It was then Āditya showed himself upon the rising-hill, looking just like Padmayoni, asleep on lotus petals, as he, most pleased, opened his lotus eyes and gazed at mother earth. Overjoyed, blossom-tressed mother earth smiled, a string of pearls about her throat. As propitious music waxes in a temple at the time of celebration, so swelled waves of sweet notes throughout forest groves. Lotuses shone in splendor upon pellucid waters while on land the golden sunflower coveted as much attention.

As the blossoms bathed their bodies in Night's dew, so too chaste Pramilā with shapely breasts bathed in scented waters, then plaited her hair. A strand of pearls beautified that glossy head, like a shaft of moonlight across a cloud in autumn.

That woman whose arms were delicate as lotus stalks picked up gem-studded bracelets to adorn her lotus-stalk-like limbs—but it was as if the harsh bonds of those bangles brought anguish to her arms! alas, and her golden necklace seemed to pain that supple throat of hers. Surprised, the faithful wife summoned confidante Vāsantī, the one who is most sweet with scents of springtime, "Why, my dearest, do I find myself incapable of wearing jewelry? what causes all the wailing I hear far off in Laṅkā? My right eye twitches constantly; my heart cries out. I know not, fond friend, alas—
I know not into what dark peril I shall plunge today.

My heart's lord attends the sacrificial temple; go to

him, Vāsantī. That jewel of a warrior must not join

in combat on this inauspicious day. Tell my life's lord

that this slave of his implores him, embracing his two feet!"

She whose speech is, like a vīṇā, full of melody fell

silent. Confidante Vāsantī answered, "Listen well, O

you of fetching countenance, the wailing grows louder all

the time. I cannot tell you why the residents weep. Come,

let us go immediately to the god's shrine where her

highness, Mandodari, worships Āśutoṣa. Giddy

on the spirits of battle, the horses and elephants,

charioteers and chariots, promenade the highway

of the king. How could I reach that sacrificial temple,

my married mistress, where your husband, who always wins in

warfare, outfits himself in martial garb?" So the two of

them proceeded to the Candracūḍa temple where the

queen of Rākṣasas was imploring Candracūḍa to

protect her son—but all in vain! Anxiously they hastened.

Girīśa, at home on Mount Kailāsa, grew sullen. That

Dhūrjaṭi, dejected, sighed repeatedly, then glancing

at his Haimavatī spoke, "Goddess, your wish is won; that

monarch among charioteers, Indrajit, succumbed in
deadly battle. Hero Saumitri, adhering to the
scheme of Māyā, slew him while in the temple. The treasure
of the clan of Rākṣasas is my finest devotee,
moon-faced one. I am ever saddened by his sorrows. You
see this trident in my hand, Satī, the grief one feels for
sons strikes deeper than do blows from this. Ever present, ah,
 alas, is the agony—even all-destroying time
proves powerless to numb the pain. Has Rāvaṇa, Satī,
yet heard his sterling son has died in battle? He will at
once succumb unless I, with my gift of rudra tejas,
save that Rākṣasa. I pleased Vāsava at your behest,
faithful wife; permit me now to favor Daśādana."

Kātyāyanī replied, "Do as you wish, enemy of
Tripura. Vāsava's desire will be fulfilled; that for
which he begged before your feet now comes to pass. My lord, the
warrior Dāśarathī is a devotee of this slave
of yours. Let that fact be kept in mind, O Viṣvanātha.
To those lotus feet of yours what more shall your servant say?"

With a smile Śūlī called to mind brave Vīrabhadra. When
that warrior, most formidable of stature, had fallen
prostrate at his feet, Hara spoke, "Dear lad, Indrajit this
day has lost his life in combat. Saumitri slipped into
the sacrificial temple and slew him, by the grace of
Umā. The messengers are scared to give this message to the lord of Rākṣasas. Moreover, messengers among the Rākṣasas do not know by what deception warrior Saumitri bested that unbeatable Rākṣasa in war. But for the gods, charioteer, who in this world is capable of comprehending godly māyā? Quick, go to golden Laṅkā, O you whose arms are strong, dressed as a messenger for the Rākṣasas. By my command, give aid—confer my rudra tejas—to the son of Nikaśa."

Through the sky went the warrior Vīrabhadra, fearsome in appearance. Aerial beings all round bowed timidly. The sun was voided of its brilliance by the brightness of his charm, just as the nectar-ray-ringed moon lacks rays of light in the presence of the splendor of the sun. The frightful shadow of a trident fell upon the surface of the earth. With resounding roars the lord of waters paid homage to Bhairava's minion. That warrior reached the city of the Rākṣasas; and golden Laṅkā shook with tremors from the force of his landing, just as branches quaver when the Indra among birds, Garuḍa, alights upon a tree.

