmana. Because of his surpassing beauty he shall die today. Not in the renowned forest of Nándana, nor in famous Caitra-ratha, let alone on earth, Saumítri, is any such deer to be found.

The lovely patterns on the deer's pelt, both with the nap and against it, are brilliantly flecked with chips of gold. Look how when he yawns his gleaming, flamelike tongue darts from his mouth like lightning from a cloud. His face gleams with sapphire and crystal, his belly glows with conch shell and pearl. Indeed, this indescribable deer could beguile the heart of anyone. Anyone would be lost in wonder to see this heavenly form fashioned of every precious stone, glittering like gold. 41.25

Both for meat and sport, Lákshmana, kings armed with bows go hunting and kill animals in the deep forest. In the deep forests they gather riches with determination, precious metals of all sorts, veined with gems and gold. But here is all the wealth a man could ask for, Lákshmana, riches enough to swell his coffers, just as Shukra's coffers come to be swelled with all the wealth men dream of. Those who know the theory behind material success and those who achieve it, Lákshmana, say a man in want of something should go and get it without hesitation. 41.30

Yes, fair-waisted Vaidéhi shall seat herself next to me upon the precious golden hide of this rare deer. There is no hide, I should think—antelope's or gazelle's, goat's or ewe's—that could be so soft to the touch. This majestic deer and the heavenly deer that roams the sky are both of 41.35

ubhāv etau mṛgau divyau tārā|mṛga|mahī|mṛgau.

yadi v” āyaṃ tathā yan māṃ bhaved vadasi, Lakṣmaṇa,  
 ‘māy” âiṣā rākṣasasy’ êti,› kartavyo ’sya vadho mayā.

etena hi nṛśaṃsena Mārīcen’ â|kṛt’|ātmanā

vane vicaratā pūrvam hiṃsitā muni|pumgavāḥ.

utthāya bahavo yena mṛgayāyāṃ jan’|ādhipāḥ

nihatāḥ param’|êṣvāsās tasmād vadhyas tv ayaṃ mṛgaḥ.

purastād iha Vātāpiḥ paribhūya tapasvinaḥ  
 udarastho dvijān hanti sva|garbho ’śvatarīm iva.

41.40 sa kadā cic cirāl loke āsāsāda mahā|munim

Agastyam tejasā yuktaṃ bhakṣyas tasya babhūva ha.

samutthāne ca tad rūpaṃ kartu|kāmaṃ samikṣya tam

utsmayitvā tu bhagavān Vātāpim idam abravīt:

‘tvay” â|vigāṇya, Vātāpe, paribhūtās ca tejasā

jīva|loke dvija|śreṣṭhās tasmād asi jarāṃ gataḥ.›

evaṃ tan na bhaved rakṣo Vātāpir iva, Lakṣmaṇa,

mad|vidham yo ’timanyeta dharmā|nityaṃ jit’|êndriyam.

bhavedd hato ’yaṃ Vātāpir Agastyen’ êva mā gataḥ.

iha tvam bhava saṃnaddho, yantrito rakṣa Maithilīm,

41.45 asyām āyattam asmākaṃ yat kṛtyaṃ, Raghu|nandana.

aham enaṃ vadhiṣyāmi grahīṣyāmy athavā mṛgam,

yāvad gacchāmi, Saumitre, mṛgam ānayituṃ drutam.

paśya, Lakṣmaṇa, Vaidehīm mṛga|tvaci gata|spṛhām!

tvacā pradhānayā hy eṣa mṛgo ’dya na bhaviṣyati.

them heavenly—that deer of the stars and this deer of the earth.

Then again, if it turns out to be ‘the magic of that *rákshasa*,’ as you tell me, Lákshmana, then it is my duty to slay him. For the savage, impious Marícha used to roam the forests injuring the bulls among sages. He has killed many a king and expert bowman out hunting, and so this deer, if it be he, must be slain.

Once upon a time Vatápi lived in this place. He had utter contempt for ascetic brahmans and would kill them from within their stomachs, as her foal will kill a she-mule when it comes to be born. But finally one day he met up with the greatest sage in the world, the mighty Agástya. As usual he had himself served up to him as food. At the conclusion of the feast the holy one perceived that Vatápi was about to assume his true form again. Smiling slyly he said to him: ‘It was reckless of you, Vatápi, to show such mighty contempt to the best twice-born in this mortal world. And for that you are now to be digested.’ Just as happened with Vatápi, Lákshmana, no *rákshasa* can hope to live that treats with scorn someone like me, who is constant in righteousness and self-controlled. Now that he has fallen into my hands I will slay him, just as Agástya slew Vatápi. 41.40

But you must remain here to protect Máithili, armed and on your guard, delight of the Raghus. For our first responsibility is to her. I intend to go at once, Saumítri, and bring back the deer dead or alive. Just see how Vaidéhi longs for the hide of this deer, Lákshmana. And because of his splendid hide the deer shall die today. Stay in the ashram with Sita, Lákshmana, and be on your guard. I intend to 41.45

a|pramattena te bhāvyam āśramasthena Sītayā!  
yāvat pṛṣatam ekena sāyakena nihanmy aham  
hatv' āitac carma ādāya śīghram eṣyāmi, Lakṣmaṇa.  
pradakṣiṇeṇ' āti|balena pakṣiṇā

Jaṭāyuṣā buddhimatā ca, Lakṣmaṇa,  
bhav' ā|pramattaḥ pratigṛhya Maithilīm  
pratikṣaṇaṃ sarvata eva śaṅkitaḥ!»

