In Pramoda park wept Pramilā, that youthful daughter of a Dānava, pained because apart from her dear spouse.

The moon-faced one, eyes filled with tears, paced constantly about the flower garden, just like the maid of Vraja, ah me, when she, in Vraja's flower groves, failed to find her Kṛṣṇa, yellow-clad, under a kadamba tree, flute at his lips.

That lovesick woman, time and again, would step inside her home, then re-emerge, like a pigeon, inconsolable in her empty pigeon house. Anon, she would climb to the roof of her dwelling and gaze toward distant Lāṅkā, dabbing with the loose end of her sari her ceaseless tears. Mute were the flute, vīṇā, muraja drum, finger cymbals, and the strains of song. The faces of her retinue turned somber at the sorrow of their pretty mistress. And who is there who has not seen the sullen faces of the flowers when their forest mistress burns in separation from the spring?

To Pramoda park came goddess Night. All atremble, chaste Pramilā in trilling tones began to speak, though sniffling, as she flung her arms around the neck of an attendant named Vāsantī, redolent with scents of spring, "Vāsantī, look, dark Night has come as though a deadly snake to bite me. Where, oh where, companion, is the conqueror of foes, my Indrajit, sovereign of the Rākṣasa clan, at this time
of peril? 'I shall be back soon,' that hero said, and went
away. I fail to comprehend the reason for this long
delay. If you should know, my confidante, do tell me, please."

Replied the attending Vāsanti, like spring's companion
cooing in the spring, "How am I to say just why the lord
of your life is late today? But, dispel your worries, you
whose husband lives. Your champion will return once he routs that
Rāghava. What do you have to fear, O friend? Who in a
battle can better him whose body is impervious
to the arrows of both Asuras and gods? Come, let us
saunter through the garden. We shall gather fragrant blossoms
and string the finest garland. We shall smile as we lay that
garland round your lover's neck, as when, with glee, the people
tie the victory pennant to the winning chariot's crest."

At that, those two walked through the grove where moonbeams played on ponds
thus causing lotuses to smile. Bumblebees buzzed, cuckoos
cooed, blossoms blossomed, and a line of fireflies shone from the
forehead of a row of trees (like a jeweled part in her
sylvan hair). Southern breezes blew, causing leaves to murmur.

Both filled the loose ends of their saris with blossoms. Who can
say how many flower petals were pearled with dewdrops from
Pramālā's eyes? A little ways away that woman spied
a sad sunflower, face turned pale, aha, pining for her
sun, and went and stood beside her saying sweetly, "I too
suffer that same agony, darling of the sun, which you
endure on this darkest night. The world now seems most gloomy
to these hapless eyes of mine. My heart, it burns in flames of
lovesick separation. That sun's radiance, which I must
witness to survive, he is hidden past the setting-hill.
Yet day after day shall I gain again the monarch of
my life (as you, chaste one, will gain yours by the grace of Dawn)?"

Having gathered up a bunch of flowers from that garden,
chaste Pramila, heaved a sigh, dejected, then addressed her
confidante, "There now, I have plucked this heap of blossoms, friend,
and shall string a graceful garland; but where ever shall I
find those two feet which I wish to worship with this floral
offering. I cannot think who might impede my king of
beasts. Come, dear one, let us now all go to Lanka city."

Confidante Yasanti answered, "How will you enter on
this day Lanka? The troops of Raghava, like an ocean
impossible to cross, surround her. There thousands upon
thousands of the Rakshasas' foes tramp about with weapons
in their grasp, like Danadharas, punishing staff in hand."

Pretty Pramila, Dvana maid, became incensed. "What
was that you said, Yasanti? When once the stream departs her
mountain cave, heading for the sea, who is capable of
standing in her way? I, the daughter of a Dānava,  
a bride within the clan of Rākṣasas—Rāvaṇa is  
my father-in-law, and Meghanāda is my spouse—am  

I to fear, my friend, that beggar Rāghava? We go this  
day to Laṅkā proper by the strength of our own arms. Let  
us see by what stratagem the gem of men prevents us!"