That warrior went inside the sacrificial temple and saw the Indra among warriors on the ground, alas, like a blooming kimśuka tree felled amidst the woods from the
power of Prabhañjana. Moist eyed, he gazed upon the
prince. Immortals' hearts are pained to witness mortal sorrow.

Before the golden throne—where sat warrior Daśānana,
crown-gem of Rākṣasas—Virabhadra showed himself in
messenger's attire, now covered with ashes and lacking
brilliance like a sun concealed. Bowing slightly, that warrior
blessed the Rākṣasa and teary eyed stood before him, palms
together. Surprised, the monarch queried, "For what reason,
messenger, does your tongue hesitate to carry out its
appointed task? Rāma, the human being—you are not
a servant of that Rāghava! Then why, O bearer of
the news, is your face so ashen hued? The sun to lotus
Laṅkā, vanquisher of gods and Daityas, prepares today
for battle—can you bear me tidings that are ominous?
If Rāghava died in battle from his lethal, thunder-
bolt-like bludgeon, then convey that news. I shall reward you."

With deliberation, that one spoke, incognito, "My
lord, alas, how can I, worthless me, relate before your
feet misfortune's tidings? At the outset, Karbūra king,
grant this slave of yours abhaya." Anxiously the hero
answered, "What need have you to fear, messenger? Tell me at
once—weal and woe happen in this world by Fate's decree. I
bestow on you abhaya, now promptly give me the news!"
The hero, Virūpākṣa's emissary costumed as a message bearer, spoke, "O best of Rākṣasas, warrior Meghanāda, pride of Karbhāras, died today in war!"

As when deep within the woods a Niśāda wounds the king of animals with a mortal arrow and that lion, roaring wildly, slumps to the ground, so too slumped that monarch to the floor of his assembly hall. Counselors of his, wailing loudly, weeping, gathered all around that champion. Some fetched pitchers full of cooling water; others fanned him.

With the rudra tejas, Vīrabhadra soon brought to his senses that most excellent of Rākṣasas. The hero, reacting as does gunpowder to fire's touch, commanded the messenger, "Speak, messenger, who slew ever-winning Indrajit today in battle? Tell me without delay!"

Replied the one in disguise, "By deception Saumitri the lion entered the temple of the Nikumbhilā sacrifice, Indra among kings, and in an unfair fight that wicked one slew the Indra among warriors. Alas, I saw him there within the temple, that warrior, just like a blooming kimśūka tree felled amidst the woods from the power of Prabhaṅjana. You, the finest warrior, the lord of Rākṣasas—assuage your grief today with acts of valor. Let the women of the clan of Rākṣasas soak
the earth with teardrops. But you in warfare slaughter with your
awesome bludgeon that deceitful foe, the slayer of your
son, and appease, great archer, the denizens of this land!"

Then suddenly that godly messenger disappeared, and
the assembly hall filled with a perfume divine. The lord
of Rākṣasas caught a glimpse of a pile of matted hair
and the shadow of a monstrous trident. Bowing, his hands
cupped in supplication, that Śaiva spoke, "Have you at last,
your lordship, remembered me, your hapless servant? Stupid
me, alas, how shall I ever understand your māyā,
illusory one? But first, I shall carry out your orders,
knower of all. Thereafter shall I humbly narrate to those
lotus feet of yours everything this heart of mine contains?"

Angered—powerful today by the great rudra tejas—
that fine Rākṣasa exhorted, "Each archer in this golden
Laṅkā, muster hastily a four-division army!
On the field of battle shall we forget our suffering—
if indeed a person can forget insufferable pain!"

The rumbling of drums of war surged across the floor of that
assembly while horn blowers sounded resonating blasts
upon their best of bull’s horns, as though it were the very
moment of Pralaya! At that frightful din the Bhūtas
on Mount Kailāsa's crest quickly armed, as did Rākṣasas
everywhere; Laṅkā reeled underneath the weight of warriors' feet. Flame-hued chariots of war exited smartly, gold pennants waving; elephants, all smoky gray, brandished in their trunks huge cudgels; and out pranced snorting steeds. Cāmara, bane of the immortals, roaring, joined the four divisions of the army; with the charioteers drove Udagra, a terror in combat; among the ranks of elephants rode Vāskala, like cloud-borne Vajrī, fierce thunderbolt in hand among his clouds; shouting menacingly, the hero Asilomā, commander of the cavalry, appeared; and Bidālākṣa, a fearsome Rākṣasa, wroth in war, marched with the infantry. Then came the standard-bearers, flags flying, as though a rash of comets of a sudden streaked through the sky. And Rākṣasa music rang out all around.