42.1 TATHĀ TU TAṂ samādiśya bhrātaraṃ Raghu|nandanah  
babandh' āsiṃ mahā|tejā jāmbūnadamaya|tsarum.  
tatas tri|vinataṃ cāpam ādāy' ātma|vibhūṣaṇam  
ābadhya ca kalāpau dvau jagām' ōdagra|vikramaḥ.  
taṃ vañcayāno rāj'|ēndram āpatantaṃ nirīkṣya vai  
babhūv' āntar|hitas trāsāt punaḥ saṃdarśane 'bhavat.  
baddh'|āsir dhanur ādāya pradudrāva yato mṛgaḥ  
taṃ sa paśyati rūpeṇa dyotamānam iv' āgrataḥ.

42.5 avekṣy' āvekṣya dhāvantaṃ dhanuṣ|pāṇir mahā|vane  
ati|vṛttam iṣoḥ pātāl lobhayānaṃ kadā cana.  
śaṅkitaṃ tu samudbhrāntam utpatantaṃ iv' āmbare  
dṛśyamānam a|dṛśyaṃ ca van'|ōddeśeṣu keṣu cit.  
chinn'|ābhair iva saṃvītaṃ śāradaṃ candra|maṇḍalam  
muhūrtād eva dadṛṣe muhur dūrāt prakāśate.  
darśan'|ādarśanen' āiva so 'pākarṣata Rāghavam  
āsīt kruddhas tu Kākutstho vivaśas tena mohitaḥ.  
ath' āvatasthe su|śrāntaś chāyām āśritya śādvale  
mṛgaiḥ parivṛto vanyair a|dūrāt pratyadr̥ṣyata.

kill the dappled deer with my first shot, and afterward skin him and come straight back. With the aid of wise Jatáyus, the capable and all-powerful bird, take care of Máithili. Be on your guard every moment, Lákshmana, and suspicious of everything.”

AFTER INSTRUCTING his brother the mighty prince, delight of the Raghus, strapped on his gold-hilted sword. He then strapped on a pair of quivers and took up his proper ornament—the bow with triple curve—and set off at a rapid pace. The deer spied the lord of kings rushing toward him and he led him on, now timorously hiding, now showing himself again. With sword strapped on and taking up his bow, Rama ran toward the deer, imagining he saw his form shimmering before him. 42.1

At one moment he would spot him running through the deep forest, temptingly near, and would take his bow in hand, only to look once more and find the deer beyond the range of his arrow. In one stretch of forest he came into sight leaping through the air in frightful panic, and then he passed into another stretch and out of sight. Like the disk of the autumn moon veiled in tatters of cloud, he was seen one instant and gone the next. Now appearing, now disappearing, he drew Rághava far away, and helplessly deluded by him Kákutstha flew into a rage. Then the deer halted in exhaustion and withdrew to a shady spot in the meadow, not far away, where Rama spotted him surrounded by other animals of the forest. 42.5

42.10 dr̥ṣṭvā Rāmo mahā|tejās taṃ hantum kṛta|niścayaḥ  
 saṃdhāya su|dr̥ḍhe cāpe vikṛṣya balavad balī.  
 tam eva mṛgam uddīśya jvalantam iva pannagam  
 mumoca jvalitaṃ dīptam astram Brahma|vinirmitam.  
 sa bhṛśaṃ mṛga|rūpasya vinirbhidyā śar'|ōttamaḥ  
 Mārīcasy' āiva hṛdayaṃ bibhed' āśani|saṃnibhaḥ.  
 tāla|mātram ath' ōtpatya nyapatat sa śar'|āturaḥ  
 vyanadad bhairavaṃ nādaṃ dharanyām alpa|jīvitaḥ,  
 mriyamāṇas tu Mārīco jahau tāṃ kṛtrimām tanum.

samprāpta|kālam ājñāya cakāra ca tataḥ svaram  
 sadr̥śaṃ Rāghavasy' āiva: «hā Sīte! Lakṣmaṇ' ēti!» ca.