Thus said, that faithful wife, with a gait which matched the king of  
elephants, went inside her home of gold, seized by anger.

As when the great foe-harassing charioteer Pārtha  
following that sacrificial stallion wandered to their  
queendom, those warrior-women dressed for battle eagerly,  
enraged by blasts from the conch shell Devadatta, just so  
all the four directions resounded with the boom of drums  
as those women strode out frenzied by the wine of valor,  
unsheathing swords, twanging bowstrings, and brandishing their shields,  
while the brilliance from their golden armor glistened, lighting  
up the city! In stables, horses whinnied as they, with  
ears erect, listened to the chink of anklets, the clatter  
of belled waistbands, just as deadly cobras dance and sway when  
they hear the rapid drumbeat of the double-headed drum  
called damaru. From stalls, elephants responded with ear-  
piercing trumpeting, as the monarch among clouds trumpets  
from afar in deep, sonorous blasts. Gaily, Echo woke
in caverns and on mountain tops in forests—filling of
a sudden the environs with her reverberations.

A most wrathful, most hot-tempered woman by the name of

Nṛmūndāmālinī saddled up a hundred horses
in a mix of trappings and then led them gleefully from their
stable to a nearby platform where a hundred warrior-
women mounted them, swords rattling within scabbards against
their steeds' flanks. The crests upon their coronets bobbed high and
low; down their backs ornamented braids swung fetchingly in
concert with their quivers. Handheld lances seemed like spiky
stalks emanating from lotus blossoms. Those horses neighed,
overcome with ecstasy, just as Virūpākṣa shouts
ecstatic while he holds upon his chest that Dānava-
destroyer's pair of lotus-feet! Martial music sounded;
immortals in the heavens gave a start, as did Nāgas
in Pātāla, and likewise men within the world of man.

Spirited Pramilā dressed, overcoming with anger
her shyness and fear. The glow from the diadem atop
her chignon shone, ah alas, like Indra's bow upon the
crest of clouds. Her eyebrows drawn with black kohl were like the eye-
pleasing crescent moon upon Bhairavi's forehead. That bright-
eyed one covered her high breasts with armor and strapped a gold,
jewel-studded cummerbund artfully round her waist. Down
her back beside her quiver hung a shield, dazzling to the eyes
like the orb of the sun. Along her thigh (ah, round like
a banana tree, light of the forest!) flashed a well-honed
saber in its golden casing. Her hand grasped a long lance,
and many bangles sparkled on her arms. That Dānava
was fitted out like Haimavatī when, wild from wines of
valor, she crushed Mahiṣāsura in pitched battle or
when she vanquished Śumbha and Niśumbha. Like Īrākīnīs
and Yoginīs, the band of mounted maids ringed the chaste wife.
That pretty one rode Vādabā—flame atop the mare's fire!

As clouds call out commandingly from the skies, just so this
callipygous woman called out to her retinue in
rich, full tones, "Hear me out, Dānava maids, foe-conquering
Indrajit is now a virtual captive inside Laṅkā.

I am at an utter loss to comprehend why my life's
lord tarries there so long, neglecting me, his thrall. I will
go there, to his side; we will breach the monstrous enemy
lines and march into the city, overcoming the armed
forces of the Raghus' best—on this I give to you my
word, warrior-women. If we fail, then I shall perish in
the struggle—whatever has been written on my forehead!

We were born among the Dānava clan, my Dānava
maids. It is the fate of Dānavas to kill in combat,
or to drown within the river of our enemies' blood!

We have honey on our lips, deadly poison-glances in our eyes! Are these tender, lotus-stalk-like arms devoid of power? Come, one and all, let us see the manliness of Rāghava. We shall have a look at that handsome form which drove my auntie, Sūrpaṇakhā, mad with passion when she saw him in the Paṅcavaṭī forest; we shall gaze on warrior Lakṣmaṇa; and we shall bind up with a nāga-pāśa that cinder smudge upon the clan of Rākṣasas—Vibhīṣaṇa! We shall trample under foot the hostile camp, as do cow elephants to a clump of reeds. My ladies, you must be like lightning and fall upon our enemy!"