As the Dānava-quelling Caṇḍi, born from the power of the gods, laughed jauntily while she, Satī, armed herself with godly weaponry, so in Laṅkā armed the corps of fearsome Rākṣasas—in war a wrathful Ugracanḍā.

Her arms possessed the strength of the king of elephants; Her feet moved with equine speed; the crown upon Her head was made of golden chariots; bejeweled banners formed the loose end of Her sari; bheri kettledrums, turi horns, the duṇḍubhi and dāmāmā and other drums produced Her
lion's roar! Weapons—śela, śakti, jāti, tomara,
bhomara, śūla, muṣala, mudgara, paṭṭiṣa,
nārāca, and kaunta—shone brightly as Her teeth! The fire of Her eyes was born of armor's brilliance! Mother earth quaked constantly; with fear the ocean tossed and rolled; the mountains were atremble—from that roar of Bhīma—for once again it seemed that Caṇḍi had been born and thundered angrily!

Back at camp that champion, the sun among the solar clan, startled, addressed his boon friend Vibhiṣaṇa saying, "See there, companion, how Laṅkā lurches time and time again as if in the throes of a violent earthquake. Billows of smoke arise and, like thick clouds, blot out the lord of daylight. A frightful luster glows throughout the sky, as though born of flames of the world's final fires. Listen there, hear those crashing waves, as if the sea churns in the distance to dissolve the universe within Pralaya!" That Rākṣasa, crown-gem of friends, spoke, his cheeks gone wan with fright, "What can I say, my lord? The land trembles under foot of Rākṣasa warriors, not from any earthquake. That light you see throughout the sky springs not from doomsday fires, O husband of Vaidehi. The ten directions are aglow from the combined brilliance of their weapons, luster born of golden armor. That uproar, hero, which now deafens ears is not the rumble of the
sea; it is the ranks of Rākṣasas roaring, maddened by
the heady wines of valor. Distraught by sadness for his
Indra among sons, Laṅkā’s lord dons the charioteer's
attire. Tell me, how are you to rescue Lakṣmana and
all the many other warriors, warrior, from dire peril?"

His lordship answered sweetly, "Go quickly, O best of friends,
and summon here at once my commanding officers. This
humble thrall is ever given shelter by the gods. Those
supernal beings will be the rescue of their servant."

Then taking up a horn, that best of Rākṣasas let out
a chilling blast. Kiśkindhā’s lord came forward, striding with
the saunter of a king of elephants; then came warrior
Aṅgada, wise in ways of warfare; Nala and Nila,
divine-like in appearance; Hanumān, fiercely strong, like
Prabhañjana; the hero Jāmbuvāna; the warrior
Śarabha, bull of warriors; Gavākṣa and Raktākṣa,
dreaded by the Rākṣasas; and all the other generals.

Haling that contingent of great warriors in accordance
with the proper courtesies, hero Rāghava spoke out,
"Overwhelmed by sorrow for his son, the Rākṣasa king
today armed hurriedly together with his Rākṣasa
legions; Laṅkā trembles constantly beneath the weight of
warriors' feet. You all are world-conquerors in war; prepare
with haste; defend Rāghava today in this hour of
his direst need. By quirk of luck I became a friendless
forest exile. You all are Rāma's refuge, strength, and force
in battle. But one charioteer is yet alive in
Laṅkā—slay him today, my warriors. By your aid I placed
shackles on the sea; in pitched battle I downed the champion
Kumbhakarna, the counterpart of that trident-clutching
Śambhu; Saumitri slew ferocious Meghanāda, the
bane of gods, Daityas, and of men. Save my clan, my honor,
and my life, supporters of the Raghus, and rescue her,
the Raghu wife, incarcerated by the wiles of that
Rākṣasa. You have bought this Rāma with the coin of your
affection; by vouchsafing generosity, now bind
firm with a noose of gratitude today the entire
Raghu line, O you who dwell within the southern regions."

The Raghu lord, teary eyed, fell silent. With a sound like
that made by the clouds, Sugrīva thundered, "Either I shall
die or I shall cause that Rāvaṇa to die; this I vow,
O finest of the champions, at your feet! I now enjoy
the comforts of a kingdom, my lordship, by virtue of
your favor—you are my source of wealth and honor; by a
noose of gratitude is your humble subject ever bound
to your lotus feet! What more can I say, O champion? There
is not a warrior in our ranks who fears Kṛtānta when asked to carry out a task for you! Let the Rākṣasas arm; we shall fight unafraid!" The officers all roared with rage; that massive army bellowed, "Victory to Rāma!"

