

Chapter 14. Ending the Play

Janaki was amazed at the sight of the monkeys and others, as well as the way in which they were decorated and dressed up. Just then, Valmiki the sage reached the place, evidently overcome with anxiety. He described to Sita all that had happened. He loosened the bonds on Hanuman, Jambavan, and others and cried, “Boys! What have you have done? You came here after felling Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrughna.”

Sita was shocked. She said, “Alas, dear children! On account of you, the dynasty itself has been tarnished. Don’t delay further. Prepare for my immolation, so I may ascend it. I can’t live hereafter.” Sita pleaded for quick action.

The sage Valmiki consoled her and imparted some courage. Then, he went with Kusa and Lava to the battlefield and was amazed at what he saw there. He recognised Rama’s chariot and the horses and, finding Rama, fell at his feet. Rama rose in a trice and sat up. Kusa and Lava were standing opposite to him.

Valmiki addressed Rama. “Lord! My life has attained fulfilment. O, How blessed am I!” Then, he described how Lakshmana had left Sita alone in the forest and how Sita lived in his hermitage, where Kusa and Lava were born. He said, “Lord! Kusa and Lava are your sons. May the five elements be my witness, I declare that Kusa and Lava are your sons.

Rama embraced the boys and stroked their heads. Through Rama’s grace, the fallen monkeys and warriors rose, alive. Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrughna caressed and fondled the boys.

Lakshmana hurried to Sita, for Rama directed him to find out from her what she proposed to do about her “vow”. Nearing her, Lakshmana fell at her feet.

Sita wanted to fulfill the “vow” if that was Rama’s wish, so she accompanied Lakshmana to the presence of Rama. Seeing the group, she made this pronouncement as the Truth: “O Gods! O elements five! I have not dwelt even in my dream on anyone other than Rama, in mind, speech, body, or deed. O Mother! Goddess Earth! Take me into yourself.”

Immediately, the Earth sundered where she stood, with a great rumbling. From the trench so formed there arose a divine lion-throne, with the Goddess Earth seated therein. As she came to the surface, she held out Her hand. Lifting Janaki from the ground, she blessed her thus, “O Janaki! From birth until today, no day passed without your sorrowing therein. You streamed tears always. Come! In my home, be happy.” The next second, they were both out of sight. Her glory spread over the three worlds.

This was clearly seen by Lakshmana and others. They shed tears. Rama acted the role of a saddened person. He thought within himself. “Janaki has gone in consonance with the inclinations of my mind. She always moved in accordance with the plans I had in mind. Now, we should also proceed to our Vaikunta residence.” But to others, he appeared sad and grieving a little.

Soon, he left for the capital city with his brothers and sons. He performed the concluding rites of the sacrifice (*yaga*) as planned. He gave away in charity the sixteen prescribed gifts in quantities that were beyond description. Rama honoured Emperor Janaka as befitted his status and took the sons to his presence. Janaka was immensely delighted when he saw his grandsons. Since Janaka was replete with wisdom, and since he was aware through his

divine insight of Sita's divinity, he did not exhibit any surprise or wonder, anxiety or worry, over what had happened. His mind was unaffected because he knew that what had to happen had happened. His attitude was also not affected to the slightest extent by the incidents that took place. Janaka left for Mithila City filled with unbounded joy.

The *gurus* and *brahmins* came into Rama's presence, according to the message sent by him. And, they took leave of him. Happy that they were enabled to witness the great sacrifice; they returned to their homes fully content.

The lands are given to the heirs

Thereafter, calling the sons to his side, Rama advised them about the means and methods of administration of the empire. Then, he formally invested them with the insignia of imperium. He placed Bharatha's son Thaksha over the Southern Kingdom; his second son, Pushkara, was given the Pushkara Kingdom. They destroyed the remnants of demons (*rakshasas*) that were there and established themselves in those kingdoms.

The sons of Lakshmana, Chitrakethu, and Chitrangada, were mighty warriors, heroic fighters, veterans of wars. They were deputed to the Western Region; destroying the demons there, they ruled over that area. Rama invested those two with regal authority over cities with different names, which became their capital cities. He also gave all the sons valuable advice on political and administrative matters.

Kusa was installed in Ayodhya, so Lava was awarded the Northern Region, the treasure chest of riches. The city of Lavapura (modern Lahore) was fixed as his capital city. Rama gave away cows, lands, clothes, and money to the fullest to each.

Meanwhile, the news that Rama was contemplating return to his own place came to be known by the people of Ayodhya; they came in immense numbers to his presence and prayed that their requests be listened to. Their request was that they too be taken by him to his divine Home. The Lord said that it was a right request and he agreed to do so. He was glad at their affection and the devotion and dedication they had toward their Lord. Lakshmana led them all.

The Kishkindha Kingdom was allotted to Angada, Sugriva, Jambavan, Vibhishana, Nala, Nila, and other individuals embodying parts of divinity, and billions of monkeys who had come to fulfil the divine mission came into Rama's presence at that time. Rama said, "Vibhishana! You have to rule over Lanka; you will attain my presence in the end"; he blessed him thus. Then Rama turned to Jambavan and told him, "Jambavan! Be on the earth till the end of the *Dwapara* age. Then, incarnated as Krishna, I will fight with you. You will then recognise me as now." He blessed him in that manner.

The play ends

Then Rama went to the bank of the Sarayu River. Bharatha walked on his right and Satrugna on his left. Behind him walked the ministers and the people of the city. As they entered the waters, Bharatha merged in the Lord; Satrugna touched the water and shone in the Lotus and merged in the Lord.

The Lord uttered a blessing that all who come to the holy land of Ayodhya and all who bathe in the sacred Sarayu can reach Him.