

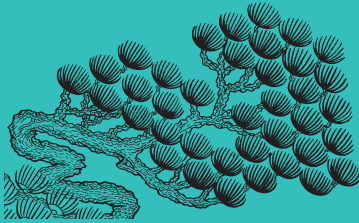
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Ramáyana

Book Three

The Forest

by Valmíki



Translated by
SHELDON I. POLLOCK

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

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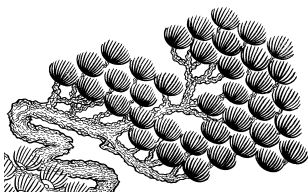


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RĀMĀYANA
BOOK THREE
THE FOREST
BY VĀLMĪKI

TRANSLATED BY
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2006

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41–47

SITA'S ISOLATION AND ABDUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

evaṃ Sītā|vacāḥ śrutvā dr̥ṣṭvā ca mṛgam adbhutam
 uvāca Rāghavo hr̥ṣṭo bhrātaraṃ Lakṣmaṇaṃ vacāḥ:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

etena hi nṛśaṃsena Mārīcen’ â|kṛt’|ātmanā

vane vicaratā pūrvam hiṃsitā muni|pumgavāḥ.

utthāya bahavo yena mṛgayāyāṃ jan’|ādhipāḥ

nihatāḥ param’|êṣvāsās tasmād vadhyas tv ayaṃ mṛgaḥ.

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

41.40 sa kadā cic cirāl loke āsāsāda mahā|munim

Agastyam tejasā yuktaṃ bhakṣyas tasya babhūva ha.

samutthāne ca tad rūpaṃ kartu|kāmaṃ samikṣya tam

utsmayitvā tu bhagavān Vātāpim idam abravīt:

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

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

evaṃ tan na bhaved rakṣo Vātāpir iva, Lakṣmaṇa,

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

bhavedd hato ’yaṃ Vātāpir Agastyen’ êva mā gataḥ.

iha tvam bhava saṃnaddho, yantrito rakṣa Maithilīm,

41.45 asyām āyattam asmākaṃ yat kṛtyaṃ, Raghu|nandana.

aham enaṃ vadhiṣyāmi grahīṣyāmy athavā mṛgam,

yāvad gacchāmi, Saumitre, mṛgam ānayituṃ drutam.

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

tvacā pradhānayā hy eṣa mṛgo ’dya na bhaviṣyati.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

taṃ bhrātaraṃ kiṃ cid uvāca Sītā.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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