Affronted by those horrid cries, the ranks of Rākṣasas thundered in heroic frenzy, like Dānava-quelling Durgā in answer to the howls from Dānavas. Golden Laṅkā filled to overflowing with raucous shrieks and shouts.

Those noises reached the place where Kamalā, Rājalakṣmi of the clan of Rākṣasas, sat upon her lotus throne. That chaste wife gave a start. Her lotus eyes saw Rākṣasas arming everywhere, blind with fury; Rākṣasa banners fluttered in the air, a sign ill-portending for any living creature. The Rākṣasas' musical instruments blared forth loudly. And Indirā—whose face is like the autumn moon—beat a path through the void to Vaijayanta.

Musicians, both various and sundry, performed in that heavenly place; Apsarā maidens danced; Kinnaras sang melodiously. Amongst the gods and goddesses sat the king among the gods upon his golden throne. To his left was Śacī of the charming smile. Inexhaustible vernal breezes wafted by, exhaling sweetly; and all about Gandharvas rained down heaps of mandāra blossoms.
There within that godly convocation stepped the love of Keśava. Bowing to her, Indra spoke, "Give me, please, the dust from on your feet, O Mother; for by your grace this slave of yours is freed of fear—wicked Rāvaṇī lost his life today in battle. Now I can pursue the pleasures of this heaven unencumbered. Compassionate one, what does he lack on whom you cast your sympathetic glance." With a smile pretty Indirā, gem par excellence of the jewel-laden sea, replied, "Foe of Daityas, your enemy may have fallen to the ground; but with his throng of Rākṣasas, the king of Laṅkā, that distraught monarch, makes ready to avenge the slaying of his son. Thousands of Rākṣasas gird up with him. It was to announce this news, my lord, that I traveled here. High-minded Saumitri accomplished your task for you. Now save him, Āditeya. Great is he who risks his life to rescue a helpmate when in danger. What more, Śakra, can I tell you? The prowess of the clan of Rākṣasas is not unknown to you. Do ponder, O spouse of Śacī, by what means you might help rescue Rāghava."

Replied the sovereign of the gods, "See there, in the north of heaven, O Jagadambā, there in the province of the sky, a fine array of immortals. If that great archer, monarch of the Rākṣasa clan, ventures out desiring
battle, I shall war with him upon the battlefield, kind
one. I fear not Rāvaṇa, Mother, stripped of Rāväṇi."

Much impressed, Rāma surveyed the troops of Vāsava in
heaven’s northern sector. As far as her divine eyes saw,
that pretty gazed on chariots and elephants, on steeds
and horsemen, on mahouts, charioteers, and infantry,
victorious in combat, all victors over Yama.
There were Gandharvas, Kinnaras, and the gods, as full of
fire as the final fire of this yuga. There was general
Skanda, foe of Tāraka, aboard his peacock-banne
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chariot; and there was charioteer Citraratha
on his multicolored vehicle. The sky glowed like a
woods engulfed by flames; in silhouette against all that loomed
rows of elephants majestically, like smoky billows.
Flame-shaped spearheads, glittered, blinding, bedazzling eyes. Flags flared
stylishly, as though static streaks of lightning; shields glinted,
out gleaming the solar orb; and armor sparkled brightly.

The love of Mādhava inquired, "Speak, Āditeya,
treasure of the gods, where are Prabhañjana and all the
other guardians of the compass points? Why is it that the
ranks in heaven seem so vacant in their absence?" Śacī’s
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hero husband answered, "I ordered the direction-guards
to guard today their respective regions, Jagadambā.
In this battle of the gods and Rākṣasas (both clans near invincible), who can say what will happen? Mother earth perhaps this day shall drown, as at the time of Pralaya; this vast creation might be plunged into the nether realm."

Keśava's sleek-haired darling blessed that monarch of the gods. Then she, the Mother, returned most hurriedly to Laṅkā transported on gold-hued clouds. There Kamalā went within her own shrine, sadly sitting on her lotus throne—all ten directions were illumined by her beauty’s rays, but her face was drawn, ah, due to sorrows of the Rākṣasa clan.

Drunk on the heady wines of warfare, the sovereign of the Rākṣasas donned his martial gear—his legions of Indras among charioteers circled him with an effulgence as bright as the golden peak of Mount Hemakūṭa. Not far off martial music played; Rākṣasa banners fluttered in the breeze; and countless Rākṣasas shouted threateningly. At that instant queen Mandodari rushed into the court, alas, like a flustered pigeon who finds her nest devoid of fledglings. Scurrying behind her came her retinue of confidantes. The queen collapsed before those royal feet.

