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**THE
JASMINE GARLAND
(KUNDAMĀLĀ)**

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PANJAB UNIVERSITY ORIENTAL PUBLICATIONS, No. 27

THE
JASMINE GARLAND
(KUNDAMĀLĀ)

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

A. C. WOOLNER

C.I.E., M.A. (OXON.), HON. D.LITT. (PANJAB),

F.A.S.B., OFFICIER D'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE ;

*Principal, Oriental College, Lahore ; Vice-Chancellor
of the University of the Panjab*

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN the *Kundamālā* (Jasmine Garland) was first published¹ in 1923 from newly discovered manuscripts the fact that the play was ascribed to Diñnāga gave rise to the idea that it belonged to the time of Kālidāsa.

If that claim to antiquity could be substantiated there would obviously be very good reasons for the most careful study of the language of this text, of its style and spirit.

The recovery of a play by a famous poet, whose works have otherwise been completely lost, naturally appeals to the imagination more than the finding of a play by some obscure poet otherwise unknown. Yet in judging the evidence the 'will to believe' should not obscure the critical faculty.

Some writers have hailed this little play as the long-lost child of a great poet Diñnāga, whom they believe to have been a rival of Kālidāsa. Unfortunately, closer examination has shown that there are no cogent reasons for assigning this work to such an early date. On the other hand, there are general considerations which indicate that the play is later than Bhavabhūti, who has been placed at the end of the seventh century A.D.

AUTHOR'S NAME. There is a doubt regarding the author's name. The two Tanjore manuscripts give the name as DHIRANĀGA of ANUPARADHA, while both the Mysore manuscripts state (in the Prologue) that the play was composed by DIÑNĀGA of ARARĀLAPURA. Neither version of the name of his home has been identified. It has been suggested that both are incorrect and represent Anurādhapura, the only known place of that name being the famous old capital of Ceylon. Dhīranāga is otherwise unknown.² The name Diñnāga is familiar (a) as the name of a Buddhist philosopher, said to have

¹ *Dakṣiṇa-bhārati-grantha-mālā* Series, No. 2, edited by M. Ramkrishna Kavi, M.A., and S. K. Ramanatha Shastrī. Madras, 1923.

² A Dhīranāga, styled Bhavanta, is mentioned in the *Suktimuktārāṇi* (Veda Vyasa and Bhauṇa).

lived in the fifth century A.D., and (b) as the name of a poet mentioned by commentators on the *Meghadūta* as a contemporary of Kālidāsa.

If the author's real name was Dhīranāga one can conceive that the more familiar name may have been inserted in some manuscripts or even adopted by the poet himself for literary purposes. On the other hand, if Dīnnāga was his real name, there is no obvious explanation why it should be replaced by Dhīranāga.¹

DATE. Clearly no secure argument can be based on the AUTHOR'S NAME. Even if his real name be Dīnnāga, that tells us nothing unless we venture to identify him with a Dīnnāga known from other sources.

The first editors boldly identified our author both with the famous Buddhist logician and with Kālidāsa's alleged rival.

Mr. Veda Vyasa and Prof. Saran Das Bhanot in their introduction² show that the author was not a Buddhist, for he invokes Gaṇeśa and Śiva's matted hair, and therefore cannot be Dīnnāga the logician. They think, however, he was the rival of Kālidāsa supposed to be alluded to in verse 14 of the *Meghadūta*.

This matter has two aspects, (a) the interpretation of that verse, and (b) the literary tradition of a poet Dīnnāga.

(a) The cloud is bidden to rise *sthānād asmāt sarasa-niculād*, 'from this place abounding in wet reeds', and to face North *dīnnūgūnām pathi pariharan sthūlahastāvalepān*, 'avoiding on the way the blows of the massive trunks of the elephants of the quarters'.

The commentator Dakṣiṇāvartanātha (dated c. A.D. 1100) tells us that the word *nicula*, 'reed', is intended to signify a certain poet who got the name of Nicula, 'Reed', because of a verse he wrote about a reed that moves with the current and

¹ One MS. of Vallabhadeva's *Subhaṣi'āvali* is said to ascribe the second verse of the *Kundamālā* to Dīnnāga, but we are not told the date of this MS., which differs from the printed edition.

² *Kundamālā of Dīnnāga*, edited with a

Sanskrit commentary by Jai Chand Shastri, M.A., M.O.L., and translated into English with introduction, critical notes, &c., by Veda Vyasa, M.A., LL.B., and S. D. Bhanot, M.A., the Punjab Sanskrit Book Depot, Lahore, 1932.

saves itself from the violence of the stream. And by the word *sarasa*, the commentator explains, Kālidāsa praises that poet's good taste. Similarly by *dinnāgānām* is meant Dinnāgācārya, *sthūla*² being the gestures of his fat hands when condemning Kālidāsa's compositions.

Mallinātha (fourteenth century A.D.), whose commentary is now generally read, makes a similar statement. He speaks of Dinnāgācārya as Kālidāsa's *prtipakṣa*, opponent or critic rather than rival. Vallabhadeva (assigned to the tenth century A.D.), generally regarded as the earliest of surviving commentators,¹ says nothing of the poet 'Reed' or Dinnāgācārya. Scepticism as regards these allusions has been clearly expressed by Prof. A. B. Keith: 'Nor is the *double entendre* at all in Kālidāsa's manner; such efforts are little in harmony with Kālidāsa's age, while later they are precisely what is admitted, and are naturally seen by the commentators where not really intended.'²

(b) There remains the fact that Dakṣiṇāvarta in the twelfth century thought there was an *ācārya* called Dinnāga, who criticized Kālidāsa's works and a poet *kavi*³ named 'Reed' who defended them. Any one who thinks of the actual value of many anecdotes related, e.g., of Firdausi (though the Persians were more accurate as regards dates) is likely to be sceptical of the historicity of traditional details regarding Indian poets. Nothing that we know about such traditions can inspire us with confidence in a statement made about Kālidāsa by a commentator writing six or seven centuries later.

Quotations, as the first editors have shown, have been traced only to the eleventh century apart from the rather doubtful instance of Vallabhadeva's *Subhāṣitāvalī*. The LANGUAGE does not give any indication of antiquity. The manuscripts have certain Southern peculiarities that do not indicate any

¹ Vide edition of *Meghadūta* by Dr. E. Hultzsch, 1911, Preface, p. ix. K. P. Patnak, however, places Vallabhadeva in the twelfth century A.D., vide his edition of *Meghadūta*, second edition 1916, Preface, p. xv, and

following. Even if this is so, Vallabhadeva in Kashmir might preserve the older view.

² Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*, p. 145

³ Mallinātha promotes him to the rank of *mahākavi*.

particular period. Several Prākṛit passages in the text are imperfect, but the Prākṛit has no archaic features.¹

The treatment of the story may be held to indicate a date distinctly later than the *Uttara-Rāmacarita*, but before discussing this we may summarize the action of the play.

The Jasmine Garland is based on the conclusion of the Rāmāyaṇa story, beginning where Lakshmaṇa takes Sītā into banishment and ending with the consecration of her twin sons, Kuśa and Lava as Rāma's heirs. In § 45 of the Uttarakāṇḍa of Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa² Rāma tells his brothers of the talk among the people regarding Sītā and her sojourn in Laṅkā. He orders Lakshmaṇa to take Sītā away to another country next morning.

'On the further shore of the Ganges the high-souled Vālmiki has a hermitage of heavenly beauty resting on the bank of the Tamasa. Leave her in that lonely region, Raghunandana, and quickly return.'

In the next section, 46, Lakshmaṇa obeys these orders. Sītā takes various jewels and costly clothes to give to the female ascetics. Before noon of the second day they reach the Ganges. Lakshmaṇa bursts into tears. Sītā does not understand.

'Why art thou weeping, Lakshmaṇa? Now that I have come to the Ganges' bank as I have desired so long, it is a time for joy; why doest thou cast me down? Thou art always by Rāma's side, thou mighty man. Art thou grieved to be parted from him but two nights? To me too, Lakshmaṇa, is Rāma dearer than my life and I am not grieving; do not thou be so silly. Take me across the Ganges and let me see the ascetics and I will give the clothes and jewels to the sages. Then after saluting them, as is due, and passing one night there, we will return to the city. My heart also is in haste to look on Rāma with his eyes of lotus petal, his broad bosom and slender waist, best of all delightful men.'

So Lakshmaṇa wipes away his tears, sends for the boatmen and takes Sītā across the Ganges.

In § 47 Lakshmaṇa takes Sītā across the Ganges and breaks the news to her that Rāma has decided to put her away because

¹ P. V. Ramanujaswamin Bulletin, Bombay version.
L.S.L., 1933.

of the calumny of the people. He is ordered to leave her near Valmiki's hermitage.

In § 48 Lakshmaṇa receives her pathetic farewell message and leaves her.

'When Janaka's daughter heard those cruel words of Lakshmaṇa she was beset with great sorrow and fell down. For some moments she was senseless, her eyes suffused with tears, and then in piteous tones Sītā spake to Lakshmaṇa. "This body of mine has the Creator made for misery that to-day it seems the very image of woe. What sin have I done in a former life? Whom did I part from his wife that I that am chaste and pure should be abandoned by the king? Formerly I made a pleasure of dwelling in a hermitage, in spite of all discomfort, while I could attend on Rāma. How shall I live in a hermitage parted from my people? And when I am overcome by grief, to whom shall I impart my sorrow? Shall I tell the sages some wrongful deed was done, when they ask me for what cause did the high-souled Rāghava put me away? No, never. Oh Lakshmaṇa, I would fain abandon life this very day in the Ganges' water, but so my husband's royal house would end. Do as thou wert bid, Lakshmaṇa, abandon me, wretched that I am, and fulfil your orders, but listen to this word of mine.'"

Sītā sends salutations to her mothers-in-law and a resigned message to the king. Lakshmaṇa boards the boat and departs.

'And when he came to the other bank weighed down by grief like one that is dazed with pain, he swiftly mounted the car. Again and again turning round as he went along, he saw Sītā wandering helplessly on the further bank. Again and again Sītā gazed at the car and Lakshmaṇa in the distance, and as she saw them go, she shuddered and grief overwhelmed her.'

In § 49 Sītā is discovered by young anchorites and is welcomed by Valmiki to his hermitage. In § 50 Lakshmaṇa, seeing Sītā conducted to the hermitage, discusses the injustice of her banishment with the charioteer Sumantra, who explains it is the work of destiny. Lakshmaṇa returns to Ayodhya. Then for many sections we hear no more about Sītā.

In § 91 Rāma announces his intention of performing a great Horse-sacrifice and orders a spacious sacrificial ground to be prepared on the banks of the Gomati in the Naimiśa forest, and

in the procession of Bharata, citizens, &c., is to be 'the golden image of my wife'.

Eventually to this sacrifice, which lasted for a year, came Vālmiki (§ 93) and his disciples Lava and Kuśa, whom he tells to sing the whole Rāmāyaṇa at the door of Rāma's dwelling. They do so (§ 94), and after listening for many days Rāma understands that the boys are Sītā's sons. Then he sends a message to Vālmiki that if Sītā is sinless and has led a pure life in the forest she should give proof of her purity by taking an oath before the assembly. Next morning (§ 96) everybody assembles and Vālmiki brings in Sītā and swears to her innocence. Sītā makes her declaration (§ 97).

' If I ever even thought of any man but Rāma,
So may the Goddess Earth open up for me.
If I honour Rāma in thought and word and deed,
So may the Goddess Earth open up for me
If these words are true and I know none but Rāma,
So may the Goddess Earth open up for me.'

A miracle took place, the ground opened and a fairy throne arose on the heads of mighty serpents. The Goddess Earth welcomed Sītā, took her in her arms, and placed her on the throne. Slowly Sītā sank into the depths while all creatures gazed in wonderment.

' Some cried out aloud in delight, some pondered in silence; some gazed at Rāma and some at Sītā. When they saw Sītā sink into the earth, they were all united. For a moment the whole world was utterly bewildered.'

Rāma is left alone to grieve (§ 98). In § 107 Rāma determines to consecrate his heirs.

The Jasmine Garland compresses this part of the Rāmāyaṇa story for the purposes of a drama and makes considerable modifications. It begins with the arrival of Lakshmaṇa and Sītā at the Ganges. There is nothing about crossing the river. They get down when the road becomes too difficult for the chariot and Lakshmaṇa leads Sītā along the bank. She is soon tired and Lakshmaṇa tells her she is not to return. She sends

her messages and bids him go. Lakshmaṇa entrusts the Queen to the care of Nature and departs. Vālmiki finds her and takes her to his hermitage. (Act I.)

In a short introductory scene two maidens of the hermitage let us know of the birth of Sītā's twins, that they are learning Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa, and that a great sacrifice is being prepared in the Naimiśa forest.

Sītā in a soliloquy and then in a dialogue with her friend Vedavatī reveals her sorrow, her patience, and the dawning hope of seeing the king once more. (Act II.)

A weary hermit speaking Prakṛit is on his way to Naimiśa. After this short scene Rāma enters with Lakshmaṇa. Rāma is oppressed by grief for the loss of Sītā. Making their way along the shores of the Gomatī¹ they see a jasmine garland washed up by ripples to Rāma's feet. The arrangement of the flowers reminds Rāma of Sītā's skill. Working up the stream they come to Sītā's footprints and so near the hermitage. Sītā is hidden in a bower of creepers and overhears them talking of herself. She replies to some of Rāma's lines, being inaudible to him, and after a little while creeps away to the hermitage. A sage brings an invitation from Vālmiki. (Act III.)

Vedavatī and another girl let us know that the nymph Tilottama has come to the hermitage to test Rāma's feelings by assuming the form of Sītā. The king's retinue has evidently arrived, for we learn that the Jester overhears the ladies talking. Moreover, they tell us Vālmiki has ordained that, now the king is staying in the neighbourhood, women by the pool shall be invisible. Since then Sītā has spent the whole day on the bank of that pool. Sītā enters wearing her celestial mantle. Rāma enters conversing with the sage Kaṇva. When Rāma is left alone he sees the *reflection* of Sītā in the pool, though she herself is invisible. Failing to find the original of the reflection Rāma faints and Sītā goes round to him. When he

¹ According to Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa the hermitage on the Gomatī where Lakshmaṇa and Sītā stayed the first night was half a day's drive from the Ganges' bank opposite to Vālmiki's hermitage on the Tamasa.