Those female Dānavas let loose a menacing sound, just like a herd of female elephants—gone mad in springtime.

As the progress of a forest fire is most difficult to check when accompanied by its friend, the wind, just so that chaste one headed toward her spouse, unchecked. Golden Laṅkā shook; the ocean roared; thick clouds of dust flew up on every side—yet when have clouds of smoke ever had the force to screen out flames at night? With the brilliance of just such flames, the woman Pramilā proceeded with her band of warrior-women.

Shortly, that moon-faced one reached the western gate. At once a hundred conch shells blared, a hundred awesome bows were strummed by
those women, threateningly. Lanka quaked with terror. Mahouts
shuddered on their elephants, charioteers upon their
chariots, the best of horsemen on their mounts, the monarch
on his throne, and clan wives in their inner quarters. In their
nests birds shivered, lions in mountain lairs, wild elephants
in jungles. Aquatic creatures dove to deeper waters.

Hanumān, fearsome-looking son of Pavana, sallied
forth aggressively, growling out his words, "Who are you who
on this night come out to die? Hanumān stands vigilant
at this gateway—Hanumān whose very name when heard will
cause the lord of Rākṣasas to tremble on his throne! The
jewel of the Raghu clan himself stands guard, together
with his ally Vibhiṣaṇa, lion-like Saumitri,
and a hundred other warriors, so very difficult
to best in combat. Is this some joke that you dissemblers
have assumed the guise of women? I know Niśācaras
are accomplished sorcerers. But I shall shatter with strength
of arms the power of your māyā—I shall smash the foe
when and where I find him with my fright-instilling bludgeon."

The attending Nṛmuṇḍamālinī (that wrathful, hot-
tempered woman) twanged her bow inflated, shouting threateningly,
"Barbarian, bring here at once that lord of Sītā! Who
wants you, you wretched little beast! We, by choice, have not struck
the likes of you with our weapons. Does the lioness pick
a quarrel with a jackal? We spared your life, now scamper
off, jungle-dweller! Simpleton, what is there to gain by
killing you? Be off with you, call the lord of Sita here,
and your master Lakshmana, and call that blemish on the
clan of Rakshasas, that Vibhishana! Foe-conquering
Indrajit, whose wife is pretty Pramila—his woman
now will enter Lanka, by force of arms, to worship at
her husband's feet! What man of arms, you fool, can block her way?"

With force like that of mighty winds, Hanuman, an Indra
among heroes and son of Pavana, rushed forward, but
then that champion saw with trepidation there among those
warrior-women Pramila, the Dvana, in attire
most colorful. A brilliance, lightning-like, played upon her
diadem. Her fine coat of mail glistened from her stunning
figure, shining like a mesh of sunbeams interlaced and
tinged with gems. Hanuman stood wonder struck as he thought to
himself, "When I leapt the ocean none can leap and landed
here in Lanka, I espied fearsome Bhima, ferocious,
a falchion and a human skull in hand, and wearing round
her neck a string of severed heads. I saw Ravana's sweet-
hearts, Mandodari and those other Dvana daughters
all. I watched the wives and young girls of the Rakshasas (like
slivers of the moon) return alone in dark of night, each
to her own abode. I saw that lotus of the Raghu
clan in the Aśoka grove (alas, distressed by sorrow).

But never have I seen throughout the world such beauty and
such sweetness as she has! Praise the warrior Meghanāda,
that such a brilliant streak of lightning should be forever
bound by bonds of love to the body of a cloud like him!"

And thinking to himself these words, the son of Añjanā
spoke in deep tones (as storms Prabhañjana), "O pretty one,
my lordship, sun among the solar clan, bound the captive
sea with fetters made of stone, then ventured to this city
accompanied by some thousand warriors. The Rākṣasas' king
is his foe. Your ladyship, tell me, for what reason do
you come here at this odd hour? Speak, and have no fear in
your heart. I am Hanumān, servant of the Raghus. That
wealth of Raghus is an ocean of compassion. What quarrel
do you have with him, bright-eyes? What favor do you beg? Tell
me promptly—you have come on what account? Speak. I shall make
your wishes known, your highness, at the feet of Rāghava."