With tenderness the Rākṣasa king helped his chaste wife to her feet, then spoke sadly, "Fate has at present turned against us both, Indrāṇi of the Rākṣasa clan. That we yet
live is only to avenge his death. Return now to your
empty quarters—I am headed for the battlefield. Why
do you detain me? An eternity, my lady, we
shall have during which to grieve. We shall renounce the worthless
pleasures of the realm, purest wife, and dwell in solitude—
the two of us—and reminisce on him day after day.

Go back. Why would you douse this flame of wrath with the water
of your tears, O Queen Mandodari? The stately śāla
tree that enhanced the woods was felled today; the highest peak
upon that best of mountain’s crest was crushed; the moon, jewel
of the skies, has been forever swallowed up by Rāhu."

Tugging, coaxing, her companions escorted her to the
women's quarters. Consumed with rage, the Rākṣasa lord stepped
outside and, turned to the Rākṣasas, ranted with fury—

"He, by whose might this Rākṣasa force proved dominant in
war with gods, Daityas, and with men—he, the volley of whose
arrows harassed Indra, of the gods, in the company
of his godly charioteers, and the Nāgas in the
depths of Pātāla, and men within the world of man—he
is dead this day, that monarch among warriors, slain in
unfair combat, warriors! Saumitri in a sneak-thief’s guise
stole into the temple and in that out-of-the-way place
slew my son while he sat unarmed! Just as one away from
home dies sad at heart, distant from his native land, in like manner died today the ornament of golden Laṅkā, within this very golden Laṅkā, without seeing there in front of him as death approached those objects of his love—father, mother, brother, and devoted wife! For a long time now I have protected all of you as though you were my sons—ask the world over, what family rivals that of the Rākṣasas in fame? However, all for naught have I vanquished gods and men, and planted in this mundane world the tree of glorious achievements. Cruelest Fate this day has at last turned utterly against me, and that is why the irrigation trough around that tree of mine dried up in this unseasonable summer's heat. Still then, I do not weep or wail. Of what use is crying? Shall I get him back again? Alas, do streams of tears ever melt Kṛṭānta's stony heart? Now I shall join the fray and best that stupid Saumitri, transgressor against dharma, who in warfare stoops to deception. Should my efforts prove futile today, I shall not return—I shall not set foot again within this city as long as I shall live! Such is my promise, Rākṣasa charioteers. You in battle are the bane of gods, Daityas, and of men; you are world-victors. As you march onto the battlefield, recall him. Meghanāda
died in battle. When one has heard such news, who within this
clan of Karbūras would wish to go on living. Hero
Meghanāda was the pride of our own Karbūra clan."

With remorseful sighs, the great archer ceased his speech. Out of
rage, and of grief, those Rākṣasas let loose a baleful howl,
dampening the ground, ah me, with a downpour from their eyes.

On hearing that horrendous hooting cry, the army of
the Rāghus, boisterous, thundered back. And the Indra of the
heavens shouted from on high. Vaidehi’s husband became
incensed, as did Saumitri the lion, and Sugrīva,
Aṅgada, Hanumān, and the other valued generals,
all Yamas to the Rākṣasas—Nala, Nila, and high-
minded Śarabha—that huge army bellowed out their shouts
of "Victory to Rāma!" Roiling clouds rumbled as they
veiled the skies. The universe was dazzled by lightning streaks
as thunder clapped. Those jets of light flashed grins that looked much like
Cāmuṇḍā's many smiles when that goddess giggling, giddy
on warfare’s liquor, crushed the frenzied Dānava forces.

The jewel of the day, the dark’s destroyer, sank within
those clouds of gloom. Winds, with the breath of Vaiśvānara, blew
everywhere. Forest fires raged through woodlands. Flood waters
roared as they, without warning, swallowed villages and cities.
Earth tremors toppled trees and buildings. Living creatures cried
out loud, and then gave up the ghost, just as at Pralaya!

In sheer terror, panic-stricken mother earth fled sobbing to Vaikuṇṭha. There, upon his throne of gold in all his gracefulness, sat Mādhava. That faithful wife bowed before the god and prayed, "Time after time, O spouse of Rama, sea of kindness, you assumed so many incarnations and thereby saved me, your most humble subject. During the flood you, as Tortoise, placed this slave of yours upon your tortoise shell. I found myself between the tips of your tusks (which looked like smudge marks on the body of the moon) that time when you, friend of the needy, descended in the body of the Boar. You eased this servant's suffering by taking on the guise of Human-Lion and dismembering the Daitya Hiranyakasipu. Vāmana, as the dwarf, you dwarfed Bali's pride. I lived, my lord, by your grace. What more can I say. This thrall finds sanctuary at your feet. And so, I fall before those lotus feet in this time of grave danger."