Perhaps this confusion is due to a South Indian poet unfamiliar with the rivers of the Ganges' basin. Or it is simply a confusion between Vālmiki's hermitage and the site of the sacrifice.

recovers she moves away and we have a dialogue in which Rāma cannot hear what Sītā says.¹ A second time he faints and she, still invisible, fans him with the edge of her mantle. He snatches this mantle, which then becomes visible and is recognized by him as Sītā's. He puts it on, to her delight. Then he throws his own away. Sītā takes it and vanishes.² While he is wondering over this the Jester tells him of the trick which the nymph Tilottamā intends to play upon him. Rāma thinks he has been deceived. (Act IV.)

In the next Act Rāma is wondering over these strange appearances and talks with the Jester about Sītā. The Jester goes out with orders regarding an audience of the ascetics. He returns to describe Vālmiki's two pupils. These are brought in. They are questioned about their parentage and Rāma begins to suspect they are his own sons. He determines to hear them recite Vālmiki's poem. (Act V.)

Every one assembles in the audience hall with the *rānīs* behind a curtain. The twins recite the story of Rāma in ten verses, ending with the abandonment of Sītā. That they say is the end of the poem. Kaṇva is sent for and completes the story in three more verses, revealing that Kuśa and Lava are Sītā's children. All four princes³ embrace each other and faint away. Vālmiki brings in Sītā; they revive the princes. Vālmiki chides Rāma for his treatment of Sītā, and bids Sītā prove her innocence. She swears by all the powers and all the sages and asks the Earth to become incarnate and reveal to the world the purity of Sītā's heart. Amid strange portents the Earth appears. She proclaims Sītā's innocence. Rāma takes Sītā back and the Earth disappears. Rāma wishes to install Lakshmaṇa as his heir, but at his brother's request names Kuśa, who is consecrated by Vālmiki. All indicate their joy and we have a happy ending with Vālmiki's blessing.

(Act VI.)

¹ This dialogue recalls that in the *Swapna-Vāsavadattam*, Act V, where the king is dreaming.

² This magic invisibility effected by contact reminds us of the magic ring in

Avimāraka, Act IV

³ Rāma, Lakshmaṇa, and Rāma's two sons. Bharata who is so important in Vālmiki's poem does not appear in this play.

A comparison of this outline, and still more the play itself, with Vālmiki's story¹ will show how far our poet is from the simpler pathos of the Epic. In *The Jasmine Garland* we have rather sophisticated sentiment and an attempt to heighten the effect of Sītā's misery nobly borne. When Rāma comes to the hermitage and Sītā is invisible, we feel that we are in familiar scenes where the Hero is separated from the Heroine and are approaching some denouement whereby all will be well. This departure from the original story may be regarded as necessary because tragedy was not allowed in the Sanskrit drama. No doubt the return of Sītā to the Earth was a feature of the ancient Sītā legend. The epic poet could retain this element of tragedy, which was hardly possible for a dramatist. It is interesting to note how Bhavabhūti deals with this difficulty in his *Uttara-Rama-carita*.² In Act VII, in the play within the play, the Earth blames Rāma for his conduct and the Ganges defends him. Then (VII. 72) Sītā requests her mother the Earth to receive her into her womb, but the goddess reminds Sītā of her duty to her sons. Again, when the Ganges proposes to put the two boys in Vālmiki's charge, Sītā asks the Earth to receive her into her womb, but is asked to wait till the boys are weaned.

‘*Prthivī* - Child, follow my behest and look to the needs of thy sons until they are weaned. But after that—as shall seem good.’³

In the end Rāma takes back his wife and nothing is said of her return to the Earth.

It would appear that Bhavabhūti's play comes between the *Uttarakāṇḍa* and the *Kundamālā* in the history of the development of the Rāma story.⁴

If this be so, it follows that the author was not contemporary

¹ That is, the story in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* which is recognized to be a later addition to Vālmiki's poem.

² Vide the translator's article, 'The Date of the *Kundamālā*', *Annals of the Bhandarkar*

Oriental Research Institute, vol. xv, p. 238, 1934.

³ Dr. Belvalkar's translation, *Harvard Oriental Series*, vol. 21.

⁴ Vide Introduction to Dr. Belvalkar's translation.

with Kālidāsa, but might be dated anywhere between the seventh and eleventh centuries.

My best thanks are due to my colleague Dr. Lakshmaṇa Sarūp, D.Phil., for reading this translation and for several suggestions; also to Dr. Ç. L. Fábri for a reading of the proof.

A: C. W.

THE JASMINE GARLAND

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(In order of appearance.)

Stage-Manager in the Prologue.

SĪTĀ.

LAKSHMAṆA, Rāma's brother.

Sumantra, the charioteer.

Vālmiki, the sage and author of the Rāmāyaṇa.

First Maid, Yajñavedi.

Vedavatī, another maid belonging to the hermitage.

Hermit.

RĀMA.

Bādarāyaṇa, a sage.

Kaṇva, a sage.

Kauśika, the Jester.

Kuśa and Lava, twin sons of Rāma and Sītā.

Chamberlain.

Earth, the Goddess.

Citizens, warriors, &c., are spoken of as present but do not speak.
Kausalyā and other royal ladies are mentioned as present but are not seen.

THE JASMINE GARLAND

(*Kunda-mālā*)

ACT I

Prologue

May the dust from Ganeśa's¹ feet, the dust that sips the honey of the *mandāra* garland on Indra's² crest, drink up the sea of obstacles. (1)

[*At the end of the benediction*³ *enters the Stage-Manager.*]

May the matted mass of Śiva's hair, tawny as the rays of early dawn, protect you—locks like a soaring flame of the perfected fire of austerity within, like a glorious anthill, where the Ganges' ripples dwell as serpents;⁴ like twilight eternal or the crescent moon delicate as a fresh lotus stem. (2)

I am bidden by the audience to produce the *Jasmine Garland*, a work of the revered poet Diñnāga of Arārālapura. So I must summon the good lady, who renders me her co-operation in the production of this composition and get down to the stage.⁵

[*Voice behind the scene.*]

Here, my lady, you must get down.

Stage-Manager. Why, who is this that seems to be assisting me in summoning my good lady? [*Looking off*]

Alas! alas! this is too pathetic -

Here is Lakshmana dragging Sītā to the forest, heavy with the babe unborn, for Rāma has banished her from out the land, perturbed by his dread of the people's gossip. 'She dwelt full long', they say, 'in the palace of Lanka's lord.' (3)

[*Exit.*]

End of the Prologue.

[*Enter Sītā on a chariot, with the charioteer and Lakshmana.*]

Lakshmana. Here, my lady, you must get down. No chariot can penetrate these jungles on the bank of the Ganges, for the way is completely blocked by a dense tangle of trees and creepers. So please get down.

¹ Heramba.

² Jambha's foe, Mandāra, is the coral tree

³ *nāṇḍyante* as in the Trivandrum plays and other plays in South Indian MSS.

⁴ Snakes live in anthills. The Ganges fell on Śiva's hair. His hair is like an anthill with Ganges' ripples for snakes.

⁵ *anaturamu.*

Sitā. Lakshmaṇa, my dear,¹ the horses dash about so terribly, I am shaking all over. I can hardly hold together, much less get down.

Lakshmaṇa. Come, Sumantra, try and hold the horses in.

Sumantra. Try as I may, they are so fond of music they resist my efforts—for,

These steeds attracted by the strains of swans, that softly penetrate their ears, are heedless of the reins' restraint and speed on all the swifter. (4)

Lakshmaṇa. But, Sumantra, if they rush at this terrific pace they cannot distinguish the level and the uneven ground, and will precipitate the chariot down the crumbling bank of the Ganges—so you must exert all your strength—

[*Sumantra gesticulates hauling on the reins.*]

Lakshmaṇa. The chariot has stopped. Now your ladyship can get down.

[*Sitā gets down and walks about.*]

Lakshmaṇa. Sumantra, these horses are tired after their long journey, so give them a rest.

Sumantra. As your Highness commands. [*Mounts the chariot and exit.*]

Lakshmaṇa. [*Stepping round—aside.*] My noble brother, nay, my master, laid his command on me—'Dear Lakshmaṇa,' he said, 'the people in the city are suspicious of the conduct of Queen Sitā because of her sojourn in Rāvana's palace. All kinds of scandals are circulating. Now just for Sitā's sake, I cannot bring a stain on the Ikshvāku house, spotless as the autumn moon. Moreover, from a fancy natural to a lady in her condition, Sitā has asked me to let her visit the Ganges. So under pretext of this visit to the Ganges, do you take her on a chariot, with Sumantra to drive, abandon her in some forest region and return.' So here am I, with the Queen suspecting nothing as she trusts her kin—leading her to the forest like a tame deer to the slaughter-place—

Sitā. Lakshmaṇa, my dear, I'm far gone with child and my feet are weary with bearing the weight and they are giving out. So do you go on ahead and bring me word how much farther on it is to the blessed Bhāgirathī.²

Lakshmaṇa. I am sure the sacred river is near at hand. Do not be anxious, we are nearly there. See,

Hither blows the Ganges' breeze, wafting honeyed perfume from the lotus forest, carrying the songs of swans exceeding

¹ Vaccha, 'child'. Usual address to younger brother or husband's younger brother.

² The Ganges.

sweet and scattering the cool spray from the waves—it comes as though it fain would greet thee. (5)

Sītā. [*Indicating feeling the breeze.*] The touch of this breeze from the Ganges' waves, deliciously cool like the touch of a mother's hand, removes at once my sin and my fatigue.—Yet a fancy of my condition urges me to bathe in the river.—So do you show me the way I can get down this crumbling bank, weary as I am.

Lakshmaṇa. [*Showing the way.*] These places along the bank are difficult to descend being entirely free from human traffic.—So hold on tight at every step—

With thy left hand cling to the *nivāra* creeper,¹ with thy right upon thy knee, come slowly lady, placing a foot for a moment on each of my footsteps. (6)

Sītā. [*Descending as described.*] I am very tired, my dear. I'll sit a moment in the shade of this tree and rest.

Lakshmaṇa. As you please.

[*Sītā sits down indicating repose.*]

Lakshmaṇa. Ah, there are ever blessings inseparable from the meritorious. For thus—

The wavelets blow cool zephyrs laden with spray. So these melodious swans sing in concert. This shade embracing one like a friend delights the heart. Your ladyship has good servants, so it seems, even in this lonely forest. (7)

Sītā. As you say, my prince, my heart is here content as if I were among my own people.

Lakshmaṇa. [*Aside.*] The Queen has rested and sits at ease. Now is the moment to do as I resolved. [*Aloud, suddenly falling at her feet.*] Luckless Lakshmaṇa that I am, sharing the grief of endless exile, I charge you steel your heart

Sītā. [*Confused.*] What, is my lord not well?

Lakshmaṇa. [*Pointing to the forest.*] How can he be well, like this?

Sītā. Has the Lady Kaikeyī ordained another exile?

Lakshmaṇa. An exile has been ordained, but not by mother.

Sītā. Then by whom?

Lakshmaṇa. Our noble lord.

Sītā. But how?

Lakshmaṇa. [*Restraining his tears*] I will only force myself to say it is our lord's command, but even so the words tie knots in my heart. (8)

Sītā. Does he order my exile in the forest?

¹ *nivāra* is wild rice. It is not clear what the poet means by 'wild rice creeper'.

Lakshmana. Not only yours but his own as well.

Sītā. How so?

Lakshmana. Rāma may dwell in his pleasant palace, where the sacred fire is maintained, in a palace that his friends delight in, counting it as their own, but if he dwell there in thy absence that is but dwelling in the wilds. (9)

Sītā. My dear, tell me clearly. If I am exiled in the forest to-day, how is that exile for my lord?

Lakshmana. What more can I say, wretched that I am?

Verily Rāma endowed with virtuous character hath abandoned thee. I too must go, leaving thee here in the forest. (10)

Sītā. Oh father, father, noble king of Kosala, to-day indeed thou art no more. [*Swoons.*]

Lakshmana. [*In alarm.*] Alas, alas! On hearing the news of her abandonment, dreadful as the fall of a thunderbolt now the Queen has passed away. [*Looking closely.*]

Nay happily she breathes. Now what indeed could serve to bring her to— [*Indicates despair.*]

Wonderful: oh, wonderful!

Tended by the gentle zephyr cool with the Ganges' spray and awakened by the remnant of my luck, the princess after all has come to life. (11)

Sītā. Lakshmana dear, have you gone?

Lakshmana. Command me, here I am, unfortunate.

Sītā. On what charge am I put away?

Lakshmana. What charge could there be against you?

Sītā. Ah me, how wretched, am I punished without the slightest accusation? Has he sent no message?

Lakshmana. He has.

Sītā. Tell me, oh, tell me.

Lakshmana. This is the message from our noble lord.

Equal in lineage I know thou art, of the like quality, rich in virtue, and so long my mate in weal or woe. I give thee up, my Sītā, only through dread of the people's tongues, not for any real fault. (12)

Sītā. What does he mean by the dread of the people's tongues? Have they anything to say against me?

Lakshmana. What could they say against you?

The Queen was purified in the sacred Fire, before the sages, the guardians of the quarters, Rāma and myself; and yet . . .

Sītā. And yet, what? go on—

Lakshmana.

—the people are unbridled. (13)

Sītā. You speak of the purification in the fire—that brings back memories—I am troubled again by the affair of Rāvana's palace. That Sītā's name is so handled is a great slur on womanhood. And so I am put away, yes, put away. And if my lord puts me away, should I not put myself away? Yet mustn't I preserve my life, torn by the thorns of scandal, to look after this offspring ruthless as himself?

Lakshmana. I am thankful for that. [*Rises and makes obeisance.*] There is this further message from our lord.

Sītā. What can that be?

Lakshmana. Thou, my Queen, enshrined in my heart, art the goddess of my house, thou only the companion of my couch coming in my dreams. To espouse another I could not endure.

At the sacrifice thine image shall be my lawful wife. (14)

Sītā. By sending this message my lord has entirely removed my grief at being abandoned: for a wife devoted to another does not pain her husband as a faithless husband pains a wife.

Lakshmana. What is your message in reply?

Sītā. To whom?

Lakshmana. To our noble lord.

Sītā. A reply in such a case? Nay, salute the Royal Mothers on my behalf and entreat them to think kindly of me living without defence in a forest teeming with wild beasts.

Lakshmana. I acknowledge this command. Is there no message for our noble lord?

Sītā. Ruthless as he is, if he has a message, that only shows Lakshmana's words are irresistible, no happiness of Sita's. On my behalf, then, take him word—

'Do not neglect the protection of castles and hermitages to trouble yourself bewailing wretched me—Take heed to rightful duties and to your person.'