42.15 tena marmaṇi nirviddhaḥ śareṇ' ān|upamena hi  
 mṛga|rūpaṃ tu tat tyaktvā rākṣasaṃ rūpam ātmanaḥ  
 cakre sa su|mahā|kāyo Mārīco jīvitaṃ tyajan.  
 tato vicitra|keyūraḥ sarv'|ābharaṇa|bhūṣitaḥ  
 hema|mālī mahā|daṃṣṭro rākṣaso 'bhūc char'|āhataḥ.  
 taṃ dr̥ṣṭvā patitaṃ bhūmau rākṣasaṃ ghora|darśanam  
 jagāma manasā Sītāṃ Lakṣmaṇasya vacaḥ smaran.

« hā Sīte! Lakṣmaṇ' ēty!» evam ākruśya tu mahā|svaram  
 mamāra rākṣasaḥ so 'yaṃ śrutvā Sītā kathaṃ bhavet?  
 Lakṣmaṇas' ca mahā|bāhuḥ kām avasthām gamiṣyati?»  
 iti saṃcintya dharm'|ātmā Rāmo hr̥ṣṭa|tanū|ruhaḥ.

42.20 tatra Rāmaṃ bhayaṃ tīvram āviveśa viṣādajam  
 rākṣasaṃ mṛga|rūpaṃ taṃ hatvā śrutvā ca tat|svaram.  
 nihatya pṛṣataṃ c' ānyam māṃsam ādāya Rāghavaḥ  
 tvaramāṇo Janasthānaṃ sasār' ābhimukhas tadā.

Seeing the deer mighty Rama was determined to kill him. 42.10  
 The powerful prince nocked his sturdy bow and drew it back with power. Aiming at the deer he shot a gleaming, flaming arrow fashioned by Brahma that glared like a snake as it darted forth. The supreme arrow penetrated the illusory deer form and like a bolt of lightning pierced the heart, Marícha's heart. The deer leaped high as a palm tree and with a ghastly shriek fell to the ground, tormented by the arrow, his life ebbing away. And as Marícha lay there dying, the shape he had assumed began to disappear.

Knowing the time had come, in Rághava's own voice he cried out, "Oh Sita! Oh Lákshmana!"

Pierced to the quick by an arrow unlike any other, Ma- 42.15  
 rícha once more took on the form of a massive *rákshasa*, giving up the deer form and his life. Struck by the arrow, he became a *rákshasa* once more, with huge fangs, a necklace of gold, sparkling earrings, and every other ornament to adorn him. Seeing that dreadful sight, the *rákshasa* fallen on the ground, Rama thought suddenly of Sita and recalled what Lákshmana had said.

"With his dying breath this *rákshasa* cried out at the top of his voice, 'Oh Sita! Oh Lákshmana!' How will Sita react to hearing this? And great-armed Lákshmana, what will be his state of mind?" As these thoughts came to righteous Rama, the hair on his body bristled with dread. Then Ra- 42.20  
 ma's consternation gave way to a feeling of fear that shot through him with sharp pangs: The deer he had slain was in fact a *rákshasa*, the voice it had used was his own. He killed another dappled deer and taking the meat hurriedly retraced his steps to Jana-sthana.

43.1     ĀRTA|SVARAM tu taṃ bhartur vijñāya sadṛśaṃ vane  
 uvāca Lakṣmaṇaṃ Sītā «gaccha, jānīhi Rāghavam!  
 na hi me jīvitaṃ sthāne hṛdayaṃ v” âvatiṣṭhate  
 krośataḥ param’|ārtasya śrutaḥ śabda mayā bhṛśam.  
 ākranda mānaṃ tu vane bhrātaraṃ trātum arhasi  
 taṃ kṣipram abhidhāva tvam bhrātaraṃ śaraṇ’|âiṣiṇam!  
 rakṣasāṃ vaśam āpannaṃ, siṃhānām iva go|vr̥ṣam.»  
 na jagāma tath”|ôktas tu bhrātur ajñāya śāsanam.

43.5     tam uvāca tatas tatra kupitā Janak’|ātmaajā:  
 «Saumitre, mitra|rūpeṇa bhrātus tvam asi śatruvat  
 yas tvam asyām avasthāyāṃ bhrātaraṃ n’ âbhipadyase,  
 icchasi tvam vinaśyantaṃ Rāmaṃ, Lakṣmaṇa, mat|kṛte.  
 vyasanaṃ te priyaṃ manye sneho bhrātari n’ âsti te  
 tena tiṣṭhasi visrabdhas tam a|paśyan mahā|dyutim.  
 kiṃ hi saṃśayam āpanne tasminn iha mayā bhavet  
 kartavyam iha tiṣṭhantya yat pradhānas tvam āgataḥ?»

iti bruvāṇaṃ Vaidehīm bāṣpa|śoka|pariplutām  
 abravīl Lakṣmaṇas trastaṃ Sītāṃ mṛga|vadhūm iva:

43.10    «devi, deva|manuṣyeṣu gandharveṣu patatriṣu  
 rākṣaseṣu piśāceṣu kiṃnareṣu mṛgeṣu ca  
 dānaveṣu ca ghoreṣu na sa vidyeta, śobhane,  
 yo Rāmaṃ pratiyudhyeta samare Vāsav’|ôpamam!  
 a|vadhyaḥ samare Rāmo. n’ âivaṃ tvam vaktum arhasi!  
 na tvām asmin vane hātum utsahe Rāghavaṃ vinā.