Smiling, and in the sweetest of tones, the foe of Mura asked, "For what cause are you upset today, tell me, mother earth, mother of the world? Who troubles you this time, dear child?"

Answered mother earth, weeping, "What is there you do not know, omniscient one? Look, my lord, toward Laṅkā. The Rākṣasa king is drunk on war. So too is that hero, Indra of
the Rāghavas. Likewise is that charioteer, the Indra
of the heavens! Three rut elephants, they give trouble to
your servant. That god-like sovereign among charioteers,
Lakṣmana the lion, slew fierce Meghanāda today
in battle. Beside himself with bitter grief, the treasure
of the Rākṣasas vowed to kill in combat Lakṣmana.
Indra, with bravado fit a warrior, vowed to defend
him. Alas, any moment now the deadly battle will
begin in golden Laṅkā, O Pitāmbara, sparked off
by tempers of the gods, the men, and Rākṣasas. How shall
I endure this ghastly torment, O lord, please tell me that."

With a smile, the lord of Ramā glanced toward Laṅkā. He saw
Rākṣasa forces setting out in countless numbers, blind
with fury, arrayed in four divisions. In the lead marched
"Prowess," sending tremors through the earth; on behind came "Din,"
deafening the ear; "Dust" followed, forming heavy clouds which
blocked one's vision. Golden Laṅkā reeled most violently. The
spouse of Śrī observed the Raghu army on the outskirts
of the city, as Prabhaṅjana, the waves' eternal
enemy, shows himself from afar to them who ride the
ocean's surface. Puṇḍarikākṣa watched the god clan on
the run toward Laṅkā, just as Garuḍa, king of birds, on
espying at a distance his staple diet—hooded
cobra—swoops screaming. The universe filled with grave rumblings.

Abandoning their meditations, yogis fled; frightened mothers held their babies in their arms and cried; animals dashed off in all directions terrified. Cintāmani (he who is the swan upon the "mind-lake" of Yogīndra) pondered for a moment then replied to mother earth, "Chaste wife, I see your situation is most awkward. By the gift of rudra tejas, Virūpākṣa made that monarch of the clan of Rākṣasas powerful today. I find no other resolution. You simply have to go to him, earth mother!" Weeping, she answered to those lotus feet, "Alas, my lord, that powerful destroyer, Trisūli, is constantly engaged in pure destruction. That foe of Tripura displays an inexhaustible supply of tamas. O Sauri, the deadly snake only wants to spew his caustic venom, and thus burn the living! But you, an ocean of compassion, supporter of the universe, if you bear not the burden of this universe, then tell me, who else will? Save your servant, O lord of Śrī, this is my entreaty most humbly put before your reddened feet!"

Replied the deity, with a smile, "Return to where you were, mother earth. I shall carry out this task for you by holding godly might in check. Devendra will be power-
less to rescue Lakṣmaṇa; Umā’s grieving lord will not
be able to avenge the sorrow of the Rākṣasas."

Much relieved, mother earth repaired to earth. Then his lordship
said to Garuḍa, "Fly through the firmament, winged one, and
pilfer the power of the gods during this day’s fight, just
as the sun, enemy of darkness, purloins quantities
of water, or just as you, my Vainateya, filched the
amṛta. By my orders, go make the gods impotent."

Spreading his gigantic wings, that monarch of the birds flew
the skies. His monstrous shadow fell upon the earth below,
darkening the countless forests, mountains, streams, and rivers.

Just as flames leap out through doors and through windows when a fire
flares up in a house, just so from all four city gates leapt
Rākṣasas, howling wrathfully. The Raghu army roared
in all directions; and the forces of the gods then made
their entry to the fray. First came that best of elephants,

Airāvata, driven mad by the thrill of battle. On
his back rode lightning-tossing Sahasrākṣa, lustrous as
Mount Meru’s pinnacle caught within the rays of sun, or
like the sun himself at noon. Then came the charioteer
general Skanda, the foe of Tāraka, riding in his
peacock-banneed chariot. And warrior Citraratha
in his vehicle of many hues. And Kinnaras and
Gandharvas and Yakṣas on their several different mounts and chariots. In terror, Laṅkā listened to music from the heavens. That land shook, startled by the godly noises.