Lakshmana, my dear, how could I criticize the king?

Lakshmana. Can you not do even that?

Sītā. So then just tell him this—'It becomes you ill to suddenly banish this innocent soul from your heart, the more so from your kingdom.'

Lakshmana. It is a worthy message. [*Aside.*]

Perchance our mighty lord has banished her from his heart. how else could he send his very home away from home, and even from his country? (15)

Sītā. Further take this word from me. 'Dwelling in the penance grove,

with folded hands on parted hair,¹ I implore that though I have no virtue yet for long acquaintance sake, for helplessness, or just for being Sītā, I may be sometimes brought to mind.'

Lakshmaṇa. When he hears this message, like salt upon a wound, my lord beyond all doubt will fall into depths of grief unendurable. (16)

Sītā. Though his household be so great, how can you be so many comforters in trouble? Now I'm away, you alone must look after him. You must attend to your brother's person.

Lakshmaṇa. This befits your great magnanimity.

Sītā. And, Lakshmaṇa dear, take a salutation from me to revered Ayodhyā, capital of Raghu's house; pay obeisance to the Great King's statue; execute the commands of the Royal Mothers; console my dear little prattling companions; and always remember unhappy me. [*Weeps.*]

Lakshmaṇa. [*Moved.*] Full of enmity was the Storm God's son, reviving me with healing herb as I lay at peace smitten on Lankā's field—only to abandon with my own hands this sweet lady in the forest and to listen to her lamentations. (17)

[*Looking around.*]

Gazing at the Queen, these deer are shedding tears giving up their grazing; the swans are full of grief, pitiful their plaint; the very peacocks have given over dancing. These animals have kinder hearts than men.² (18)

Sītā. Lakshmaṇa dear, the sun is about to set; it's far from here to human habitation. The birds are flying home, wild beasts are prowling round. Go now, you must not delay.

Lakshmaṇa. [*Folding his hands.*] This is Lakshmaṇa's final prayerful salutation. Hearken pray with all attention.

Sītā. Nay, I'm all attention.

Lakshmaṇa. I entreat your Highness—

Remembering your husband, friends or kin, let not sorrow bring you unto death. This offspring of the Ikshvākus, lying in the womb, you should guard with all your might. (19)

Sītā. Lakshmaṇa's words are irresistible.

Lakshmaṇa. One more request.

Sītā. What another?

Lakshmaṇa. At my elder brother's behest I abandon thee in a desolate forest, forgive me this one fault. (20)

¹ Alluding to the ceremony in which the hair was parted on three occasions during pregnancy.

² lit. are better than.

Sītā. [*In confusion.*] There is the satisfaction that you follow your elder's order, what fault can be imputed for that?

Lakshmana. [*Offers salutation walking round her to the right.*]

Sītā. [*Weeps.*]

Lakshmana. [*Looking towards the cardinal points.*]

O ye guardians of the world, hearken to my prayers. This daughter-in-law of Daśaratha the mighty warrior—

Sītā. These are excellent words to hear.

Lakshmana. Consort of Madhu's slaughterer, Rāma hight—

Sītā. How did I get such luck?

Lakshmana. Banished from her husband's house—

Sītā. [*Covers her ears.*]

Lakshmana. dwells all alone

In this lonely forest. Do ye, I pray, protect her. (21)

Sītā. [*Indicates the child in her womb.*]

Lakshmana. This sacred River too I entreat for the lady's sake—

When her time comes do thou favour her in her weariness with zephyrs from thy waves, balmy with lotus fragrance—And when the Queen plunges in thy waters, O Ganges, for purification, restrain their current for a moment. (22)

Whatever sages dwell within the forest, with bowed head I entreat them, be kindly to this lady, for she is a woman all forlorn, nobly born but devoid of refuge, and a Queen is always sacred. (23)

Lakshmana. I fold my hands in homage to the sylvan deities—that they may hearken for a moment to my prayer. Blessed Ones, do ye guard this lady with all care be she asleep, in a swoon, or any trouble. (24)

Ye wild beasts! This tract you must avoid—

For none should enter the land of others—

Ye female deer! In the absence of her friends, ye are her companions, do not leave her for a moment. (25)

Ye streams her friends, Ye lords that guard the quarters, Mother Ganges, fraternal Mountains, again and again Lakshmana here implores you to protect the princess. I must go— (26)

[*Salutes and exit.*]

Sītā. Has Lakshmana really gone and left me all alone! [*Looking round.*] Alas, woe is me! The sun has set. Lakshmana is too far to hear! Even the deer are going home. The birds are on the wing, and beasts are prowling round. It grows too dark to see. The great forest is desolate—What shall I do, unhappy me? Must I wander on all

alone? . . . What wrong have I done, that now I endure this separation? Why—why do the sylvan deities just charged by Lakshmana—why do the mighty saints, Vasishtha, Vālmiki and all—linked with Raghu's house—why do they now forsake me and—[*She faints.*]

[*Enter Vālmiki.*]

Vālmiki. [*Perturbed.*] From boys of the hermitage repairing to the Ganges¹ for their evening bathe, I hear there is a lady in the forest all alone weeping and forlorn, and far gone with child—so I have hurried here. (27)

Now I must search for her. [*Indicates a search.*]

Sītā. [*Recovering consciousness.*] Who is this fanning me?² [*Reflecting.*] Nobody, it is the blessed Ganges, obeying Lakshmana's behest that shows me favour with her waves

Vālmiki. Here—the darkness is so dense, nothing is visible and I must shout—Ho! here I am!

Sītā. [*Joyfully.*] Oh, Lakshmana dear—have you returned?

Vālmiki. I am not Lakshmana.

Sītā. [*Indicates veiling her face.*] How dreadful! who else can this stranger be? How can I avoid this calamity? [*Reflecting.*] Like this—I am a woman and all alone.³

Vālmiki. Here I stand. My child, have no misgivings as of a stranger. I am an ascetic and only come to help you as I heard of you from boys of the hermitage, returning from their evening worship and bathe in the Ganges. May I ask your ladyship—

Tell me, pray, my child, whence comes this trouble upon thee, while Rāma, righteous victor in the battle is ruler of the earth? (28)

Sītā. This thunderbolt has fallen on me from that same full moon.

Vālmiki. Is Rāma then the source of your distress?

Sītā. Why, yes.

Vālmiki. If you have been exiled by the Great King, the very law incarnate of caste and hermitage, then fare you well, I must go. [*Steps round.*]

Sītā. But I entreat—

Vālmiki. Say on—

Sītā. If I do not deserve your pity, being exiled by Rama, yet I am entitled to protection now that I carry in my body the offspring of such heroes as Raghu, Sagara, Dilipa, and Daśaratha.

¹ Jahnu's daughter.

above.

² *vijai* taken as for *vijai* not for *viksai* fans or sprinkles with water. Cf verse 22

³ Warning him not to approach.

Valmiki. [*Turning back.*] How does she come to recite the genealogy of the Ikshvāku house? I must inquire into this. My child, are you daughter-in-law to Daśaratha?

Sītā. At your reverence's service.

Valmiki. Are you the daughter of the King of Videha?

Sītā. Why, yes.

Valmiki. What, Sītā?

Sītā. No, not Sītā, reverend Sir, unhappy that I am.

Valmiki. Alas! I am undone, unhappy too! But why this fall of your ladyship from the pulace?

Sītā. [*Indicates shame.*]

Valmiki. Why is she ashamed? So be it. I will look with second sight.¹ [*Indicates concentrated thought.*] My child, Rāma has abandoned you solely from fear of scandal among the people, against his feelings. You are innocent and we must not forsake you. Come, let us go to the hermitage.

Sītā. Tell me who you are.

Valmiki. Harken—

An old friend am I of King Janaka, thy father, companion of Daśaratha's boyhood—

Valmiki, lady: set aside misgivings of the stranger, I am no stranger but like thy father and thy husband's father. (28)

Sītā. I salute your reverence—

Valmiki. May you be the mother of heroes and soon see your husband again!

Sītā. To the world you are Valmiki, but to me you are father. So lead the way to your hermitage.

Sītā. [*Looks at the Ganges and folds her hands.*] Holy Bhāgīrathī, if I have an easy delivery then every day I shall offer you a well-planted jasmine garland.

Valmiki. This path is extremely difficult to traverse, especially for you. So come with me just as I point out the way—

Lightly place thy feet on the clump of Kuśa grass in front, now bend down slightly for here is a hanging branch, there is a huge chasm on the left, so cling with thy hand to the post on the right. Now the ground is level. Bathe thy feet in this sacred lotus tank. (30)

Sītā. [*Moves round as described.*]

Valmiki. [*Addressing her.*] All the sacred rites of all the Ikshvakus we alone perform, so be not anxious for your babe. (31)

¹ *Yoga cakshus*, Contemplative vision.

In the elder women wilt thou find the delight of serving Kausalyā's¹ feet, and lo! your friends and sisters are these maidens of the hermitage. (32)

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

Introductory Scene

[*Enter two maidens of the hermitage.*]

First maid. Ah, Vedavatī, my dear! Good news for you! Your dear friend Sitā has given birth to two little boys as brown² as Rāma—

Vedavatī. I am very glad. What are their names?

First maid. His reverence has just called the elder one Kuśa and the other one Lava.

Vedavatī. Can they run about in the road?

First maid. Can they, indeed?

ERRATUM

Page 12. Note 1

For Dhritamshtra read Dismatha

First maid. I would the reward were greater. What's the news from Naimiśa forest.

Vedavatī. Materials have been collected for the Great King's sacrifice. A whole crowd of hermits is invited with their wives.

First maid. Have they invited the revered Vālmiki?

Vedavatī. I hear that a messenger from Rāma has come to Vālmiki's hermitage also. Where could I find Sitā?

First maid. She's here sitting in the shade of a *śāl* tree. Shall I take you along?

[*Exeunt ambo.*]

END OF INTRODUCTORY SCENE.

¹ Kausalyā was the wife of Dhritarāshtra and mother of Rāma.

² *ccāma*—*śyāma*, 'dark', 'black'.

³ Taking *edāraṭham* with Jayacandra to represent *e'āvarṭham*. The reading of the

next sentence is corrupt. Apparently *aham* should go with the previous *takkem* and the meaning was something like 'the two bring mutual affection to remove Sitā's sorrow'.

[Then *Sitā* is discovered seated on the ground, indicating anxious thought.]

SITĀ. Ah, none should trust the hearts of men, they are by nature ruthless. For I was raised to great renown in the company of wedded pairs whose love deserved recording on a monument—*Umā* and *Maheśvara* in heaven, *Sitā* and *Rāma* on earth. And now for no fault of mine I am brought for ever¹ to such a plight as this. But who am I to blame, my lord but now so many miles away for no reason I have become a cause of complete misery as I am. (?)² With him I used to watch the moon rise, with him listen to the *koi's* melodious call, with him feel the caress of the *Malaya* breeze—but now I look and listen and feel—all alone. For women like myself it is all in vain to think of abandoning life. All the folk of *Mithilā* used to bring requests to me, because I was the darling of my husband, and now, poor wretch, I have come to this condition. The shame of that hurts me more than the pain of being put away. And now the boys are born and reared. The revered *Vālmiki* is so considerate in these days. It is wrong of me to waste the time with these deep sighs, so out of keeping with life in a penance grove. Besides I have sent no word to my dear *Vedavati* nor asked her here, that in itself is a reason against seeking death.

[Enter *Vedavati*.]

Vedavati. I have honoured the ascetics with my salutations and shown the courtesy due to the guests. So now I can go to the *sāl* tree and greet my dear friend. [Stepping round and looking about.] This daughter of the king of *Videha*, like a creeper in the hottest months, adorns the root of the *sāl* tree, but reveals her heart by her wasted and pale condition. So I'll go up to her. [Approaches.] Here she is, down-cast as if overpowered with anxiety. She looks sad and shades her eyes with her long tresses. I'll call to her. [Does so.] *Vaidehī*, my dear **SITĀ**. [Looking round in confusion] I'm so glad you've come, my dear *Vedavati*. You're very welcome. [Embraces her and makes her sit down.]

Vedavati. Are *Kuśa* and *Lava* quite well?

¹ *attatam* = *alyantam*.

² The passage is corrupt and neither the construction nor the meaning is clear. *Evam purā amautena saśa vaana-gādhādhanum sua-mētaena adarita-maṇṇu ti, sampadam anea - joanāntaride - - saṇam akaranam māsi puṇṇadukkahāriṇi jādā*. Apparently on some former occasion *Rāma* (*āryaputrena*) was

very angry (*adarita-maṇṇu* (?)) about the noise (*gādhādhanam* (?)) 'piercing noise' or *gaṇḍa dhvanam* (?) 'stuttering noise' of some one (*kuśa*) *Sua-mētaena* looks like *sukamatrakena* 'by a mere parrot' or possibly (?). *śrutamātrakena* 'on merely hearing'. Now (*sāmpadam*) *Sitā* is banished for no reason. (? Read *adassanam*.)

Sītā. Like all the forest dwellers.

Vedavati. And how are you yourself?

Sītā. [*Pointing to her braid of hair.*¹] Like that.²

Vedavati. [*Aside.*] The poor soul grieves too much. I'll console her by stressing Rāma's ill-treatment.³ [*Aloud.*] Foolish one! Why do you waste away day by day like the waning moon for the sake of a neglectful, ruthless man?

Sītā. How is he ruthless?

Vedavati. In putting you away.

Sītā. Putting me away?

Vedavati. [*Laughingly touches her braid.*] So the people say, you're really put away.

Sītā. Only from the body, not from the heart.

Vedavati. How can you know another's heart?

Sītā. How can his heart be another's to Sītā?

Vedavati. Ah, what constant love!

Sītā. Isn't my lord constant to me? Wasn't it for the sake of unhappy me that he went through the toil of making the bridge and all that, as the world knows?

Vedavati. You flatter yourself. That was just a warrior's rage against Rāvaṇa, not affection for Sītā.

Sītā. And don't you see this other point?

Vedavati. What other point?

Sītā. Why—this.

Vedavati. Well, what?

Sītā. [*Bashfully.*] All this while I have this honour that Rāma's bosom is untouched by the breath of other wives.

Vedavati. Don't be puffed up, my dear. The time has come for the initiation of Rāma's sacrifice.

Sītā. What of that?

Vedavati. Has he not to take the hand of a companion in the great Horse sacrifice?

Sītā. My sway is over my lord's heart, not over his hand.