The chaste one answered—aha, that message sounded to the
ears of Hanumān like the strains played on a vina thick
with honey! "That best of Raghus is my husband's foe. Be
that as it may, I personally have no quarrel with him.
My husband, lion of Indras among warriors, is world-victor by the might of his own arms. What need have I to battle with his adversary? We are all mere women, maids among this clan. But consider this, warrior, lightning's splendor, which delights the eye, kills men on contact. Here, champion, take with you my messengeress. The lovely woman will relate to Rāma what I seek. Go with haste."

Messengeress Nṛmunḍamālinī, who resembles her who wears the necklace strung with human heads, stepped forward fearlessly into the enemy's ranks, just as a ship under sail frolics in the waves without concern, even though afloat upon the waters of a shoreless ocean. Hanumān went on ahead to lead the way. The warrior throng seemed startled by that woman, just as a householder is alarmed when in the dead of night he espies a fire in his home. That irascible woman smiled to herself. All those warriors stared aghast. They milled about uneasy, banding together here and there. Anklets chimed from her feet as did the ornamental waistband round her midriff. An awesome lance in hand, she with hips well endowed strode forward dominating everyone with piercing dart-like glances. The apex of her diadem made of peacock feathers danced smartly there atop her head. A gemmed necklace flashed from
the cleavage between her shapely breasts. Down her back dangled
one jewel-studded braid, waving like Kāma's flag in spring.

With a young cow elephant's saunter, that voluptuous
one proceeded, casting light in all directions, just as
moonlight, the confidante of lotuses, shines upon a
clear lake, or as the rays of Dawn on mountain pinnacles.

Inside his tent sat the gemstone of the Raghus. Before
him stood Lakṣmaṇa, lion among champions, his hands cupped
reverently together. Off to one side was their ally
Vibhīṣaṇa, and the other warriors, most ferocious
in their mien and as spirited as the Rudra clan. The
cache of those god-given weapons shone resplendent from a
wooden altar, colored crimson by red sandalwood and
covered with a flower offering. Incense smoldered in
its censers while rows and rows of oil lamps burned on all four
sides. Everyone gazed in awe at the godly weaponry.

Some praised the sword; some marveled at that best of shields, with gold
overlaid, like clouds graced by the sun at sunset; others
spoke of the quiver; still others, of the armor, a mass
of brilliance. High-minded Rāghava himself held up that
best of bows, saying, "By the might of these two arms I, at
Vaidehī's bridegroom-choosing ceremony, broke the bow
named Pīnāka. I better not string this one! How is it,
brother Lakṣmana? Would you like to bend it?" Suddenly

the ranks cried out, and "Victory to Rāma!" rolled through the
skies in a raucous din, like the crashing roar of ocean

waves. The Rākṣasa charioteer, in panic, glanced at

Dāśarathi, then that lion spoke, "Look, Indra among

Raghus, beyond the camp. Does Dawn approach in dead of night?"

Wonder-struck, all gazed out past the tents. "That woman seems like

Bhairavi," said the gem of men. "Is she Dānava or
goddess, friend, please look. Laṅkā is a place of māyā; she

is full of wizardry; and your elder brother can assume

any shape at will. Look carefully, for that sorcerer

is not unknown to you. It was a stroke of luck, O best

of Rākṣasas, when I got you on my side. Who but you,

friend, speak, could save these weakened forces in such peril? You

are Rāma's lasting savior in this land of Rākṣasas!"

Just then the messengeress, escorted by Hanumān,

reached the tent. Politely bowing, hands cupped reverently, that

woman spoke (as if the rāginīs, all thirty-six, had

blended into song!), "I bow respectfully before your

feet, Rāghava, and to all the other venerable ones—

my name is Nṛmuṇḍamālini. I am the servant

of the Daitya woman, pretty Pramilā, pleasure of

Indrajit, lion of Indras of warriors." Offering
his blessings, warrior Dāsarathi asked, "Why have you made
your way here, messengeress? Tell me in detail by what
deed, auspicious one, I might please your mistress? Say at once."