The gem of men prostrated flat upon the ground in front of Indra, then spoke, "I am a servant to the servants of the gods, O sovereign of the god clan! How many deeds of merit I must have done in former births—what can I say? For that is surely why today I gained the refuge of your feet in these most trying times, O Vajrapani. Is that the reason that the denizens of heaven on this day have sanctified this soil with the touch of their feet?"

Replied the monarch of the skies, addressing Rāghava, "You are favored by the god clan, gem among the Raghus. Climb aboard this godly chariot, charioteer, and, by strength of arms, destroy the Rākṣasa who transgresses against dharma. By his own wicked acts is that treasure of the Rākṣasas now lost. Who can save him? Just as we procured elixir through the churning of the waters, so too shall we gods today churn this Laṅkā. We shall thrash those Niśācaras and deliver unto you, champion, that faithful and most pure Maithili. How much longer must that Ramā sit beneath the waters, with the world in darkness?"

Raucous fighting raged between the gods and humans and the
Rākṣasas. Ten thousand conch shells, like the sea itself, blared all around. Heroic archers twanged their bowstrings until the ear no longer heard. Arrows shot across the skies, and, with the might of lightning bolts, they pierced leather armor, shields, and bodies, causing blood to flow in torrents. Rākṣasa and human charioteers, both were leveled. Elephants fell in heaps, as do leaves in a garden stripped by forces of Prabhañjana. Chargers, whinnying, collapsed. And the battlefield filled with an excruciating dissonance!

Cāmara, scourge of the divines, attacked the godly ranks with the full force of all four divisions. Charioteer Citraratha, that champion on a chariot, brilliant as the sun, sped to the fray, like a lion when he spies his mortal enemy, the elephant. With ferocious shouts, Udagra, monarch among charioteers, beckoned to Sugrīva. Chariot wheels ground round and round, making noises like a hundred streams cascading. With his troop of elephants, Vāskala—as unstoppable himself as a bull elephant—spotted Aṅgada some ways away; that young prince grew enraged, as do little lion cubs when they see a herd of deer. Asilomā, livid, keen sword in his hand, surrounded with his horses Śarabha, bull among those warriors. Biḍālākṣa (as destructive as
Virūpākṣa) began to war wildly with Hanumān.

Into combat on his godly car rode charioteer

Rāghava, aha, like a second monarch of the skies,

that wielder of the thunderbolt. He whose banner shows a

peacock, Skanda, enemy of Tāraka, gazed upon,

to his surprise, the handsome champion Lakṣmaṇa, likeness

of himself in the mortal world. Dust clouds rose round about;

golden Laṅkā tottered; the ocean roared. That hero, spouse

of Śacī, drew up his array of troops, magnificent.

Out came the Rākṣas’ king astride his Puṣpaka. Its wheels screamed loudly, spitting sparks. The team of horses neighed with spirit. A luster, born of gemstones, blinding to the eye,

ran ahead, just like Dawn when Āditya in his one-wheeled chariot ascends the rising-hill. And the Rākṣasas

shouted uncontrollably when they caught sight of their lord.

Addressing his best of chariot drivers, that finest charioteer spoke, "The humans do not fight alone this day, O driver, have a look. Like fire amidst the smoke, just so a regiment of the enemies of Asuras shines splendidly amidst the Raghu ranks. Indra comes to Laṅkā now that he has heard of Indrajit's demise in battle." And remembering his son, the king, that treasure-trove of Rākṣasas, roaring angrily spoke in grave tones,
"Steer this chariot, O driver, to where thunder-clutching
Vāsava stands now!" That chariot traveled with desire’s
speed. The Raghu army turned and fled, as forest dwellers
flee, short of breath, when they eye a raging bull elephant!
or, as birds and beasts flee terrified when fearsome thunder
clouds, filled with flashing lightning, whip across the skies, belching
loudly! Twanging his bowstring, that lion among Indras
among warriors pierced then and there the drawn battle lines with
his sharpest arrows, as easily and simply as flood
waters, with a strong surge, cave in levees made of sand! or,
as a tiger in the nighttime crashes through a pasture's
fences! But Śikhidhvaja drove his chariot ahead,
and with resolve drawing back his bowstring, that great hero,
foe of Tāraka, blocked the other charioteer's path.