Vedavati. [*Aside.*] Her affection is immovable. [*Aloud.*] My dear, when you look at your little boys' faces doesn't that take away the grief of your exile?

Sītā. In taking grief away it makes it all the greater.

Vedavati. How so?

Sītā. At first the two children used to look up into my face and laugh, their little teeth half-cut like little buds, and they called to me with

¹ A sign of separation.

² Lit. How is that?

³ Rāma-saderasa (°).

their endless delicious prattle. Then I felt myself lost in Rāma's loveliness. But now they are growing up, leaving babyhood behind, they are infants no longer. That hurts me all the more.

Vedavatī. Ah! how costly is his cruelty, that even Sitā with her little boys should come to such a plight.

Sitā. Vedavatī, my dear! Perhaps . . .

Vedavatī. Why so bashful? Say—I shall see my noble lord.'

Sitā. [*Aside.*] Why should I feel ashamed? I will say it. [*Aloud.*] Perhaps my birth will yield the fruit of seeing Kuśa and Lava's father.

Vedavatī. Nay, the time is near when you will see the king.

Sitā. How?

[*A Seer behind the curtain.*]

Good sirs, dwellers of this hermitage, pray hearken to my words.

Not far from here goes forward a great Horse sacrifice. The materials for the rite have been collected. Great sages like Vasishṭha and Ātreya dwelling in the hermitages of various countries have assembled. Only waiting for the arrival of the revered Vālmiki, the Great King even yet will not enter on the initiation of the rite. And now Rāma's envoy has arrived to convey an invitation to all the dwellers of Vālmiki's hermitage. Do not therefore procrastinate—

Let the sages go on ahead forthwith taking the holy water,¹
the sacred fuel unimpaired, and shoots of *darbhag* grass uninjured:
and let the maidens of the hermitage pour out auspicious
libations in the courtyards of the huts. (2)

Sitā. I must hurry, I must hurry. The moment the departure was proclaimed the noble Kāśyapa took his sacrificial gear and set out ahead. And I have to see to the auspicious ceremonies of Kuśa and Lava's departure.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

ACT III

Introductory Scene

[*Enter a hermit fatigued with his journey and carrying a load.*]

Hermit. [*Indicating fatigue.*] Phew!² I'm right done up by this eternal burning hot weather. My legs are that tired I can't lift 'em or let 'em down. The soles of my feet are baked and bursting into blisters. Besides—a delicate lady like Sitā, and those tender lads Kuśa and Lava, with the crowd of ascetics, get to Naimiśa before sundown, while I

¹ Lit. waters of *tirthas*

² Speaking Pīākrit.

haven't yet got to the entrance of the forest—[*Reflecting.*] Now who'll tell me the way to Naimiśa—[*Looking round.*] Why, this must be Rāma with Lakshmaṇa come to Naimiśa. So I'll just follow in their tracks. [*Exit.*]

END OF THE INTRODUCTORY SCENE.

[*Enter Rāma afflicted with grief and Lakshmaṇa leading the way.*]

Lakshmaṇa. This way, noble brother. [*Stepping around.*]

Aforetime I came dragging that innocent queen to abandon her in a pathless forest. Now once again, unhappy one, apt for the woes of my kin, I come forth, I know not whither, bringing the king, Rāma, the last of his house. (1)

Lakshmaṇa. Ah! it has indeed been well said:

Heedlessness destroyeth fortune, and arrogance affection.

Wickedness destroyeth modesty and sorrow self-control. (2)

For example, Rāma here, whose fortitude was as firm as Mount Mandara, when he heard of Vālmiki's coming, set out for the hermitage on Gomatī's bank in order to meet him. And now his mind is so agitated by his grief that he has left that direction and turned towards the great forest. So shall I inform him rightly? Nay, what is the good? I will show him the way by running ahead as a footman,¹ so that he may arrive unwittingly at Vālmiki's hermitage. This way, noble brother.

Rama. [*Sighing.*] The bridge of rocks over the ocean² was built in vain. The god of Fire vouched for her purity but was disregarded. I gave no thought to the offspring of the Ikshvākus, renowned throughout the world. What, oh what was I doing in my madness to cast out the princess of Mithilā? (3)

[*Stepping round.*]

Oh!—Woe, alas! The poor soul's exile is beyond endurance. On what does she bend her gaze? On what does she set her mind for comfort? How does Sitā live, without hope in a forest the abode of wild beasts? (4)

Lakshmaṇa. [*Aside.*] He is brooding over Sitā's exile and the loss³ of his offspring. That distresses him extremely. So I must distract his mind from the affair of the queen to something else. [*Aloud.*] Just look this way.

Lo, there is the Gomatī in front of thee, O best of men—No other river has such waters, green as emeralds. The whole vicinity is made delightful by the music of her impassioned

¹ Porter, doorkeeper.

² Abode of crocodiles.

³ *vaiśaṃ*, 'ruin, destruction'.

swans. The ends of the earth are scented by the blossoming of her lotus forests. (5)

Rāma. [*Indicating the contact of the breeze.*] Since Sītā was abandoned, Malaya zephyrs and necklaces of pearl, sandal-paste, and the moon's cool rays have brought me only excessive torment. Now all at once the breeze along Gomatī's banks delights my heart. In that direction surely must the unhappy exile dwell. (6)

Lakshmaṇa. This way down to the stream is very rough, so come down with care. [*Both indicating descent.*] [*Observing.*] Here are marks of footprints all along the sandbanks. The creepers on the banks show that their flowers have been plucked as only the stalks are left.—The shade of the trees has been made thinner by cutting their shoots. So I believe there must be some human habitation close at hand. Also—

The sandbanks are rich in tribute of water drops and blossoms recently offered to the gods. And here amid the ripples, playfully twisting like a female serpent, is a jasmine garland. (7)

Rāma. Not only must there be some human habitation close at hand—it must be but a little way up the stream.

Lakshmaṇa. How strange! This jasmine garland has been carried up to your feet gradually by a succession of ripples as if the river wished to worship them. Observe with care the way the flowers are arranged. So have a look at it. [*Takes the garland and hands it to Rāma.*]

Rāma. [*Examines it and indicates a thrill.*] My dear, the skill shown in this arrangement of the flowers is familiar to me—

Lakshmaṇa. Where have you seen it before?

Rāma. Where else can one find the like?

Lakshmaṇa. You mean—the queen's?

Rāma. Why, yes—

Lakshmaṇa. What stupid mortal knows the ways the Lord of Creatures amuses himself? Come, my lord, we will go upstream along the bank of the Gomatī till we come to the source of that jasmine garland.

Rāma. One may easily find a resemblance to human art. We could not be so fortunate. Nor could Sītā after being abandoned have come to such a remote place as this. However, show me the way so that we may reach the habitation without going far from the water.

Lakshmaṇa. The river strand is difficult to walk on because of conch shells and the sharp pebbles, so come gently as I show the way.

Rāma. Very well—I have taken a fancy to this garland, but yet, for fear it might be an offering to a deity, I must not use it. [*Throws it away.*]

Lakshmana. Step over this cane. Do not step here, where the conch shells lie.

Bend thy head with care, before thee a tree is bending low.
Avoid this slanting bough before thee, turning it aside with the point of thy bow. Step quietly on lest the wild things¹ yonder take alarm. (8)

Rama. [*Stepping round as described.*] Tell me, little brother,² isn't the revered Vālmiki's hermitage situated in these parts?

Lakshmana. Why, what have you seen?

Rama. That line of smoke, so slender that it needs attention to discern it, extends through the sky.³ The chanting of *sāmans*, wafted by the gentle breeze, echoes in one's ears. (9)

Lakshmana. You have observed aright. I will go forward and make sure. [*Stepping round and indicating the trunk of a tree.*] Why is my heart palpitating as I raise my feet? Why are my thighs paralysed, and my feet as I lift them unable to go forward on to the ground? What can it mean? [*Reflecting.*] Clearly some worshipful person must have trodden here. Yes, there seem to be footprints. [*Examines the ground.*]

Rama. Why this care in examining the ground, little brother?

Lakshmana. I can see some footprints here on the sandy shore, which seem to be those of a lady, for they are lovely in form and deeply planted. Their exquisite beauty reveals the delicacy of the soles of her feet. Look, my noble brother.

Be it through dalliance, fatigue, or habit, these sluggish footsteps of some lady on the shore move slowly on, as with the rolling gait of swans. (10)

Rama. [*Observing with delight.*] Why do you say 'some lady', little brother? You should say 'Sītā's footsteps'. Look you—

The position is the same; the form deep and lovely is the same. Here is the beautiful mark, the very print of the lines of the lotus on her feet. And as the sight of this line of footprints cheers a heart distraught with grief, so was it surely imprinted here by the queen. (11)

Lakshmana. [*Delighted.*] Let us follow this line of footprints and find the way to Vālmiki's hermitage. And as these footprints have been recently made I presume the queen must be near—

[*Enter Sītā.*]

Sītā. The evening rites are complete, and prayers said, oblations poured

¹ 'Wives of wild beasts.'

² Lit. 'child'.

³ *samākramati dīśah.*

into the holy fire. I have plunged into the revered Ganges¹ and, to worship her, made offering of the jasmine garland twined with my own hands . . .² Now I'll go into this lofty bower of creepers, so dense and cool, to pick some flowers for presentation to the guests.

[*Enters and indicates plucking of flowers.*]

Lakshmana. This line of footprints following the path has gradually diverged from the sandy beach, gone up to the hard ground and disappeared. So before we approach the reverend sage let us rest ourselves sitting in the delightful shade of that clump of creepers, which I see in front of us.

Rāma. Just as you please.

[*Stepping around, they sit down.*]

Rāma. [*Sighing mournfully.*] Ah, my child—

Sita. [*Listening.*] Now who can this be who with that voice, deep as the thunder of a raincloud, thrills even my body, the vessel of endless woe? I'll see who it is. Nay, it is not proper for me, without knowing the truth, to set my eyes on a wrong object. Yet what is there to know? No stranger's word could disturb my body with such a thrill. It is evident the Ruthless One has arrived. So I'll have a good look. Nay, I'm ashamed of myself for being so well-disposed to one so averse. So I won't look. [*Turns away her face.*] How is this? Can't I control myself? My eyes turn that way willy-nilly—What else can I do? It is the command of my own allegiance to the king. [*Gazes.*] Ah, it is a comfort to see him, but my long exile grieves me; it distresses me, he is so thin, his ruthlessness hurts my pride, long intimacy fills me with yearning, his handsome form with longing; I respect him as my lord, as Kuśa's and Lava's father—I honour him as a housewife should: that I'm thought guilty fills me with shame—I don't know what I feel at seeing my lord again—

Lakshmana. Why has my noble brother suddenly called to me, and then become silent and downcast with his eyes full of tears?

Rāma. Looking at this lonely forest, destitute of habitation, and this river with its clear waters and its shores pleasantly shaded by the trees on the banks, reminded me of the exile in the Dandaka forest, and so I fell into this mournful mood.

Sita. Ah, my lord, you remember the exile in the forest but not the person exiled.

Lakshmana. What is there worth remembering in that forest exile?—abode of nothing but woe.

¹ As pointed out in Jayacandra's edition the poet seems to have forgotten that Sita

has gone to Naimisa on the Gomati.

² *mahapadma* is not clear.

Rāma. Oh, Lakshmana, why do you say 'worth remembering in that forest exile?—abode of nothing but woe?' Look you—

I remember at the close of day taking the queen's hand,
delicate as a tendril, and while we discoursed of the various
joys of love, slowly sauntering along, the shores of the river
oozing with water under the pressure of our feet. (12)

Sītā. Ah, ruthless one; why do you recall that conversation to torment this wretched helpless person all the more?

Lakshmana. Grieve no more, my brother.

Rāma. How should I not grieve, wretched that I am? Look you—

First the exile in the forest, then Lankā, and now this banishment. After coming to me, so unfortunate, Sītā has passed from one misery to another. (13)

Sītā. This is not becoming, my lord, for one you sent to exile.

Rāma. O daughter of Janaka!

Sītā. Ah you, that I, so poor in merit, must avoid.

Rāma. My helpmate in the forest exile.

Sītā. Not even that at present.

Rāma. Alas, where have you gone?

Sītā. The way the wretched go.

Rāma. Give me an answer.

Sītā. What answer to one we may not approach?

[*Rāma indicates grief.*]

Lakshmana. Come now, I entreat you, noble brother, have done with grieving.

Rāma. How can I help grieving for the Videha princess, so pitiful?

Sītā. [*Aside.*]¹ Don't say 'so pitiful', my lord. No one needs pity, for whom the beloved grieves like this.

Rāma. Tell me, little brother, is it possible to learn where she is?

Sītā. [*Aside.*] I'm in exile in this very spot like a *cakravāka* barred from meeting her mate at the close of the day.

Lakshmana. No, it is impossible to find out where she is.

Rāma. I have destroyed the Raghu line, unbroken for so long. [*Weeps.*]

Sītā. [*Sorrowfully.*] My lord is in extreme distress. What shall I do? I'll be bold and wipe away the flood of tears that dim his sight. [*Lifts one foot.*]² Nay, I must avoid any scandal. Though my lord has not yet seen me, I'm carried away by the force of my sorrow and cannot control myself. This place is frequented by ascetics, and some one arriving by chance might see me. So I'll go back to the hermitage by

¹ She is not visible or audible to Rāma or Lakshmana.

² i. e. is about to go to him.

this path hidden by a creeper trellis, that'll be safe, and look after Kuśa and Lava—

[*Gesticulates, looking carefully round, and exit.*]

[*Enter a Sage.*]

Sage. The revered Vālmiki has commanded me, 'Bādarāyaṇa, my child, I hear that the blessed Rāma has arrived at this penance grove accompanied by Lakshmaṇa. He might suppose us to be engrossed in the performance of the noonday rites and stay outside. So go and inform him that I have completed my midday duties and wish to see him.' So now as the revered Vālmiki commands me, I must seek for Rāma. [*Walks about.*]

Lakshmaṇa. [*Looking round in confusion.*] Here is an ascetic, sir, coming this very way.

[*Rāma wipes away his tears, recovers himself, and stands up.*]

Sage. [*Looking closely.*] Oh, there seems to be a couple of men in the shadow of this clump of creepers. Probably it is Rāma, and Lakshmaṇa with him. [*Reflecting.*] No doubt about it.

•Gently blows the breeze, the rays of the summer sun are not severe. Even the does are not alarmed, but roam fearlessly with lions.