NOW, WHEN SITA heard that cry of distress, in her husband's own voice, coming from the forest, she said to Lákshmana, "Go and find out what has happened to Rághava. My heart—my very life—is jarred from its place by the sound of his crying in deep distress that I heard so clearly. You must rescue your brother, who cries out in the forest. Run to your brother at once, for he needs help! The *rákshasas* have him in their power, like a bull fallen among lions." So she spoke, but Lákshmana, heeding his brother's command, did not go. 43.1

Then the daughter of Jánaka angrily said to him, "You wear the guise of a friend to your brother, Saumítri, but act like his foe, refusing to aid him in his extremity. You hope Rama perishes, Lákshmana, isn't that so? And it is all because of me. I think you would be happy should some disaster befall your brother. You have no real affection for him, so you stand there calmly with the splendid prince gone from sight. For with him in danger and me here, how could I prevent what you came here with the sole intention of doing?" 43.5

So Sita, princess of Vidéha, spoke, overwhelmed with tears and grief, and Lákshmana replied to her as she stood there frightened as a doe.

"My lady, there is no one, god or man, *gandhárva*, great bird, or *rákshasa*, *pishácha*, *kinnara*, beast, or dreaded *dánava*—no one, fair lady, who could match Rama, the peer of Vása, in battle. Rama cannot be killed in battle. You must not talk this way, for I dare not leave you in the forest with Rághava gone. His power cannot be withstood, not by any powers however vast, not by all three worlds up in 43.10

a|nivāryaṃ balaṃ tasya balair balavatām api  
tribhir lokaiḥ samudyuktaiḥ s' ēśvaraiḥ sāmarair api.  
hrdayaṃ nirvṛtaṃ te 'stu saṃtāpas tyajyatām ayam,  
āgamiṣyati te bhartā śīghraṃ hatvā mṛg'ḥottamam!

43.15 na sa tasya svaro vyaktaṃ na kaś cid api daivataḥ  
gandharva|nagara|prakhyā māyā sā tasya rakṣasaḥ.  
nyāsa|bhūt" āsi, Vaidehi, nyastā mayi mah"ātmanā  
Rāmeṇa tvam, var'ārohe, na tvāṃ tyaktum ih' ḥtsahe.  
kṛta|vairās ca, kalyāṇi, vayam etair niśā|caraiḥ  
Kharasya nidhane, devi, Janasthāna|vadhaṃ prati.  
rākṣasā vividhā vāco visrjanti mahā|vane  
hiṃsā|vihārā, Vaidehi, na cintayitum arhasi!»

Lakṣmaṇen' āivam uktā tu kruddhā saṃrakta|locanā  
abravīt paruṣaṃ vākyaṃ Lakṣmaṇaṃ satya|vādinam:

43.20 «an|ārya, karuṇ'ārambha, nṛśaṃsa, kula|pāṃsana!  
ahaṃ tava priyaṃ manye ten' āitāni prabhāṣase!  
n' āitac citraṃ sapatneṣu pāpaṃ, Lakṣmaṇa, yad bhavet  
tvad|vidheṣu nṛśaṃseṣu nityaṃ pracchanna|cāriṣu!  
su|duṣṭas tvam vane Rāmam ekam eko 'nugacchasi  
mama hetoḥ praticchannaḥ prayukto Bharatena vā.  
katham indīvara|śyāmaṃ Rāmaṃ padma|nibh'ēkṣaṇam  
upasaṃśritya bhartāraṃ kāmayeyaṃ pṛthagjanam?  
samakṣaṃ tava, Saumitre, prānāṃs tyakṣye na saṃśayaḥ  
Rāmaṃ vinā kṣaṇam api na hi jīvāmi bhū|tale.»

43.25 ity uктаḥ paruṣaṃ vākyaṃ Sītayā roma|harṣaṇam  
abravīl Lakṣmaṇaḥ Sītāṃ prāñjalir vijit'ēndriyaḥ:

arms, or the deathless gods themselves, their lord included. Let your heart rest easy, do not be alarmed. Your husband will soon return, after killing that splendid deer.

That was clearly not his voice, or any belonging to a god. 43.15  
It was the magic of that *rākshasa*, unreal as a mirage. You were entrusted to my safekeeping, shapely Vaidéhi, by the great Rama. I dare not leave you here alone. Then too, dear lady, because of the slaughter at Jana-sthana, where Khara perished, we have earned the hostility of the nightstalkers. *Rākshasas* delight in causing trouble, Vaidéhi, they make all kinds of noises in the deep forest. You need not worry.”