The one who looked like Bhīmā answered, "You are the best of
warriors, Raghu lord. Please come fight with her. If not, then let
her pass, for that beauty will enter golden Laṅkā to
do obeisance to her lord, her husband. You slew many
Rākṣasas by might of your own arms. A Rākṣasa's wife
now begs battle; battle her, O Indra among warriors.
We are a hundred women strong—whomever you prefer
will fight you by herself. Take up bow and arrow, if you
choose, best of men, sword and shield, or mace—and always we are
anxious for barehanded combat! Your choice, my lord, but please
be quick about it. For your sake that chaste one holds in check
her troops, as the huntress, a Kirāta, holds her cheetah
when that lethal one goes wild on spotting a herd of deer."

Saying thus, that good woman bowed her head, as a blossom
fully blown (dewdrop studded) offers salutation by
the lowering of its head before the gentle breezes.

Answered the Raghu sovereign, "Listen, my sleek-haired one, I
never quarrel without cause. The Rākṣas' sovereign is
my foe. You are all young girls and wives within the clan. For
what offense should I act bellicose toward you? Merrily,
with fearless hearts, enter Laṅkā. Rāma, my good lady,
was born of Raghu kings, kings of warriors; your mistress, bright-eyed messengeress, is a warrior's wife, her attendants,
warrior-women. Tell her, gentlewoman, I profusely
praise her wife's devotion, her strength and valor—I beg from
her to be excused without a battle. Hail Indrajit!
Hail pretty Pramilā! It is known throughout the world, O
messengeress, that Rāghava is but a beggar now;
by twist of Fate he became impoverished, a mere forest
dweller. What gift (one which would befit you), comely one, could
I give today? I give my blessings. May you be happy!"

Thus said, his lordship turned to Hanumān, "Hero, let them
pass. Oblige this host of women by most cordial conduct."

With obeisance to Sītā's husband, the messengeress
took her leave. Smiling, friend Vībhīṣaṇa spoke, "See there, O
Raghu sovereign, see the prowess of Pramilā out there!
Note, my lord, that matchless marvel. I know not who could wage
a winning war with such a host of women, truly bold
Bhīmā-like Cāmuṇḍā—foe of the Raktabija clan!"

Added Rāghava, "My heart was gripped by fear when I saw
the figure of that messengeress, best of Rākṣasas.
Then and there I put aside all thought of fight. Only a
fool, my friend, would antagonize a tigress such as that.
Come, companion, let us have a look at your nephew's wife."

Just as when a forest fire far away penetrates a
wooded stand, filling full of flames all ten directions, that
Indra of Rāghavas saw in smokeless skies before him
a glowing mass which tinged with gold the gathered clouds. Alarmed,
he listened to the clatter of their bows, the trotting hooves
of horses, the threatening shouts, the jangle of their swords sheathed
in scabbards. Their instruments of music rang out, blending
with other sounds, as if waves of warbling birds were carried
by a thunderstorm. Banners fluttered—glimmering from gems
embossed. Horses pranced, then cantered smoothly; their belled trappings
jingled. On either side stood tall a column of soldiers
like two mountain ranges—between them marched that female corps,
just as lumbers through a mountain pass cow elephants who
fill the land with trumpeting and cause the earth to tremble.