The shadow he has resorted to does not keep close to the thicket though it is noon. Clearly Hari, under Rāma's name, has visited this forest. (14)

One may detect it not only by his superhuman prowess, but also from his appearance—

[*Observing him.*] Hardened by training, tall, long eyes stretching to his ears, broad-chested, mighty arms—clearly he is Daśaratha's son. (15)

So I will go up to him and tell him how things are. [*Approaches.*]
Hail, O King.

Rāma. I salute you.

Sage. Victory be yours.

Rāma. What, sir, is the object of your visit?

Sage. The revered Vālmiki has completed all his duties and awaits the arrival of the king.

Rāma. [*Looking round.*] Ah, it is past midday—

After whiling away the noonday heat ensconced at the roots of trees, the shadows, like travellers, come slowly forth. (16)

moreover—

Yonder elephant has allayed the fierce heat of the noonday's rays of the sun by plunging into water, his ears fanning his

face with a breeze wet with spray, and now with his trunk splashing through the eddies of the stream, he comes slowly to the bank flooded by the waters propelled by his breast. (17)

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

ACT IV

[*Enter two women anchorites.*]

Vedavati. Yajñavedī, my dear, the nymph Tilottamā has come to Vālmiki's hermitage on account of the recital of the Rāmāyaṇa. She has told me that by her magic power she has taken the form of Sītā and come down to the earth, where Rāma can see her, as she wants to see whether or no he is compassionate towards Sītā. So she bid me go and find Rāma, and you, my dear, must show me where he is resting.

Yajñavedī. Why, my dear Vedavati, Rāma's comrade, the noble Hasita,¹ is hidden behind that clump of bushes and creepers close by—he must have heard all your talk with Tilottamā.

Vedavati. This is the very mischief. If Tilottamā goes playing the part of Sītā before him, when he's already got the clue, she'll meet with bitter ridicule—so I must go and stop her.

Yajñavedī. Where is Sītā at present, dear?

Vedavati. I'll tell you. To-day being the seventh day, a deputation of the women of the hermitage came to the revered Vālmiki and said, 'That pool belonging to the hermitage used² for gathering lotuses and so on—now the king is in the neighbourhood, is exposed to the gaze of strangers, so we women cannot bathe in it.' Then the revered Vālmiki meditated a while with his eyes fixed in contemplation and said, 'Womenfolk that are by this pool shall be invisible to the eyes of man.' Since then Sītā has spent the whole day on the bank of that pool safe from Rāma's gaze.

Yajñavedī. Do Kuśa and Lava know of their relationship to Rāma?

Vedavati. They are only children and have only mixed with ascetics, so they don't even know their mother's name, let alone the story of Rāma with their long exile coming in between.

Yajñavedī. Did you know that Rāma had entered this penance grove?

Vedavati. Which way did he come?

Yajñavedī. You go to Tilottamā and I'll attend on Sītā.

[*Exeunt ambo.*]

END OF THE INTERLUDE.

¹ Lit. laughed at, the Butt.

² The construction of *attano upabhvesu* is not clear. Perhaps a word has dropped out.

Attano used for 'their' refers to the women themselves *itthājana*. The words would go better with *ogāhduṃ*.

[*Enter Sītā and Yajñavedī with a mantle worn as a cloak.*]

Yajñavedī. Vaidehī, my dear, who told you to wear two mantles? You never did before.

Sītā. This steady breeze rippling the lake. It is very chilly.

Yajñavedī. My dear, this mantle is too good for exile. It's so beautifully white, like heaped-up rays of the autumn moon, and delightful with the melody of multitudes of bees attracted¹ by its wealth of aromatic fragrance.

Sītā. When I was abandoned in the forest by the Great King's command, I left Citrakūṭa and went south. Māyavatī, the forest deity, was anxious about me—I stayed so long she came to love me—and gave me as a keepsake her celestial mantle sweetly scented and white as the moon. My lord and I greatly loved the feel of it; it has long been my companion in affliction, and so now I have put it on out of respect. [*Weeps.*]

Yajñavedī. Don't cry, my dear. One can't call living in this hermitage exile in the jungle.

Sītā. How can I help it? How can I endure the doubled torture of my lord's coming to this grove?² All alone I pass the days and nights with deep sighs. Now my distress is all the greater.

Yajñavedī. One must expect these mishaps. Divert your thoughts by watching the birds and their amorous sports on the bank of the lake, while I attend to my duties. [*Steps around.*]

Sītā. [*Looking at the lake.*] This pair of royal swans is fortunate indeed. It has never known the pains of separation, but enjoys the bliss of union. That shows a married couple has no pedantic instructor like my separation, and so even the birds, sweetly playful, can ravish each other's heart and indulge in coaxing speech.

Yajñavedī. [*Observing.*] All the ascetics have just got up in a hurry, throwing their bark garments as a wrap over their shoulders—³ (?)—their eyes wide with astonishment: they have all gone off in the same direction. So I think the king must have arrived.

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter Rāma, absorbed in thought, and Kaṇva*]

Kaṇva. The revered Vālūṅki commanded me, saying: 'Kaṇva, go and divert the son of Daśaratha by showing him the beauty of the Naimiśa

¹ āradha (?).

² The Prakrit is not clear—*divanem viddhāram āsa saanam pa'tharem* = *driguṇam* (?) *sayanam prastarayāmi*. ? read *vāthārdam* = *visārdam*, i.e. lit. How can I strew a couch that is twice as large?

³ Prakrit *suasamamunapāudho* is not clear.

Perhaps the original was *-pāudo* and the meaning was something like 'garments slipping as they went' *-ruta* (or *srac̥ha*) - *saṃgamana prār̥c̥h* ?

forest.' But here he is so absorbed in thought he does not recognize even when I step in front of him. For—

He stumbles again and again even on a level path. With his sluggish gait he lingers far behind. With face downcast he does not raise his eyes to glance at this beautiful forest. (1)
[Approaching.] O King!

Rāma. O fie, my comrade, that is no address for an ascetic. Or is that the fault of the changes of age and not of your reverence.

'Rāma' was I to thee in childhood and 'Kaṇva' thou to me.

Now age has made your reverence a sage,¹ ourselves a king. (2)

Kaṇva. Ah, the reproach is noble and kindly too—

Rāma. Speak out what you wish to say.

Kaṇva. I trust this woodland site delights thy heart. The dark line of trees encircling its borders—thousands of them bowed by the burden of their fruit, and charging the quarters with the fragrant scent of their flowers. (3)

Rāma. There is no need to ask whether this penance grove delights me or does not, my mind is occupied with so deep a reverence.

The forest blaze I honour like the sacrificial fire, the trees with the same regard as sacrificial posts. The vague chirping of the birds I adore like the holy chanting of the sages, and the woodland deer I honour like the anchorites. So hardly with the greatest hesitation can I set my feet upon the ground in this Naimiśa forest. (4)

Kaṇva. This great esteem for Naimiśa well befits a king devoted only to his religious duty, the source of the bliss and prosperity of the whole world, for this forest is the scene of successful austerities, free from interruption, and here resorted the former royal sages of his house.

To this forest have repaired the Ikshvāku kings after conquering the world to the zenith with a single bow and preparing the way to heaven by hundreds of holy sacrifices—hither they came for final bliss after laying the burden of sovereignty on their sons. (5)

[Rāma makes obeisance.]

Kaṇva. Observe this wondrous quality of Naimiśa not possessed by other groves.

The fierce summer heat grows lukewarm as it mingles with the moonlight from the head of Śiva that resideth here—too cool to cause the buds to wilt or dry the water in the pools, it causes humans no affliction but brings a lustre to their eyes. (6)

¹ *aryāḥ*.

Moreover—

Every day is Indra¹ present at the sacrifice (in this forest): so the sandal trees of Indra's heaven are neglected, and it is these forest trees, so high that one must view them with eyes up-cast, that serve as tether-posts and bear the bracelet scar of the halter binding Indra's raging elephant. (7)

Rāma. [*Looking about.*] The sacred grove with its perpetual great sacrifices makes Indra forget his heaven Nandana.

Here in this wood, timidly listening to the recital of invocations to the Lord of Gods, Indra's spouse ever throws aside her garland to bind the braid of separation.² (8)

Kaṇva. And do you not see this also?

In this wood the rutting elephants are so intent on listening to the strains of sacred chants, their ears are still or hardly move, so their flapping ears make no obstacle at all to the bees that swarm to sip the ichor from their cheeks. (9)

Rāma. [*Smiling.*] Is that surprising?

The saints' singing of the chants so sweet and holy, ravish the heart of those who wander far from home. Why not of tuskers too? (10)

Kaṇva. [*Aside.*] Ah, how greatly exile distresses Rāma! He supposes those abroad more absent-minded than even animals. [*Aloud.*] Just glance this way.

The smoke of the sacrificial oblations has disturbed these bees: they leave the mango branch, flowering with crowded blossom, by the powers of the saints full blown, though there is no Spring, and speed to the hollows of the lotuses in the lake. (11)

Rāma. Yes, this mass of smoke, made all the thicker by the continual oblations, begins to trouble us like the bees. [*Indicates being blinded by the smoke.*]

Kaṇva. Oh, are your eyes really troubled by the smoke?

Rāma. My eyes are ever in pain with tears that flow from Sītā's absence, and verily the smoke hurts them all the more. (12)

Kaṇva. Then do you stay here a while—plunge into that hermitage pool in front there and find relief by washing away the pain in your eyes with the cool water. Meanwhile I will honour with my presence the occasion of the patriarch's fire offering.

[*Exit.*]

Rāma. [*Stepping round.*] I will descend the bank of the pool. [*Descends.*] What delicious water in this lotus pool. [*Sees Sītā's*

¹ Hari.

² As Indra will be attracted away from her.

reflection¹ in the water, excited.] What, is that Sītā there? [*Indicates joy and astonishment.*]

Sītā. [*Looking round.*] Oh dear, I was so taken up with watching those two swans I never noticed my lord coming unexpectedly—Now I must go away—[*Does so.*]

Rāma. What! has Sītā gone away without even greeting me?

That is Sītā seen at last after a hundred yearnings. Her pallid face and dangling tresses show me the pain of lengthy separation. And now she's going off again, whither I know not, leaving me alone. (13)

Come, I will seize hold of her. [*Stretches out his arms.*] Nay; it is not she, but

Only a reflection in the waters that I saw, of Vaidehī going somewhither by the path along the bank. (14)

So I will seek the original of this reflection. [*Gesticulates search.*] The bank of the pool is deserted with no one about,² but there cannot be a reflection with nothing to reflect. What does it mean?

Sītā. My lord sees my reflection; why can't he see me? [*Considering.*] I know, it's thanks to the Sage that women of the hermitage on this bank are invisible to the eyes of men. I'd have been grateful if the Sage had made the reflection invisible too. I must slip away so that he can't see that either. [*Goes away.*]

Rāma. Let me look at the image of Sītā in the clear water. [*Looks.*] What! has that also disappeared? [*Faints.*]

Sītā. Alas, alas! my lord has fainted: I'll go to him. [*Steps around.*] Nay, if my lord is seen to be angry again, the hermits will regard me as immodest. So I'll go—[*Turns round*] But this is no time to consider what's proper and what is not—let my lord be angry with me, let the hermits consider me immodest—come what may, I can't leave my lord in such a state. [*Steps around.*] Hearken, ye Guardians of the World, my lord sent me into exile, but if I transgress his commands it's not through immodesty. The force of grief overpowers me and I make so bold because I cannot help it. [*Going up and looking.*] Alas, my lord seems quite unconscious. [*Embraces him.*]

[*Rāma indicates recovery. Sītā moves away.*]

Rāma. Why this sudden thrill?

Sītā. Exiled as I am, I made so bold and now I'm really afraid.³

¹ Sītā herself being invisible by the absence of any habitation 'Vedavyasa. Sage's magic.

² *nāśampāta*, or 'blocked up'; 'in the

³ Sītā is inaudible to Rāma.

Rāma. [*Mournfully.*]

Embrace me close, Vaidehī.

Sītā. I did no wrong.

Rāma. Let me see you, sweetheart.

Sītā. The saint's command prevails. What's a poor woman to do?

Rāma. Give up this ancient grudge.

Sītā. That's what I say to my lord—

Rāma. Why so cruel to me? (15)

Sītā. My lord, that reproach is the wrong way round.

Rāma. My queen, I do beseech thee.

Sītā. I'm all attention; pray command me.

Rāma. As thou art of noble character.

Sītā. Ah! now life's worth while.

Rāma. And was driven from the realm.

Sītā. My lord rules all his subjects.

Rāma. For this fault forgive me. (16)

Sītā. Do thou forgive, and I'm content for ever.

Rāma. When again couched on a mantle's end¹ shall I while away
a full-moon night with thee pillowed on my arm? (17)

Sītā. Ah, so fearful of scandal—and your love you pine for is very near.

Rāma. Oh Janaka's daughter, my darling, vouchsafe an answer. [*Faints.*]

Sītā. Why, my lord has fainted again. I'll revive him. [*Fans him
with the end of her garment.*]

Rāma. [*Puts out a hand and seizes the garment.*] Why, it seems like
the end of a garment. Now who can it be? [*Reflects.*] Nay,

None on earth, I believe, but Sītā my queen could fan me like
this with a breeze from the end of her robe (18)

So I will look at her. [*Opens his eyes.*] My eyes are so clogged with
incessant tears I can see nothing at all. So I'll take a pull on this and
wipe them away. [*Wiping away his tears with the end of her mantle
he pulls it off*]

Sītā. [*Letting go of her mantle.*] My lord should not dry his tears on
another person's garment like a practised lover.

Rāma. [*Looking at the fallen mantle.*] How is it I can see the garment
and not the wearer?

Rashly have I snatched another's garment as lovely as a
snake's skin in the moonlight, slipped down from the vault of
heaven. (19)

¹ ? *pañāna-sayana*. Jayacandra with Vedavyasa takes *anta* = *ramya* quoting the Śabdārṇavam, but *pañāna* must have the

usual meaning of 'hem, edge of garment' as below.

[*Inspecting it again.*] Yet why do I blame myself for acting without due deliberation? Clearly this¹ is the same as was shown to me by Māyāvati the forest deity of Citrakūṭa.

This mantle brought to me by the force of fate is soft-eyed²

Sītā's—a gage in our gambling and a noose in love's frolics:

a fan after dalliance to waft away the weariness of play,

a couch for midnight quarrels. (20)

Sītā. I'm glad my lord has recognized it.