Though what he said was true, Sita was enraged by Lákshmana's words. Her eyes blazed bright red as she made this harsh reply: “Ignoble, cruel man, disgrace to your House! 43.20  
How pitiful this attempt of yours. I feel certain you are pleased with all this, and that is why you can talk the way you do. It is nothing new, Lákshmana, for rivals to be so evil, cruel rivals like you always plotting in secret. You treacherously followed Rama to the forest, the two of you alone: You are either in the employ of Bharata or secretly plotting to get me. I am married to Rama, a husband dark as a lotus, with eyes like lotus petals. How could I ever give my love to some ordinary man? I would not hesitate to take my life before your very eyes, Saumítri, for I could not live upon this earth one moment without Rama.”

Such were the words Sita spoke to Lákshmana, so harsh 43.25  
they made his hair bristle with horror. But he controlled himself, and with hands cupped in reverence he addressed her:

«uttaraṃ n' ôtsahe vaktuṃ daivataṃ bhavatī mama.  
vākyam a|pratirūpaṃ tu na citraṃ strīṣu, Maithili.  
svabhāvas tv eṣa nārīṇām eṣu lokeṣu dṛṣyate  
vimukta|dharmās capalās tīkṣṇā bheda|karāḥ striyaḥ.  
upaśṛṅvantu me sarve sākṣi|bhūtā vane|carāḥ  
nyāya|vādī yathā vākyam ukto 'haṃ paruṣaṃ tvayā.  
dhik tvām, adya praṇāśya tvaṃ yan mām evaṃ viśaṅkase!  
strītvād duṣṭa|svabhāvena guru|vākye vyavasthitam.

43.30 gamiṣye yatra Kākutsthaḥ, svasti te 'stu, var'|ānane!  
rakṣantu tvām, viśāl'|ākṣi, samagrā vana|devatāḥ!  
nimittāni hi ghorāṇi yāni prādur|bhavanti me,  
api tvām saha Rāmeṇa paśyeyaṃ punar āgataḥ!»

Lakṣmaṇen' āivam uktā tu rudatī Janak'|ātmaajā  
pratyuvāca tato vākyam tīvraṃ bāṣpa|pariplutā:

«Godāvarīm pravekṣyāmi vinā Rāmeṇa, Lakṣmaṇa,  
ābandhiṣye 'thavā tyakṣye viṣame deham ātmanaḥ!  
pibāmi vā viṣaṃ tīkṣṇaṃ pravekṣyāmi hut'|āśanam,  
na tv ahaṃ Rāghavād anyam pad'' āpi puruṣaṃ spṛśe!»

43.35 iti Lakṣmaṇam ākruśya Sītā duḥkha|samanvitā  
pāṇibhyām rudatī duḥkhād udaraṃ prajaghāna ha.  
tām ārta|rūpām vīmanā rudantīm

Saumitriṃ ālokya viśāla|netrām  
āśvāsayām āsa na c' āiva bhartus

taṃ bhrātaraṃ kiṃ cid uvāca Sītā.

“I dare not answer, Máithili, for you are a deity in my eyes. And yet inappropriate words from a woman come as nothing new. This is the nature of women the whole world over: Women care nothing for righteousness, they are flighty, sharp-tongued, and divisive. May all the inhabitants of the forest give ear and bear me witness how my words of reason met so harsh a reply from you. Curse you and be damned, that you could so suspect me, when I am only following the orders of my guru. How like a woman to be so perverse! I am going to Kákutstha. I wish you well, fair woman. May the spirits of the forest, each and every one, protect you, large-eyed lady. How ominous the portents that manifest themselves to me! I pray I find you here when I return with Rama.” 43:30

Now, when Lákshmana addressed her in this fashion, Jánaka's daughter began to weep. Overwhelmed with tears she hotly replied:

“Parted from Rama I will drown myself in the Godávári, Lákshmana, I will hang myself or hurl my body upon some rocky place. Or I will drink deadly poison or throw myself into a blazing fire. I would never touch any man but Rághava, not even with my foot!”

Such were the insults Sita hurled at Lákshmana in her sorrow, and sorrowfully she wept and struck her belly with her fists. At the sight of large-eyed Sita so deeply anguished and weeping, Saumítri was beside himself and tried to comfort her, but she would say nothing more to her husband's brother. Then, cupping his hands in reverence and bowing 43:35

tatas tu Sītām abhivādyā Lakṣmaṇaḥ  
 kṛt'āñjaliḥ kiṃ cid abhipraṇamya  
 avekṣamāṇo bahuśaś ca Maithilīm  
 jagāma Rāmasya samīpam ātmavān.