Ahead, the wrathful, hot-tempered Nṛmuṇḍamālinī,
mounted on her kohl-black steed, held a golden banner staff
in hand. Behind her, the musicians stood just like a troupe
of heaven-sent Vidyādharis, ah, peerless upon the
face of the earth; vīnā, flute, mṛdaṅga drums, small cymbals,
and the like, blended in sweet tripping notes. Behind them, in
amongst lance-wielding warrior-women was Pramīlā, like
a crescent moon among a constellation! in prowess,
just like Bhimā! All about her there danced lightning's splendor,

born of gems. And through the welkin brandishing his flower-

bow, Rāti's husband wantonly accompanied her, striking

her repeatedly with unfailing blossom-darts. Like the

buffalo-destroying Durgā on her lion's back; like

Śāci, Indra's consort, on Airavata; like Ramā,

wife of Upendra upon the Indra among birds—like

them all, that purest heroine appeared resplendent

astride her Vaḍabā, who was herself the queen of mares

caparisoned in jewels! Slowly, deliberately, as though

oblivious to the hostile throng, that troop of women

marched. Some strummed their bowstrings; others shouted, brandishing their

swords; some vaunted lances; others laughed; while still others roared

like lionesses, deep in the forest, or Bhairavī,

driven mad by love and valor's strong intoxication!

Glancing toward that best of Rākṣasas, Rāghava spoke, "How

amazing, Naikaṣeya! I have never seen, never

even heard of such a one in all of the three worlds! Have

I awakened to a dream? Tell me honestly, greatest

jewel of friends. I cannot fathom this. It unnerves me here

to witness such a strange illusion, friend, so do not you

deceive me too. From charioteer Citraratha's mouth I

heard the news that goddess Māyā would descend to help her
slave. Is it she who perpetrated such a hoax, disguised
as faithful consort, and is it she who now proceeds to
Laṅkā? Tell me, wise one, who is doing the beguiling?"

Answered Vibhiṣaṇa, "I tell you truly, this is no
nocturnal dream, Vaidehi's husband. There is a Daitya
by the name of Kālanemi, renowned throughout the world,
a foe of the divines; this pretty Pramilā is his
daughter. The woman, my lord, was born from part of goddess
Mahāśakti and so is just as powerful as the
"Great Śakti." Who can match that Dānava in prowess? The
captivating woman, O Indra among Rāghavas,
keeps under foot the Indra among Rākṣasas, that
lion, yellow-eyed, who defeated on the battlefield
lightning-hurling Sahasrākṣa—as Digambarī keeps
under foot Digambara. To save the world, Providence
wrought these bonds which bind the hero Meghanāda, deadly
elephant upon a rampage. Just as streams of water
damp a dreaded forest fire, the enemy of woodlands,
so does this chaste wife damp with loving conversation that
doomsday fire constantly. The deadly hooded viper,\(^1\) its
strike now overpowered, remains submerged under fragrant
waters of the Yamunā. Hence, those who dwell amidst this
universe live in happiness—gods in heaven, Nāgas
in their lowly Pātāla, men within the world of man."

The Raghu sovereign spoke, "It is true what you say, best of friends; charioteer Meghanāda is the greatest of the charioteers. I have not seen skill like his in all of the three worlds! and I have fought with Bhṛgurāma, a mountain of a warrior, immovable in battle. It was, indeed, an auspicious moment, friend, when your nephew seized the bow and arrow. What shall I do now, tell me, gem of Rākṣasas? When the mighty lioness joins her mate within the forest, who can protect my herd of deer? See there, the ocean filled with *halāhala* poison surges all about us with an awful roar. As Nilakaṇṭha (conqueror of Nistārini's heart) saved the world, just so, my friend, by your power save those under your protection. Consider well, O champion, your elder brother is as fatal as a snake, his poison fangs, that greatest hero, Indrajit. If I could somehow break those fangs, my fondest hopes would be fulfilled; if not, I declare to you, I bound the sea and ventured onto golden Laṅkā all for naught."

Bowing low before his brother's feet, champion Saumitri spoke, "Why should we any longer fear the Rākṣasa, O Raghu sovereign? He who has the favor of the lord of gods, what need he fear in all three worlds, my lordship? For sure,
Rāvaṇi will fall, defeated by my hand tomorrow.

When and where does that which is not dharma triumph? The king of the Rākṣasas practices non-dharma; on the field of battle, Meghanāda will be stripped of strength due to those iniquities. For the father's faults, the son shall die. Tomorrow he who is the sun to lotus Laṅkā will descend the setting-hill; so said Citraratha, divine charioteer. So, my lord, for what reason do you fret?"