Rāma. Now in what way can I show it special honour as my love's favourite? [*Reflects.*] Yes, that is the special honour enjoyed by none else. [*Puts it on. Wraps it round, then looks at himself.*] The hermits might wonder why I had two mantles, so I will discard my own. [*Throws it away.*]

Sītā. [*Takes it delighted.*] Now I've got the delightful fruit of living so long. [*Smells it.*] Good, my lord's mantle carries no scent of cosmetics. The Rāghavas are absolutely true to their word. [*Puts it on.*] Ah, as I put this on, it feels delicious from its contact with my beloved, as if I were reclining on the bosom of my lord with thrills in every limb.

Rāma. [*Astonished.*] Some one has seized the mantle before it has reached the ground, so I think the fruit of my desires must be near at hand. [*Reflects.*] The removal of the mantle is reflected in the water, but not Sītā. Why is that? Yes, this power of hers may be derived from the dwellers in the Saint's hermitage. Now by what means can I see her face to face? Oh, Princess of Videha have you no memory of the old times, that you do not even let me see you?

Sītā. Where are those old times to-day?

Rāma. On Citrakūṭa when thou hadst gone to gather flowers, slender lady, I followed thee in secret and with passion clasped thy mantle's hem scattering the blossoms, thou hadst gathered, on the ground. (21)

Sītā. [*Smiling.*] Tyrant, a good reason for keeping you at a distance.

Rāma. What, does she give no answer at all?

Sītā. Here I am with evening coming on. I can't leave my lord in this state all alone,³ so what am I to do? [*Looks round in every direction.*] Good, here's dear old Kauśika coming this way looking for something, it seems, with his eyes on the ground and absorbed in curiosity, so I'll slip away. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter the Jester searching for something.*]

¹ Reading uncertain.

² Gazelle-eyed.

³ Lit. with the deity as the second.

Jester. Now where ever can his Highness be? [*Stepping and looking round.*] There's my dear companion looking distracted and adorning the bank of the pool with his charming form. I'll go up to him. [*Approaching.*] Good luck to you!

Rāma. [*Looking round.*] Good, here's good old Kauśika. Where have you been, comrade?

Jester. I've spent the whole day since the sun got up looking for you.

Rāma. Why were you so eager to find me?

Jester. I heard something at dawn, when I was hidden in a clump of shrubs.¹ The ascetic maids and the heavenly nymphs were having a private confabulation, and I overheard a hermitage secret being concocted from their lips. It was not a thing you'll like—it's troubling me like a secret babe in the womb.

Rāma. What sort of hermitage secret?

Jester. Oh, don't you know her ladyship?

Rāma. [*Covering up his ears.*] A secret about a woman! Not another word!

Jester. Don't be alarmed! Am I not the companion of Rāma. Don't you know her ladyship, the celestial nymph of old?

Rāma. [*Aside.*] A story of a nymph, then there is no harm in hearing it. [*Aloud.*] Which celestial nymph. Urvāśi or Tilottamā?

Jester. I don't know, Tilly or Silly something.² Anyhow she wants to make a game of you by playing the adventures of a princess. Our Princess of Videha separated so long ago.

Rāma. [*Aside.*] Misery! Kauśika must be right. Besides, for my darling to be invisible while I could see an object that proved her presence—that is impossible among humans. This nymph has deceived me all through, taking any form she chooses.

Parched with thirst I thought I'd found pure water and clasped my hands in delusion to drink of a mirage in the wilderness. (22)

[*Looking at the mantle.*] Why, even this mantle has she fashioned with her many spells. What wonderful skill in deception!

Jester. You're looking vexed, comrade. Has she deceived you?

Rāma. I have been deceived.

Jester. Is my secret turning out differently?

[*Voice behind the scenes.*]

The fierce-rayed sun after burning all the world with unmitigated blaze, grows milder now towards eventide. Even so

¹ Bower of *atimukta* shrubs.

² *Tiluttamā*—*Siluttamā*, suggesting *Tilottamā*, 'of supreme virtue'.

a bitter tyrant at first afflicteth all the world with his full power and then his ardour is calmed with the mellowness of age. (23)

Rāma. [*Observing.*]

The blessed sun is setting—

One by one the rows of fresh lotus petals contract as the sun goes down, along with the fingers of many a dame parted from her beloved, intent on counting the days to the end of separation. (24)

Moreover

The steeds of the sharp-rayed sun are bewildered. The charioteer stays their course by drawing in the reins and urges them on with strokes of the goad. On trembling feet they can neither halt nor move, then their hooves slipping they plunge in confusion into the ocean from the rugged ridge of the western mountain. (25)

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

ACT V

[*Enter the Jester.*]

Jester. [*Looking off towards the retiring room.*] It's near the time for the ascetics' meeting—so you must hurry up.

[*Enter Rāma.*]

Rāma. Evening rites are over, oblations offered in the fire and the rising sun duly worshipped. Completing thus the ritual at dawn I have come to pay homage to the saints, whose sole wealth is their self-control. (1)

Jester. Here is the audience hall,¹ pray enter.

Rāma. [*Indicates thought as he enters.*] Ah, it is a marvel, what happened to us yesterday—

In that water, so transparent that it seemed unreal, I saw the Lady with the lotus eyes. Her face between her hanging locks was charming in its grace, with pale rounded² cheeks. (2)

Rather it looks as if Tilottamā was mocking me.

The nymph might well produce a jasmine garland just like Sītā's handiwork, and footsteps in the sand just the same; she

¹ *Maṇḍapa maṇḍapa* — 'pavilion, tent, *shāmāna*'.

² *pāṇḍura* — *pīna gaṇḍam*. Jayacandra explains that though they had been thin

through separation, they had now become fatter from expectation. Rather the poet describes a beautiful face without regard to the situation.

might counterfeit the reflection, but how could she fan Rāma with the breeze of a mantle's border in her hand? (3)

[Indicates thought.]

Jester. He seems very thoughtful—so I'll sit down and question him more closely to-day. [*Sitting down.*] Hello, comrade, don't sit there, or anywhere else, and make my heart flutter, looking as black and sticky¹ as a storm cloud. With your chain of pearls round your neck you look like one of the palace pillars, made of sapphires, very lofty and so hard to climb. So be seated on this throne as on the circle of a lotus pericarp, the white lotus is the pavilion of the audience hall² in this palace of Lakshmi, the praises of which are sweetly sung by vassal kings assembled at the time of homage—sit there and eclipse the greatness of your holy grandsire³ mounted on the lotus pericarp of Vishṇu's⁴ navel.

Rāma. As you say. [*Sits down pondering.*] To-day I seem to have become sensible of new joys and pains. [*Lays his hand on his heart in deep thought.*]

So many days, when my wife was cast away, my heart was broken in despair and I felt neither joy nor pain. Now from the sight of the reflection and the rest my heart takes hold of pain and joy again (4)

[*Goes into a reverie.*]

Jester. [*Observing him, aside.*] Ah, now I'll find out what he's driving at. [*Aloud.*] O King, these lions of the throne seem to have grown weary of supporting a very heavy burden. they are spouting showers of foam in the form of strings of pearls, that issue from cavities of their mouths. So I guess you've grown heavier, supporting the Earth with your two arms and the Earth's daughter⁵ with your heart.

Rāma. [*Aside.*] Kauśika has heard something⁶ and wishes to know about Sītā. He is a friend of my childhood so I'll tell him how things stand. [*Aloud*] That's it, my friend—unceasingly I remember Vaidehī.

Jester. For her faults or her virtues?

Rāma. For neither.

Jester. If you leave out those two, what else is there that ladies are remembered for?

¹ *snigdha* – *snigdha*.

² Construction of *dāsera*, 'slaves', is not clear.

³ *Brahma*.

⁴ *Madhu-mathana*.

⁵ Sītā, daughter of the earth to which in the old tale she returned.

⁶ Or reading *upakṣepya* 'is alluding to Sītā's story and wishes to learn all about it'

Rāma. With other couples passionate love may be obedient to a cause—but with Sītā and Rāma it was not so.

The bond of my love was manifest for years in weal and woe,
without the need of words ; centred in her as in my own self,
it was based on sincerity without thought of fault or virtue. (5)

Jester. Don't try to deceive Vaidehī¹ or an old friend like me with these honeyed words, all false. Why in the absence of the queen, you—

Rāma. You think Rāma by himself is indifferent to Sītā, but you have no proof of that.

On the outside I am hard, but my affections are concealed and
my tender feelings are hidden like the filaments in the lotus
stalk. (6)

Jester. Violent sorrow does not² affect your greatness as the sacred ocean is not² reduced by submarine fires. But I'm softer³ by nature, and when I remember the plight of Queen Sītā I am all scorched up like snow flakes⁴ by a forest fire : so help me.⁵ [*Weeps.*]

Rāma. If you consider Sītā worthy of remembrance, why did you not prevent me when I was about to put her away?

Jester. It is hard for servants to direct their king, even when he's in a good humour. much worse when he's terribly angry.

Rāma. Comrade, kings like me do not plunge into such a state of anger that they do not listen to their friends.

A king who shows excessive might should be restrained by
ministers, abodes of virtues, as when the sun afflicts the earth,
he is obscured by clouds heavy with water. (7)

Rāma. Dwelling on the story of Sītā is painful for us both. Go then to the entrance and tell the doorkeeper that the time has come for the audience of the ascetics and so they should mount guard with their staves at every door.

Jester. Why, your Majesty, what sort of ascetics are these to be received with such honour? They only eat fruit and radishes,⁶ wear garments of bark and flourish huge sticks.

Rāma. That doubt of yours is out of place. Is not the achievement of knowledge, the guide to all human ends, based on the union of the self with the absolute?⁷ Look you,

The light that ever lies within us does not manifest true mean-

¹ *su mam* not clear Not likely to be *sumam*, 'flower'.

² Reading *na* before *parihāsi*.

³ Lit. 'lighter'.

⁴ Or 'dew-drops', *tusāru-bindu*.

⁵ *tā paritāpāḥi mam* Omitted in the Sanskrit *chāyā* of both editions, and in Vedavyasa's translation

⁶ *kandamūla*. Can be 'tubers and roots'.

⁷ *mūla-stayoga*.

ing unless it is lit up by the adepts;¹ even the energy called fire is unequal to its function without the wind. (8)

Jester. If the audience of the ascetics is so important, I must hasten to carry out your orders. [*Goes out and re-enters.*] Oh, I went just now to the door at the King's bidding and I saw two hermit boys come to show their skill to my comrade—Oh, my word, they are lovely! dark and glossy of complexion but still lacking the bloom of youth—Being children they have not attained their full stature,² but with the richness of their beauty they look like two sons of Cupid, two shoots of fortune near the pillars of the gate-house. Very tall like *sul* trees, they are pulsing with life, very restless, very strong, and exceedingly grave.³

Rāma. [*Significantly.*] What prevents their coming within range of our vision?

Jester. Your curiosity is aroused in these two charming boys, so just listen to this introduction.

Rāma. Well, go on—

Jester. These two are pupils of the great sage Vālmiki, they are proficient in their knowledge of the lute, and have a piece never heard before. And they say they should be given a seat on the ground, because the people of a royal sage like themselves have such respect for the ascetics.⁴ And the sage, they say, told them to sing their poem accompanied by the lute⁵ before your Highness.⁶ It is a difficult poem on the deeds of a great man composed by a sage—profound, significant, and never heard by anybody before. It is full of sentiment, concordant with the science of music, delightful with the artistic combinations of its words. Then when the king's mind is attracted by this exceptional skill they are to observe him and what he does.

Rāma. Ah, this introduction expresses assurance in their art and in their pride—My friend, grant them what they wish, and bring them in without delay, so that they do not go away impatient of the long wait.

Jester. Why should they be impatient? There they stand with the chamberlains all over them—they are so fond of each other and so like each with their side-locks that the men gaze at them saying, 'Rāma and Lakshmaṇa were like that, when they graced the palace and the

¹ *āptapādān*

² *asamāpta-pamāna asanūpta-pamāna*

³ Omitting *apramādhā* *via*, *asamkhepūā* *via*, and rearranging slightly. *apramādhā* as it stands is incorrect—'not mattentive'—has little force. *asamkhepūā* *via* equals *asamkhepūā* *na* 'not compressed as it were'. These words look rather like the remains

of a marginal direction to the actor, 'carefully not to be abridged!'

⁴ *padanam* it is not clear.

⁵ Lit 'accompanied by notes of the lute strings'.

⁶ *māmadabhadrasa dūā rādulān* is not clear. *gadu amhe . . . guamha* 'when we sing'.

Great King Daśaratha was still alive', and the memory of your childhood and of the old king fill their eyes with tears.

Rāma. Do they resemble us when we were children?

Jester. They do indeed.

Rāma. My curiosity is growing, so bring them in without delay.

Jester. As your Highness commands. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter the two ascetics, Kuśa and Lava, with the Jester showing them the way.*]

Jester. This way, gentlemen. [*Steps around.*]

Kuśa. [*Turning aside.*] My dear Lava, when I took farewell of mother and set out for the king's palace at the bidding of the revered Vālmiki, she gave you a sign with a pull on your sidelocks and took you into her leafy hut—With what secret errand did mother commission you?

Lava. No errand at all—But the hermits were crowding round the hut and she took me inside and clasped me tightly in her arms.¹ She kissed my head smiling sweetly.² Then timidly she brought her face quite close to mine and whispered in my ear,³ 'My child, I want you two to forgo your inborn pride and salute the king, and ask about his health.'

Kuśa. It is fitting to ask about his health, but why the obeisance?

Lava. Why not?

Kuśa. Men of our family do obeisance to none.

Lava. Who told you that?

Kuśa. Mother.

Lava. And yet she bade us salute him. An elder's command should not be questioned.

Kuśa. Well, let us go forward. Later on we shall act as suits the occasion.

[*They both step round.*]

Jester. This way gentlemen, this way.

Rāma. [*Looking round.*] This must be the two boys coming this way under Kauśika's guidance. Why do I feel so strange?⁴ What can the reason be?

I know them not, know nothing of their purpose. Yet a mere glance has brought tears to mine eyes. (9)

¹ With her slender waist.

² Lit. 'smelled my head with a sweet smile' indicated by *sit-kara*, a little hiss sucking in the breath.

³ Lit. (?) 'timidly, gradually enlarging her ear-ornament covering my face with hers, thus she directed'. As she brings

her face across her son's face he sees the width of her ear-ornament, which appears to grow larger. On the other hand, the usual meaning of *karnapatra* 'ear-leaf' is lobe of the ear, not ornament.

⁴ *asmāyita*.

[Nay, what is wonderful in that?