- 44.1 TAYĀ PARUṢAM uktas tu kupito Rāghav'ānujaḥ  
 sa vikāṅkṣan bhṛśaṃ Rāmaṃ pratasthe na|cirād iva.  
 tad" āsādyā Daśagrīvaḥ kṣipram antaram āsthitaḥ  
 abhicakrāma Vaidehīm parivrājaka|rūpadhṛk.  
 ślakṣṇa|kāṣāya|saṃvītaḥ śikhī chatrī upānahī  
 vāme c' āṃse 'vasajy' ātha śubhe yaṣṭi|kamaṇḍalū  
 parivrājaka|rūpeṇa Vaidehīm samupāgamat.  
 tām āsasād' ātibalo bhrātr̥bhyāṃ rahitāṃ vane,  
 rahitāṃ sūrya|candrābhyāṃ saṃdhyām iva mahat|tamaḥ.
- 44.5 tām apaśyat tato bālāṃ rāja|putrīm yaśasvinīm,  
 Rohiṇīm śaśinā hīnāṃ grahavad bhṛśa|dāruṇaḥ.  
 tam ugraṃ pāpa|karmāṇaṃ Janasthāna|ruhā drumāḥ  
 samīkṣya na prakampante na pravāti ca mārutaḥ.  
 śīghra|srotās ca taṃ dṛṣṭvā vīkṣantaṃ rakta|locanam  
 stimitaṃ gantum ārebhe bhayād Godāvarī nadī.  
 Rāmasya tv antaraṃ prepsur daśa|grīvas tad|antare  
 upatasthe ca Vaidehīm bhikṣu|rūpeṇa Rāvaṇaḥ.  
 a|bhavyo bhavya|rūpeṇa bhartāram anuśocatīm  
 abhyavartata Vaidehīm, Citrām iva Śanaiś|caraḥ.
- 44.10 sa pāpo bhavya|rūpeṇa tṛṇaiḥ kūpa iv' āvṛtaḥ  
 atiṣṭhat prekṣya Vaidehīm Rāma|patnīm. yaśasvinīm  
 śubhāṃ rucira|dant'ōṣṭhīm pūrṇa|candra|nibh'ānanām

slightly, Lákshmana, the self-respecting prince, said good-bye to Sita. And as he set forth to find Rama, he turned around again and again and looked back at Máithili.

RÁGHAVA'S YOUNGER brother, angered by her harsh words and sorely longing for Rama, set forth without further delay. This was the opening ten-necked Rávana had been waiting for, and he took advantage of it at once. Assuming the guise of a wandering mendicant, he turned his steps toward Vaidéhi. Clad in a soft saffron robe, with topknot, parasol, and sandals, and goodly staff and water pitcher hanging at his left shoulder—disguised like this, as a mendicant—he approached Vaidéhi. Both brothers had left her, and in his pride of power he advanced upon her, like total darkness advancing upon the twilight, when both sun and moon have left. He gazed at the glorious young princess as ominously as a planet might gaze upon the star Róhini when the hare-marked moon is absent. At the appearance of the dreaded, evil creature, the trees that grew in Jana-sthana stopped rustling and the wind died down. At the sight of him peering around with his blood-red eyes, the swift current of the Godávári river began to slacken in fear. Ten-necked Rávana had waited for an opening, and Rama had given him one. In the guise of a beggar he drew near to Vaidéhi. 44.1

As Vaidéhi sat grieving for her husband, the unholy Rávana in the guise of a holy man edged closer to her, like the sluggish planet, Saturn, closing in on Chitra, the sparkling star. Like a deep well concealed by grass, the evil one in the guise of a holy man stood watching Vaidéhi, illustrious wife of Rama—the beautiful woman with lovely teeth 44.10

āsīnām parṇa|śālāyām bāṣpa|śok'|ābhīpīḍitām.  
 sa tām padma|palās'|ākṣīm pīta|kauśeya|vāsīnīm  
 abhyagacchata Vaidehīm duṣṭa|cetā niśā|caraḥ.  
 sa Manmatha|śar'|āviṣṭo brahma|ghoṣam udīrayan  
 abravīt praśritaṃ vākyaṃ rahite rākṣas'|ādhipaḥ.  
 tām uttamām tri|lokānām padma|hīnām iva śriyam  
 vibhrājamānām vapuṣā Rāvaṇaḥ praśaśaṃsa ha.

44.15 «kā tvaṃ, kāñcana|varṇ'|ābhe, pīta|kauśeya|vāsīni,  
 kamalānām śubhām mālām padmin” īva ca bibhratī?  
 Hrīḥ Śrīḥ Kīrtiḥ śubhā Lakṣmīr apsarā vā, śubh'|ānane,  
 Bhūtīr vā tvaṃ, var'|ārohe, Ratīr vā svaira|cārīṇī?

samāḥ śikhariṇaḥ snigdhaḥ pāṇḍurā daśanās tava,  
 viśāle vimale netre rakt'|ānte kṛṣṇa|tārake.

viśālaṃ jaghanaṃ pīnam ūrū kari|kar'|ōpamau  
 etāv upacitau vṛttau sahītau sampragalbhitau.  
 pīn'|ōnnata|mukhau kāntau snigdha|tāla|phal'|ōpamau  
 maṇi|pravek'|ābharaṇau rucirau te payo|dharau.