Replied Vibhūṣāṇa, "What you say is true enough, O elephant of warriors. Where there is dharma, there follows victory. By his own transgressions, alas, is the sovereign of the Rākṣasas now ruined. Meghanāda, foeman of the monarch of the skies, will die by your arrows. But you must be careful. This Dānava, Pramilā, displays great prowess; and Nṛmuṇḍamālinī—like the goddess, she who wears a garland made of human heads—is fond of battle. One who lives beside a forest in which roams the deadly lioness should be always vigilant. Who knows when, where, and on whom that Bhimā will pounce next. If from Night he obtains protection, we shall kill him in the morning."

Then the gem of Raghus addressed friend Vibhūṣāṇa, "If you would, O best of Rākṣasas, take Lakṣmana along with you from gate to gate and look in on the soldiers. See
who stands guard tonight and where. All were greatly wearied by
the battle waged with Virabāhu. Check around—what is
Aṅgada about; where is Nila, the great hero; our
ally, Sugrīva, where is he? At this western gate, I
myself shall keep the watch, bow in hand." "By your command," the
champion answered, then set off with the joy of Ūrmilā.
The two of them shone splendidly like Tāraka's slayer
accompanied by the sovereign of the gods, or like the moon,
that fount of nectar, in the presence of the lord of light.

Faithful Pramālā reached the golden gates of Laṅkā. Horns
blared; war drums rumbled with their ear-splitting pounding. Gigantic
Rākṣasas thundered like Pralaya's thunderclouds, or like
a herd of elephants. Rākṣasa Virūpākṣa flew
into a rage, a praksyvedana weapon in his hand;
likewise Tālajaṅghā, who held a palm-tree club; and just
so did Pramatta, whose appearance terrified! Horses
whinnied; elephants began their trumpeting; chariot
wheels squawked and squealed; ferocious pikemen brandished pikes; iron-
shafted nārācas were launched, blocking out the lord of Night.
The heavens, on fire, filled with tumult, as when, earth quaking,
grumbling thunderously, a volcano spews forth streams of fire
out into the dead of night! In panic, Laṅkā shuddered.

Hot-tempered Nṛmuṇḍamālinī hollered loudly, "Whom
would you slay with your weapons, timid ones, in this darkness?

We are not the foes of Rākṣasas but rather are their faithful wives! Open up your eyes! See for yourselves!

"At once, gatekeepers seized the bolt and tugged, as it creaked and groaned. With sounds like that of thunder, those gates now parted. Joyous, the pretty one entered golden Laṅkā to cries of "Victory!"

As when moths spot a flame, then cluster round in glee, so too came the townsfolk on the run from all directions. The wives among them produced auspicious calls of ululu and showered them with flowers while, inspired, bards extolled them to the strains of music. Those dashing women marched ahead, as do waves of fire through a densely wooded forest. The Vidyādhari-like musicians played on their vīnā, flute, muraja drums, and tiny cymbals. Horses neighed as they pranced high. Swords jangled in their sheaths. Babies woke up startled in their mother's lap. Many maiden Rākṣasas opened peepholes, peered through, then, delighted, praised the prowess of that Pramilā. Shortly she, consumed by love, reached her husband's home—like a serpent, jewel lost, on finding it again!

Foe-defeating Indrajit spoke in a lighthearted vein, "After besting Raktabija, you now return, I guess, to Kailāsa and your home, my moon-faced one? If you so order, I shall fall before your feet, for I am your most
constant servant, O Cāmuṇḍā!" Smiling, his wife said, "By
the grace of your two feet, my lord, this slave has overcome
the world; I cannot, however, overcome Manmatha.

Contemptuous of the arrow's fire, yet ever do I
dread the fires (most inexplicable) of separation
from you. It causes me to come to whom my heart desires
always! as the playful river flows to the sea at last."