At a mere glance those that are kin in some curious way attract the mind. The moonstone knows naught of faults and virtues. Does it hesitate in melting at the rising of the moon?]¹ (10)

I will just see what they look like. Why, I can't even see. As I try to look at these two boys a peculiar feeling comes over my heart, that I never felt before, a mixture of fear and joy, of sorrow and pity. It makes me faint. [*Indicates faintness.*] Why are these tears falling? They seem to have relieved the oppression of my heart. I feel myself again. I will look at them again now that my eyes are freed from the screen of tears. [*Observing.*] Their bearing is grave and noble, the fashion of their dress is quiet and charming, their gait gentle with the onset of discipline. Clearly these two must be well born.

Jester. There's his Majesty. Go up to him as you wished.

Kuśa. Lava, you know what I said just now about an obeisance?

Lava. Why, what now?

Kuśa. As I approach this king my heart trembles with awe and I cannot control my limbs. Why am I deserted by a pride as great as his? In front of him I cannot keep my head erect. Why say more? There, I have bowed to him.

Lava. What, has my noble brother become as completely helpless as myself?

[*Both do obeisance.*]

Rāma. No, gentlemen, you should not pass the bounds of propriety. Why have you bowed to me? Alas, that brahmins have bowed their heads to me [*Indicates distress*]

Jester. Come, why are you troubled? You've not accepted the homage they tender, so you're none the worse for it.

Rāma. Kauśika is right. Gentlemen, your consideration is very charming, but hearken

Let the obeisance ye have paid me all too hastily now become on my behalf an offering to your teacher's feet. (11)

Jester. My comrade's orders are irresistible. That's the conclusion of that confusion.²

Kuśa and Lava. [*Rising.*] And is all well with your Majesty?

Rāma. Well, indeed, at seeing you. Come, am I to receive your inquiries for my health and not the embrace fitting for a host?³

¹ Perhaps an interpolation. Rāma has no knowledge of their being connected with him in any way. *pariṇāmottā*. Otherwise, 'That's the end of the obeisance business.'
³ *atithi bhagavaṇa-ya*.

² To represent the jingle of *esa paṇamaṣa*

[*Embraces them.*] My heart is thrilled as I touch them. [*Reflects.*] I do not know the bliss of a son's embrace, yet I must have attained its like. It is fitting that householders go on their way with faces turned away from penance groves.

[*Makes to seat them on half the throne.*]

Both lads. Nay, that is the royal throne, we must not sit there.

Rāma. If any object intervenes there is no breach of proper conduct, so be seated on the throne with my lap in between.

Both lads. [*Indicating reluctance.*] Your Majesty is too kind.

Rāma. Do not be so bashful.

By reason of their age children should be fondled even by those of lofty virtues. The crescent of icy rays, because it is young, becomes the *ketaku* leaf on Śiva's head. (12)

[*Looking at them with tears in his eyes, he embraces them again.*

Looking at the Jester.]

Do you remember how many years have passed since Sītā was exiled?

Jester. [*Reflecting.*] I remember, worse luck. [*Reckons the number on his fingers and shows three toes over.*] No need of so much reckoning. Anyway you take it, to-day is the tenth year since Queen Sītā was exiled by your own hand.

Rāma. [*Observing the two boys.*] If she had a safe delivery [and if some child were lost,]¹ then her child by this time would be just about——

Jester. Ow! All this tale of a long-lost child, nobody knows, makes me stiff with woe. [*Weeps.*]

Rāma. I, too, as I look at these hermit lads, have fallen into a state of unbearable pain.

Whatever age² the exile supposes his own child has reached, when he sees a boy that's come to that same age, his heart is stirred and moved to tears. (13)

[*Embraces them and weeps.*]

Jester. [*Excited.*] Avaunt, let go, snakes, let go. Save the boy's life. Send them off the throne.

Rāma. [*In confusion lets go of the boys.*] Why, comrade, what is the matter?

Jester. I've heard tell from the mouths of the oldest inhabitants of Sāketa that whoever mounts upon the throne, if he is no Rāghava, his head will split into a hundred bits.

Rāma. [*Agitated.*] Quickly, pray get down.

¹ Jayacandra would prefer to omit *yadi kacid* and take *avayāheta* with the words that follow in the sense of 'attain to'.

Apparently Rāma has not completed his sentence when the Jester breaks in.

² Or 'condition, state', *avastha*.

[*The two boys get down and sit on the ground.*]

Rāma. Are you both all right? No trouble in your heads?

Both lads. Yes, sir, we are quite all right. No trouble in our heads.

Jester. Oh, wonderful, wonderful. There they are with their bodies in their natural state uninjured.

Rāma. What is wonderful in that? [*Points to the boys.*] Persons devoted to penance are enveloped in blessings.¹ Look you,

Verily, on bodies protected by the armour of penance, arrows
are of no avail – nay, the edges of Indra's bolt are absolutely
blunt. (14)

[*To the two boys.*] Tell me, do you both dwell together in the same place?

Both lads. That, your Majesty, was ordained² from the first.

Rāma. So.

Jester. They're guests, you know, your Highness, you should entertain them with your conversation.

Rāma. The sight of your beauty has aroused my curiosity and leads me to ask you these questions. What caste and stage of life do you adorn by birth and initiation?

[*Kuśa signs to Lava.*]

Lava. The princely caste and the student stage.

Rāma. They are not Brahmans, so there is little wrong in their salutations of myself and acceptance of a lowly seat. Then which of the two ancestors of the royal clans, the sun and moon, is the founder of your house?

Lava. The blessed one of a Thousand Rays.³

Rāma. Why, they turn out to be the same lineage as ourselves!

Jester. Is it one answer for both?

Rāma. Are you two related to each other?

Lava. We are real brothers.

Rāma. The resemblance is striking. Is there any difference of age?

Lava. We are twins.

Rāma. Now I understand. Which of you is the elder and what is hisname?

Lava. [*Indicating Kuśa with folded hands.*] In honouring my noble brother I call myself Lava, and he, paying his respects to our teacher — [*Indicates he is at a loss.*]

Kuśa. And my name is Kuśa.

Rāma. Ah, how dignified and charming is the custom.⁴

¹ And so protected against injury.

² *parṇita* 'completed'.

³ i. e. the sun.

⁴ i. e. of the younger brother not pronouncing the elder's name

Jester. We've got their names, but he hasn't told us who's the elder.

Rāma. Oh, surely that indication with his folded hands and refraining from uttering the name have given us the answer that Kuśa is the elder.

Jester. Good, now I've got it.

Rāma. What is your teacher's name?

Lava. Why, the revered Vālmiki.

Rāma. By what relation?

Lava. By instruction after initiation.

Rāma. I wish to know who is your father, the progenitor of your persons.

Lava. I do not know his name, and no one in this hermitage ever utters it.

Rāma. Ah, such is greatness!

Kuśa. I know his name.

Rāma. Tell me.

Kuśa. He's called the Ruthless One.

Rāma. [*Looking at the Jester.*] What an extraordinary name!

Jester. [*Reflecting.*] Yes, that's what I'll ask 'em—Who is it speaks of him as Ruthless One?

Kuśa. Mother.

Jester. Does she do it when she's vexed, or when she feels herself?

Kuśa. Anytime she sees us lacking in good manners owing to our being so young, she will chide us saying, 'No arrogance you Sons of the Ruthless One.'

Jester. If their father's name is Ruthless One—he has disgraced their mother and sent her into exile—and she can't bear it and scolds the boys like that.

Rāma. Kauśika is right [*Sighing.*] Alas, what a hapless plight is mine. She, poor thing, by my fault, in that way will chide her offspring with angry words.

[*Looking at the boys with tears in his eyes.*]

And is this gentleman—Ruthless One—ever present in your hermitage?

Lava. No, never.

Rāma. [*Agitated.*] Is there any news of him?

[*Lava looks at Kuśa.*]

Kuśa. Up to the present we have not saluted him. But mother's sighs as shown by her single braid are for him.

Rāma. Have you never been kissed by him?

Kuśa. Not even that.

Rāma. That is a very long and grievous separation, that you have not

seen each other for such a long while. [*Looking at the Jester, aside to him.*] I am full of curiosity to know their mother's name. It is not proper for me to inquire about a woman, especially in a hermitage. So what can be done?

Jester. [*Aside to Rāma.*] Isn't the Brahman caste mighty on account of irresistible speech? I'll ask them myself. [*Aloud.*] What, sirs, is your mother's name?

Lava. She has two names.

Jester. How is that?

Lava. People in the hermitage call her 'Queen', but the revered Vālmiki calls her 'Daughter-in-law'.

Rāma. Which princely clan is honoured by the sage Vālmiki's using the word 'daughter-in-law'?

Jester. The princely clans are so widely spread—impossible to say.

Rāma. And, comrade, this way a moment.

Jester. [*Going close.*] Command me.

Rāma. Does not the family history of these two lads agree with our own in every way?

Jester. How so?

Rāma. Why, you see, their age fits with the lapse of time since Sītā was with child. They are princes of the Solar line. They were unsinged and unhurt by sitting on the throne. Their father is named Ruthless One as a sign of his cruelty. Their mother is called Queen, which indicates her high rank. I am altogether troubled and perplexed by so many similarities.

[*Indicates bewilderment.*]

Jester. What, do you mean to say these boys are Sītā's children?

Rāma. No, no, not that. Alas, how can I attribute such relationship to dwellers in a hermitage. Yet

By their age and lineage, by their dark complexion and sturdy forms these two boys remind me of Sītā, and her condition, and I am profoundly troubled. (15)

[*Indicates thought and sorrow.*]

[*Voice behind the scene.*]

Ho, there, which of the Ikshvāku princes is present—Kūśa or Lava?¹

Both lads. [*Listening.*] We are both of us here.

[*Voice behind the scene.*]

Why is your task so long delayed?

That saga of the mighty warrior, the Primeval Male² com-

¹ Presumably Rāma does not hear this

² *Purāṇa-purusha* - Vishnu, i. e. incarnate in Rāma

people's talk. He sent for Lakshmana and said, 'Sītā must be exiled!' (11)

In the desolate wilderness, teeming with fierce beasts, Lakshmana abandoned Sītā and returned; leaving Sītā unprotected, distraught with grief, her face streaming with tears, and bearing in her womb the sacred offspring of the Raghus. (12-13)

Lakshmana. Alas! What an infamous part had Lakshmana!

Rāma. What fault of yours is this? These are the noble deeds of Rāma they recite. Go on—

Kuśa and Lava. That is the end of the poem.

Rāma. [*Agitated.*] Lakshmana, the worst has happened.

Rāma and Lakshmana. Then Janaka's daughter abandoned hope and life together. Fearing to narrate unpleasant things the poet brought the story to a close. (14)

Kuśa. These two exalted persons seem greatly distressed by the story of Sītā, so I will ask a question. [*To Lakshmana.*] Are you gentlemen the heroes of the Rāmāyana. Rāma and Lakshmana?

Lakshmana. Those two unhappy men.

Kuśa. And you took away Sītā?

Lakshmana. [*Ashamed.*] Unhappily I did.

Kuśa. Was Sītā the lawful wife of Rāma?

Lakshmana. Why, of course.

Kuśa. Is there any news of Sītā or her babe?

Lakshmana. We have learned it from your recitation.

Rāma. Even after this can he give us happy tidings? [*Reflecting.*] I will just ask this. Good sirs, is that the end of what you've learned or the end of the whole poem?

Kuśa. We do not know.

Rāma. We must ask Kanva. Lakshmana, call Kanva.

[*Lakshmana goes out and returns with Kanva.*]

Kanva. [*Looking round*] There is Rāma, a joy to the eyes, attended by the sons of Sītā. He is like the cool-rayed Moon when the Archer¹ and Punarvasu¹ happen at his side. (15)

Lakshmana. Noble brother, Kanva has come.

Rāma. [*Bowing*] Be seated on this seat.

Kanva. [*Sitting down.*] If you are anxious to hear the Rāmāyana, tell me at what point did Kuśa and Lava leave off.

Lakshmana. [*Recites the verse—*'In the desolate wilderness'...] That is the limit of the recitation by Kuśa and Lava.

Kanva. Listen to what follows.

¹ Asterisms.

Rāma. Heaven help me! ¹

Kuśa and Lava. He'll sing good news of Rāma's spouse.

Kaṇva. Then Vālmiki, best of sages, heard of Sītā from his pupils,
comforted her himself and brought her to his hermitage. (16)

Rāma. The Raghu house is beholden to your Reverence and I am raised
from the depths.

Kuśa and Lava. Thank heaven that Rāma's wife was so fortunate.

[*All indicate joy.*]

Kuśa. My dear Lava, who is there in Vālmiki's hermitage called Sītā?

Lava. No one of that name, Sītā comes only in the poem.

Rāma. What happened after that?

Kaṇva. Then at the fulfilling of her time, Sītā gave birth to children
twain, as the sky to Sun and Moon. (17)

Lakshmaṇa. Hail, noble brother. Happily live the Raghu race.

Kuśa and Lava. Felicitations to His Majesty on the birth of sons.

Rāma. [*Aside.*] I wish that they were Kuśa and Lava.²

Kaṇva. After due performance of the natal rites, the sage gave
them the names of Kuśa and Lava. (18)

Rāma. What, are these Sītā's children? Oh, Kuśa, my son! Oh, Lava,
my son!

Lakshmaṇa. Born of the queen here is the facsimile of my noble
brother.

Kuśa and Lava. What, is this he? Oh, father, take care of us.

[*All the princes embrace each other and faint away.*]

Kaṇva. [*Distressed*] What calamity is this?

While I recited what was surely good to hear, unhappily four
heroes of the Raghu house have been struck down by a single
friend. (19)

[*Observing them.*] Good, they are still breathing. I must take this
news to the sage and to the queen. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter Vālmiki hurriedly with Sītā*]

Vālmiki. Hurry, my child, do not delay. A swoon uncared for can end
fatally.

Sītā. Tell me, tell me the real truth—are the Raghu princes still alive?

Vālmiki. Take heart, they still live. Do you not see they are breathing?

Sītā. Yes, father, now you make me feel quite sure.

Vālmiki. [*Indicating scrutiny*] Princess of Mithilā, yonder cast
thine eyes, trying hard to brace thy courage up. Lo, the
story of thyself like a cataclysmic gale has laid low the
Raghu house. (20)

¹ *Kā gatih*, 'What way out?' 'No help for it'.

² Or, 'Perhaps they may be'

Sītā. [*Bashfully.*] Reverend sir, my noble lord has not allowed me to look at him.