44.20 cāru|smite, cāru|dati, cāru|netre, vilāsīni,  
 mano harasi me, rāme, nadī kūlam iv' āmbhasā!  
 kar'|ānta|mita|madhy” āsi su|keśī saṃhata|stanī.  
 n' āiva devī na gandharvī na yakṣī na ca kiṃnarī  
 rūpam agryaṃ ca lokeṣu saukumāryaṃ vayaś ca te  
 n' āivaṃ|rūpā mayā nārī dṛṣṭa|pūrvā mahī|tale!

and lips, and a face like the full moon—as she sat in the leaf hut tormented with grief and tears. The blackhearted stalker of the night stole ever closer to Vaidéhi, the woman dressed in garments of yellow silk, and with eyes like lotus petals. With arrows of Mánmatha, god of love, lodged deep within his heart, and the sounds of the *rákshasas vedas* on his lips, the overlord of appeared before the deserted hut and courteously spoke. Rávana began singing her praises, that loveliest of women in the three worlds, a radiant beauty, like the goddess Shri herself without the lotus.

“Who are you, golden woman dressed in garments of yellow silk, wearing a lovely lotus garland, and like a lotus pond yourself? Are you the goddess Modesty or Fame? Are you Shri or lovely Lakshmi or perhaps an *ápsaras*, lovely lady? Could you be Prosperity, shapely woman, or easygoing Pleasure? 44.15

Your teeth are bright white, tapered, and even; your eyes are large and clear, rosy at the corner, black in the center. Your hips are full and broad, your thighs smooth as an elephant's trunk. And these, your delightful breasts, how round they are, so firm and gently heaving; how full and lovely, smooth as two palm fruits, with their nipples standing stiff and the rarest gems to adorn them. Graceful lady with your lovely smile, lovely teeth, and lovely eyes, you have swept my heart away like a river in flood that sweeps away its banks. Your waist I could compass with my fingers; how fine is your hair, how firm your breasts. No goddess, no *gandhárva* woman, no *yaksha* or *kinnara* woman, no mortal woman so beautiful have I ever seen before on the face of this earth. Your beauty, unrivaled in all the worlds, your 44.20

iha vāsaś ca kāntāre cittam unmāthayanti me.

sā pratikrāma, bhadrām te, na tvam vastum ih' ārhasi:  
rākṣasānām ayaṃ vāso ghorāṇām kāma|rūpiṇām.  
prāsād'āgryāṇi ramyāṇi nagar'ōpavanāni ca  
sampannāni su|gandhīni yuktāny ācaritum tvayā.

44.25 varam mālyam varam pānam varam vastram ca, śobhane,  
bhartāram ca varam manye tvad|yuktam, asit'ēkṣaṇe!

kā tvam bhavasi Rudrāṇām Marutām vā, śuci|smite,  
Vasūnām vā, var'ārohe? devatā pratibhāsi me!  
n' ēha gacchanti gandharvā na devā na ca kiṃnarāḥ  
rākṣasānām ayaṃ vāsaḥ, katham nu tvam ih' āgatā?

iha śākhā|mṛgāḥ siṃhā dvīpi|vyāghra|mṛgās tathā  
rṁkṣās tarakṣavaḥ kaṅkāḥ; katham tebhyo na bibhyase?  
mad'ānvitānām ghorāṇām kuñjarāṇām tarasvinām,  
katham ekā mah'āraṇye na bibheṣi, van'ānane?

44.30 k' āsi? kasya? kutaś ca tvam? kiṃ|nimittam ca Daṇḍakān  
ekā carasi, kalyāṇi, ghorān rākṣasa|sevitān?»

iti prasastā Vaidehī Rāvaṇena dur|ātmanā  
dvijāti|veṣeṇa hi tam drṣṭvā Rāvaṇam āgatam  
sarvair atithi|satkāraiḥ pūjayām āsa Maithilī.  
upānīy' āsanam pūrvaṃ pādyen' ābhinimantrya ca  
abravīt «siddham» ity eva tadā tam saumya|darśanam.  
dvijāti|veṣeṇa samīkṣya Maithilī

delicacy and youth, and the fact of your living here in the woods stir the deepest feelings in me.

I urge you to go home, this is no place for you to be living. For this is the lair of dreaded *rákshasas*, who can change their form at will. In the most delightful palaces, in luxuriant, fragrant city gardens is where you should be strolling. To my mind you deserve the finest garlands and beverages and raiment, and the finest husband, lovely black-eyed lady. 44.25

Could you be one of the Rudras or Maruts, sweet-smiling, shapely woman, or one of the Vasus, perhaps? You look like a goddess to me. But *gandhárvas* do not pass this way, nor do gods or *kínnaras*, for this is the lair of *rákshasas*. How is it you have come here?