So saying, that chaste one stepped into the house, divesting
her person of her martial raiment. She then put on a
white silk sari with gem-embroidered border and fastened
tight across her comely breasts a bodice. On her hips shone
an ornamental girdle; a diamond necklace and a
string of pearls swung to and fro upon her bosom. The part
in her hair was lined with a twinkling starry headdress from
which a single jewel dangled on her forehead, while the
hue of gems sparkled from her tresses, and earrings from her
ears. That stunning beauty had donned these many ornaments.
The crown-gem of Rākṣasas, Meghanāda, floated on
the sea of bliss as the couple took their seat upon a
throne of gold. A troupe of singers serenaded, dancing
girls performed—as do Vidyādharas and Vidyādharis
in their heavenly abode. Forgetting their own sorrows,
birds sang from inside cages. Fountains gurgled, gushed upwards,
as does the ocean at a moonbeam's touch. Spring breezes blew honeyed tones, as when the king of seasons sports with woodlands lovingly throughout sweet springtime in some secluded spot.

Accompanied by Vibhiṣaṇa, lionsque Saumitri at this point proceeded to the northern gate; high-minded Sugriva stood guard himself, vigilant with his troop of warriors, immovable in war—like peaks of the Vindhya mountain range. At the eastern gate was Nīla, an awesome figure; goddess Sleep importuned him there in vain. Before the southern gate prowled prince Aṅgada, as does a hungry lion hunting food, or as does Nandī, with spear in hand, before Kailāsa's peak. Smokeless bonfires in the hundreds burned round about encircling Laṅkā, like the moon in a clear sky amidst encircling stars. At each of the four gates a company of warriors stood watch—as when, by the grace of rain clouds, cultivated crops grow day by day and on a platform raised beside the field a peasant stands alert, scaring off the herds of deer, huge water buffalo, and other sorts of herbivorous beasts. These troops of warriors, the bane of Rākṣasas, were on duty all round Laṅkā.

Quite satisfied, the two of them retraced their steps to the tent where, composed and calm, waited warrior Dāśarathī.

With a smile, Umā, in Kailāsa, addressed Vijayā
saying, "Gaze down, my moon-faced one, toward Laṅkā. In warrior's
garb shapely Pramilā now enters through the city gates,
escorted by her ranks of women. The luster from her
golden breastplate reaches to the skies. They stand dumbfounded,
look, that gem of mankind, Rāghava, Saumitri, their friend
Vibhīṣaṇa, and all those other warriors. Who in the
world of men possesses such exquisite beauty? I once
dressed in such attire, during the Satya yuga, in
order to destroy the Dānavas. There, listen to that
ominous sound! Drawing back the bowstring, that lady snaps
it angrily and shouts. All about, the monstrous army
trembles. See, the diadem upon her hair bun dances.
That woman with the fairest skin now crests, now troughs as her
mount canters on—ah, goodness me—like a golden lotus
upon the undulating ripples of Lake Mānasa!"

Her confidante, Vijayā, answered, "True enough, what you
say, Haimavatī—who indeed in the world of mankind
has such beauty? I know Pramilā, heroic daughter
of the Dānavas, is your thrall. But consider this, O
Bhavānī—how will you keep your promise? Indrajit, in
power, is himself world-victor; now Pramilā has joined
with him—flame, the wind's companion, has joined the wind itself!
Tell me now, Kātyāyanī, how will you rescue Rāma?
And how will champion Lakṣmaṇa destroy the Rākṣasa?

Śaṅkara thought a moment, then replied, "My beautiful Pramilā was born a part of me, Vijayā. I shall, come morning, withdraw from her my power. As the gem, which dazzles from the touch of brilliant sunlight, turns lackluster at the close of day, in like fashion I shall enervate that woman on the morrow. No doubt, in combat champion Lakṣmaṇa will vanquish Meghanāda! Pramilā and husband will come here. Rāvaṇi will serve our Śiva; and we shall welcome Pramilā, making her my companion."

That said, Sati went inside her house. On silent footsteps goddess Sleep approached Kailās, whose inhabitants gained respite on their beds of blooms. The crescent moon on Bhava's forehead brightened, spreading through the house a silvery cast.

Thus ends canto number three, called "reuniting," in the poem

*The Slaying of Meghanāda.*