Vālmiki. [*Firmly.*] Why talk of allowing or forbidding when I am here. Come, I, Vālmiki, allow you to look at him. Go up to your husband without fear.

Sītā. [*Taking a look.*] Oh, what a state he's in. Unhappy me, I'm utterly undone. [*Falls down and weeps.*]

Vālmiki. Get up, take heart. I myself will see to Rāma and Lakshmaṇa. Come, Rāma, my child, and Lakshmaṇa take heart.

Sītā. Kuśa, my son, and Lava, dear, wake up.

[*With these words she indicates the sprinkling of water.*]

Rāma. [*Recovering.*] Noble Kaṇva, is Sītā still alive?

Vālmiki. Just in front of you.

Rāma. [*Looking up.*] What, has your Reverence arrived?

[*Indicates shame.*]

Vālmiki. Be not ashamed, compassion should be extended to a wife.

Lakshmaṇa. [*Reviving.*] Has my noble brother recovered consciousness?

Rāma. I have, unhappily.

Kuśa and Lava. [*Recovering.*] Oh, father, take care of us.

[*They fall weeping at Rāma's feet.*]

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa. [*Embrace and comfort them.*] Don't be alarmed, dear boys.

Vālmiki. How now, are you upset¹ by the sight of your father? What is this weeping for? Wipe away your tears.

[*Kuśa and Lava wipe away their tears and stand looking at Rāma.*]

Sītā. [*Aside.*] Who is it that you are looking at like that?

Rāma. Alas, what apathy Sītā shows. She does not even open her mouth to welcome my presence after so long a time.

Vālmiki. [*Wrathfully.*] O king of noble birth, firm in friendship, acting after deliberation, was it fitting for you to exile Queen Sītā on hearing nothing but idle chatter of the populace? Sītā, given in marriage by Janaka, accepted for you by your father, and auspiciously wedded,² Sītā, whose virtue is vouched for by Vālmiki, whose purity is testified by Fire himself; Sītā, the mother of Kuśa and Lava, the daughter of the Earth.

[*Rāma indicates utter confusion.*]

Was it fitting, Lakshmaṇa? Nay, what fault was it of yours? You had to obey commands being the younger. [*To Rāma.*] At the end of

¹ *durlakṣita*, 'wayward'.

² *Lit.* having auspicious things made for her by Arundhati, 'a star in the Great Bear'.

the slaying of Rāvana's warriors what god was accepted as the guarantor for receiving Sītā back ?

Rāma. The holy Fire.

Vālmiki. Then what, sir, was the reason for ceasing to believe him ?

Sītā. Alack, alack, my noble lord is taken to task like this all because of wretched me.

[*Stops up her ears.*]

Vālmiki. If the deity of Fire was appointed witness to the purity of Kuśa and Lava's mother, how came you to take to heart this idle scandal among the common people ? (21)

[*Rāma supplicates the Sage with his hand.*] (?) ¹

What, will he put me off ² with his strong hand ?

Sheltered in the hearts of the common herd love can live,
artless in its limitation, but not as a garland ³ in the heart of
a king, as sesamum will not grow in sand. (22)

My child, this is no time for hesitation.⁴ Take Kuśa and Lava, and let us return to our hermitage. [*Steps round.*]

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa. Oh please, your Reverence may go.

Vālmiki. [*Returning.*] Princess of Videha, he orders punishment of even those that resort to a hermitage, so you must prove your innocence yourself.

Sītā. I prove my innocence ?

Vālmiki. You are sinless.

Sītā. [*Bashfully.*] I will declare in the midst of the people that the hapless daughter of Videha's king has never broken the rule of virtue.

Vālmiki. Let it be proclaimed aloud that the retribution shall be in keeping with the wrong.

Sītā. A preceptor's bidding must be obeyed. [*Folds her hands and looks towards every quarter.*] Hearken, ye Guardians of the Quarters, and ye deities that dwell in the sky. Hearken, Gandharvas, Siddhas, and Vidyādharas and ye who by your mystic power see all the secrets of the world—Hearken, ye great sages Vālmiki, Viśvāmitra, Vasishṭha, and all. Hearken O Sun with a Thousand Rays, revered ancestor of the Raghu house—witness of the good and evil deeds of all. Thus do I, Sītā, declare the truth regarding the purity of my conduct.

Vālmiki. Behold the marvel brought about by Sītā's greatness even without the force of magic powers !

¹ Something of this kind seems to be indicated by the following sentence, but the text has Rāma-*Āyuyamānamiva*. The Commentator explains this as *īṣat spṛīyamānam*, understanding this to mean, Rāma touches

the sage with his hand. The reading appears to be defective.

² *atirāhayati*.

³ *jālamālyam* ('?').

⁴ *kaṇḍūyana*, 'scratching your head'.

All. [*Astonished.*] Wonderful! Marvellous! Even as the queen was speaking, the whole world animate and inanimate, as if in rapt attention, has hushed every sound and ceased from all activity. And so,

The seas sink to rest with rings of billows very still. Even this breeze, whose very nature is to move, hangs motionless in the air. The herds of elephants stand without the movement of an ear. The whole world is intent on Sitā's words. (23)

Sitā. If (any say that¹) I have thought of another than thee—delight of the Raghu's house, sole archer in the worlds of gods and demons, who divided the mighty ocean with the embankment built with a thousand mountains uprooted, who fulfilled thy Sire's command confident of its importance for all the world—if (any say that¹) any other has entered my mind, been addressed or viewed by my eyes with any feeling contrary to my marriage vows, then in answer to my words of truth may the holy Earth of magic powers assume a form divine, clearly visible to all, and reveal to the world the purity of my heart.²

[*All indicate excitement.*]

Vālmiki. What change of mood³ is this appearing in the world full of vague alarms?

A roar issues from the depths of the Underworld filling the resounding cavity of space. These streams,⁴ as though wearied by their falls, wander lazily in all directions. All around the briny deeps in abounding joy have swept across their limits,⁵ the forests on their shores, with ocean waters and seem to have been churned⁶ into foam. (24)

Sitā, all the omens have appeared in your regard. Recite the truth once more.

[*Sitā repeats the speech 'If any say that I have thought . . .'*]

[*Voice behind the scene.*]

All hail to Kine, to Brahmins and the Raghu house.

The all-supporting goddess Earth, with her ocean zone is drawn from the nether regions by Sitā's⁷ words of truth. Lightly emerging from the waters,⁸ she leaves this solid form

¹ Without this addition the sentence is confused, 'if I have thought of another—may the Earth reveal my purity'

² Text has *padīkarodu* apparently as an alternative to *padīkarodu*

³ *Rasāntaram* a change of *rasa*, 'feeling', not another *Rasa* earth; Before Sitā's speech all nature was silent

⁴ Reading *surito* for *grāyo* which makes no sense

⁵ Reading *sumam* with Jayacandra for *Sitam*.

⁶ *Muthyamāna* being passive can hardly be 'churning the forests'.

⁷ Daughter of the Great King of Mithila.

⁸ Reading *toyomayana*.

and mounts to the middle world using the might of her celestial shape clearly revealed. (25)

[*All listen and indicate astonishment.*]

Vālmiki. What mean these strange phenomena never seen or heard before?

This light rises from the abode of serpents,¹ these breezes from the underworld. Fragrant with garlands of cool lotuses they have long² been scenting all the quarters. Here by degrees is manifest the Earth herself. King fold thy hands. Lakshmana do obeisance. Kuśa and Lava make an offering of flowers. (26)

[*They all act as described.*]

[*Enter the Earth, indicating the opening of the nether regions, attended by ladies in similar noble and shining apparel and with showers of blossom.*]

All. [*With folded hands.*]

Thou bearest the whole world, thou art borne on the Great Serpent's⁴ head. The gods aforetime drew from thee whatever they desired. (27)

The lofty Vindhya and Kailāsa are thy two breasts, O goddess—the Ganges is thy necklace—the oceans are thy jewelled girdles. (28)

Indra runs on thee to produce the requisites of sacrifice—thou art declared the source of gems and healing herbs. (29)

Obeisance to the holy all-supporting Earth.

[*All do obeisance.*]

Earth. [*Looking round in all directions.*] Ah! How irresistible is the command of faithful wives returned.

I have risen from afar, drawn up by Janaka's daughter from that region so remote that even ascetics of finite austerities can never reach it: from that place where the rays of the sun pervading heaven and earth have their passage obstructed, where Garuḍa, whose impetus no deep can check, must slacken his pace to carry it. (30)

So to her only shall I speak. Sita, my child, how do you wish me to help you?

Sitā. [*Looking round in surprise*] Who are you, my lady?

Earth. Do you not know me?

Saints regard me as the fellow of the mystic Om. I am the source of all, animate or inanimate. In me alone can penance

¹ Nāgas.

³ Śeṣha.

² Or 'at last, after a long time', which is not much better.

fractify. Know me, Sitā, as the spirit of the Earth come up to thee. (31)

Know also this, my child.

Thy power has now in a moment brought me forth as did of old the Mighty Boar.¹ (32)

Sitā. [*Folding her hands.*] Gracious lady, take compassion and let it be proclaimed to the world that thou dost indicate me as of unblemished character.

Earth. So be it. [*Looking all round.*]

Ye sages, demons, Siddhas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, humans and guardians of the quarters hearken for a moment to my words. (33)

Be it known to all of you that Sitā has not approached even in thought any other man, but only Rāma, son of Daśaratha. (34)

[*A shower of blossom falls from the sky, with the sound of drums.*]

All. [*Joyfully.*] Oh, wonderful! These manifold signs appear in answer to the vindication of her purity by the Earth.

The drums of the celestials reverberate in the middle air. Blossoms fall from heaven in an endless stream. In the sky, extended without a break, there seems to be an impromptu canopy held up above the goddess. (35)

[*Voice behind the scenes.*]

Glory to Daśaratha maintainer of his word and glory to Rāma the sole archer. Glory is to Raghu's house freed from stain and to the queen exalted by the virtue of her conduct (36)

Earth Is Sitā's innocence established?

All. [*With folded hands.*]

By her very nature pure, Janaka's daughter was overshadowed by clouds of scandal, but now, O goddess, thou hast cleared away the clouds as autumn cleareth moonlight. (37)

[*All do obeisance.*]

What wonder if the pair is reunited!

Vālmiki. Come, sir, Kausalyā's son, honour Sitā by recognizing her purity.

Rāma. As the preceptors command. Dear Lakshmana, do you salute her feet?

Sitā. [*Folding her hands joyfully.*] Victory to my lord.

Vālmiki. Ah! a modest and dignified way of showing his recognition.

Lakshmana. [*With joy and shame.*] Lady, guilty Lakshmana salutes thee.

¹ Viṣṇu.

Sītā. Why blame yourself? Long may you live so to follow your elder's orders.

Vālmiki. Thereby, dear Rāma, have you taken Sītā back. Now speak to her yourself, take her hand in yours, and appoint her place in the sacrifice.

[*Rāma indicates bashfulness.*]

Vālmiki. Have done with bashfulness. There is nothing new in Rāma's wedding her before all the world except the sacrifice.

Rāma. It is the custom and the preceptor's command. [*Taking Sītā by the hand.*] Lady of Videha,

Offspring and the rite the gods declare the two fruits of marriage. Of these twain the first blessing has fallen to thy lot. Do thou support the second in hearth and home.¹ (38)

Sītā. As my lord bids. Now my heart is glad and life returns.

Earth. Now may there be no hindrance to the rites, may Indra rain in season and the subjects suffer no distress by reason of the union of Rāma and Sītā. (39)

[*Exit, indicating disappearance.*]

Rāma. What, has the goddess vanished?

Vālmiki. Deities are never present very long.

Rāma. With the permission of your Reverence I wish to install Lakshmana as my heir.

Lakshmana. [*Folding his hands.*] If it please his noble brother, Lakshmana, who has followed him so long, may be rewarded by the transfer of the title of heir apparent to his brother's child.

Vālmiki. These words are worthy of the Ikshvāku race.

Rāma. It must be so, Rāma never refuses a request by Lakshmana. Verily if this is what my dear brother would have done, I will accomplish it. Lakshmana bring materials for the consecration.

Lakshmana. Noble sir, everything that is needed at the time of consecration the deities have brought in handfuls. See.

Holy Indra carries his umbrella white as the moon—the goddesses Ganges and Sacī bring a pair of chowries. Masses of the people hold golden pitchers full of water. And no wonder, for such as these fortune comes readily from affection. (40)

Rāma. We two then must bear the staff.

Lakshmana. This assignment answers my request.

Rāma. Lakshmana, hold the staff. [*To Vālmiki.*] Reverend sir, do you consecrate your grandson.

¹ *vāse bhavane* can be taken 'during residence in the palace'.

Valmiki. [*Taking the pitcher and approaching.*] Hearken, ye citizens of Sāketa, ye Kings of the ends of the earth,¹ ye warriors Vibhishana, Sugriva, Hanumat,² and all,

The excellent prince³ named Kuśa son of the Mithilā Princess is consecrated this day in the sovereignty. Be his command obeyed. (41)

May the bliss that Indra has in heaven, Vāsuki in the nether world and Māndhātṛi on the earth, be with thee. (42)

[*Shouts behind the scene.*]

Victory, victory to the Great King.

Sītā. Thanks be, my dearest hope has now come true.

Rāma. That wish of Lakshmaṇa's has been fulfilled

[*All indicate joy.*]

Rāma. [*To Kuśa.*] With your permission, O King, I wish to install Lava as heir apparent.

Kuśa. As my royal father commands.

Rāma. At your pleasure. [*Takes the pitcher.*]

At the command of the Great King Kuśa, his beloved younger brother, Lava by name, do I hereby consecrate as heir apparent (43)

[*All indicate joy appropriately.*]

Valmiki. What further favour can I bestow on you?

Rama. By thy visit my wife's good name is vindicated and she becomes my companion in the sacrifice: my two sons are entrusted with the governance of the world, what further favour could there be that a preceptor might ordain. (44)

At your service. I have all complete.

Valmiki. Nevertheless, I wish you this —

May Siva, Brahmā, and Viṣṇu, may the ocean, fire, and wind, may the underworld, the three mystic sounds,⁴ and the four Vedas like oceans with their chants and charms; may abbots⁵ and ascetics of rightly perfected learning and ripe austerities shower blessings on this king, and may all his cattle prosper. (45)

¹ Lit who dwell at the ends of various quarters.

² It is not clear how they came to be present.

³ mahāratha, i.e. warrior.

⁴ Bhū, bhuvah, staḥ.

⁵ pāṭha as, 'possessors of a chair'

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