There are monkeys here, lions, panthers, and tigers, apes, hyenas, and flesh-eating birds. How is it you do not fear them? And the dreaded elephants that go running wild, maddened by rut—how is it you do not fear them, lovely lady, all alone in the deep wilderness? Who are you, to whom do you belong, where do you come from, my precious, and why are you wandering all alone through Dándaka, the haunt of dreaded *rákshasas*?” 44.30

Such was the praise evil Rávana lavished on Vaidéhi. But seeing he had come in the garb of a brahman, Máithili honored him with all the acts of hospitality due a guest. First she brought forward a cushion and offered water for his feet, and then she called him when food was ready, for he looked kindly enough. When Máithili observed that he had come in the garb of a twice-born—a brahman with a begging bowl and saffron robe; when she saw these accoutrements,

tam āgatam pātra|kusumbha|dhāriṇam  
a|śakyam uddveṣṭum upāya|darśanān  
nyamantrayad brāhmaṇavad yath”|āgatam.

«iyam bṛsī, brāhmaṇa, kāmam āsyatām  
idaṃ ca pādyam pratigr̥hyatām iti,  
idaṃ ca siddham vanajātam uttamam  
tvad|artham a|vyagram ih’ ôpabhujyatām!»

44.35 nimantryamāṇaḥ pratipūrṇa|bhāṣiṇīm  
nar’|ēndra|patnīm prasamīkṣya Maithilīm  
prasahya tasyā haraṇe dhṛtaṃ manah  
samarpayām āsa vadhāya Rāvaṇaḥ.  
tataḥ su|veṣam mṛgayā|gatam patim  
pratīkṣamāṇā saha|Lakṣmaṇam tadā  
nirīkṣamāṇā haritaṃ dadarśa tan  
mahad vanaṃ n’ āiva tu Rāma| Lakṣmaṇau.

45.1 RĀVAṆENA TU Vaidehī tadā pṛṣṭā jihīrṣuṇā  
parivrājaka|rūpeṇa śaśams’ ātmānam ātmanā.  
«brāhmaṇas’ c’ ātithis’ c’ āiṣa, an|ukto hi śapeta mām!»  
iti dhyātvā muhūrtaṃ tu Sītā vacanam abravīt:  
«duhitā Janakasy’ āham Maithilasya mah”|ātmanah  
Sītā nāmn” āsmi, bhadraṃ te, Rāma|bhāryā, dvij’|ôttama.  
saṃvatsaram’ c’ ādhyuṣitā Rāghavasya niveśane  
bhuñjānā mānuṣān bhogān sarva|kāma|saṃṛddhinī.  
45.5 tataḥ saṃvatsarād ūrdhvaṃ samamanyata me patim  
abhiṣecayituṃ Rāmaṃ sameto rāja|mantribhiḥ.  
tasmin sambhriyamāṇe tu Rāghavasy’ ābhiṣecane  
Kaikeyī nāma bhartāraṃ mam’ āryā yācate varam.  
pratigr̥hya tu Kaikeyī śvaśuraṃ su|kṛtena me  
mama pravrajanaṃ bhartur, Bharatasy’ ābhiṣecanam

it was impossible to refuse him, and so she extended him an invitation befitting a brahman.

“Here is a cushion, brahman, please be seated and accept this water for your feet. Here I have made ready for you the best fare the forest has to offer. You may partake of it freely.”

So Máithili extended him a cordial invitation, and as Rávana gazed at her, the wife of the lord of men, he confirmed his resolve to take her by force, and with that, consigned himself to death. Her husband in his honest garb had gone to hunt the magic deer, and she waited for him and Lákshmana, scanning the horizon. But she saw neither Rama nor Lákshmana—only the deep, green forest. 44-35

WHEN RÁVANA CAME in the guise of a mendicant to carry off Vaidéhi, he had first put some questions to her. Of her own accord she now began to tell her story. For Sita had thought a moment: “He is a brahman and my guest. If I do not reply he will curse me.” She then spoke these words: 45.1

“I am the daughter of Jánaka, the great king of Míthila. My name is Sita, may it please the best of twice-born, and I am the wife of Rama. For twelve years I lived in the house of Rághava, enjoying such pleasures as mortals enjoy. I had all I could desire. Then, in the thirteenth year, the king in concert with his kingly counselors approved the royal consecration of my husband. But just as the preparations for Rághava's consecration were under way, a mother-in-law of mine named Kaikéyi asked her husband for a boon. You see, Kaikéyi had already married my father-in-law for a consideration. So she had two things she now could ask of her husband, the best of kings and a man who always kept 45.5



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The third of the seven books of the RAMÁYANA, “The Forest” carries forward the epic’s narrative. The exiled hero Rama, his wife and his brother continue their wanderings, until Sita is abducted and the search for her begins.

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