With hands together, cupped in supplication, and bowing
to that champion, Laṅkā’s monarch solemnly spoke, "This thrall,
my lord, worships day and night Śaṅkari and Śaṅkara!
Why then do I find you here today, unashamedly
among the enemy throng? For what reason, Kumāra,
do you render such assistance to Rāma, that hateful
human? You are an Indra among charioteers. In
an unfair fight, Lakṣmana killed my son. Now I must kill
that loathsome, that deceitful fighter. Do not block my way!"
The son of Pārvatī spoke, "I must defend Lakṣmaṇa today, O sovereign of the Rākṣasas, by order of the sovereign of the gods. Through strength of arms, O strong-armed one, defeat me, or you shall not realize this goal of yours."

Angered and, moreover, powerful this day, due to the great *rudra tejas*, the riches of the Rākṣasa clan, like Agni incarnate, shouted threateningly and hurled his weapons, wounding Śaktidhara in the fray with a hail of arrows. Abhayā, turning to Vijayā, said, "Look there, dear companion, over there toward Laṅkā, the monarch of the Rākṣasas mercilessly pierced Kumāra with sharp arrows. Look there in the sky, the Indra among birds is pilfering the power of the gods. Go, my dear, with lightning's speed and halt Kumāra. O follower of mine, my heart breaks when I see those bloody rivulets on my baby's supple body. Sadānanda shows compassion to his devotees, even more than to his son. That is why Rāvana is now most difficult to overcome in battle, dearest girl." That female messenger darted as sunbeams down the blue sky's path. Addressing Kumāra, that moon-faced one whispered in his ear, "Please sheathe your weapons, Śaktidhara, on orders of Śakti herself. The king of Laṅkā is at present possessed of *rudra tejas!*"
Smiling, god Skanda, Tāraka's adversary, turned his chariot about. With a triumphant roar the lord of Rākṣasa laid low countless soldiers, then sped off to where Vajrapāni sat astride the back of Airāvata.

Gandharvas, by the hundreds, and mortal men circled round that Indra among Rākṣasas; but with threatening shouts, the champion dismissed all of them in the twinkling of an eye, as a conflagration turns a stand of trees to ashes.

That throng of warriors fled, giving up disgracefully. Just then the foeman of the Daitya clan came forward, irate, like Karna seeing Pārtha in the Kurukṣetra war.

That Rākṣasa, yelling, threatening, hurled a huge lance aimed at Airāvata. But, in mid-flight the monarch of the skies shattered it abruptly with a rain of arrows. The sovereign of the Karbūras shouted brashly to the lord of the divines, "Heroic spouse of Śacī, Rāvaṇi, in mortal fear of whom you shiver constantly in your Vaijayanta, is dead, killed through perfidy today in warfare, according to your plan! I suppose that is why you have come to Laṅkā city, shameless one! You cannot be slain, immortal. But if you could, I would have quelled you in an instant, as quells Śamana! But, you cannot save Lakṣmaṇa, I give my word on that, god!" And clenching in
his fist an awesome war-club, that best of charioteers
leapt to the ground—mother earth reeled beneath the weight of his
two feet, and his sword in its scabbard clattered on his hip.

With a holler, Kulisí, the thunder-flinger, enraged,
seized a thunderbolt. At that very moment Garuḍa
stole away his strength; the lightning-hurling god was rendered
powerless to move a single shaft of lightning. The king
of Rākṣasas then bashed the skull of the monarch among
elephants with his fearsome war-club, as Prabhaṇjana,
uprooting in a storm sky-piercing trees, bashes mountain
peaks. Stopped dead there in his tracks by the colossal blow, that
pachyderm fell to his knees. Grinning, the Rākṣasa once
more stepped up onto his chariot. Chariot driver
Mātali commandeered a wondrous chariot, but the
foe of Diti’s sons forewent the chase in a fit of pique.

Then bow in hand, roaring like a lion, Dāśarathi
wheeled into the battle on a car come from the heavens.

The Rākṣasa sovereign spoke, "I do not seek you today,
husband of Vaidehi. Live a little longer on this
earth in safety. Where is your younger brother, that heinous
fighter who resorts to treachery? It is he whom I
shall kill. You return to camp, best of Rāghavas." The great
archer then let out a ghastly roar as that champion caught
sight of Rāmānuja at a distance. Like a lion
among cattle, that Indra among champions was mauling
Rākṣasas—now from his chariot, now on the ground.

The Puspaka sped along, grinding, growling. Its wheels, like
discs of fire, rained sparks everywhere. The royal banner on
that chariot's crest shone splendidly, like Dhūmaketu
incarnate! As the monarch among falcons, when it spots
a pigeon off some ways, spreads its wings and dashes through the
skies, so too dashed that Rākṣasa, on observing upon
the battlefield his son's slayer, that champion Saumitri.
Both gods and men ran here, there, everywhere, hollering, to
protect their lord of champions. And troops of Rākṣasas came
on the run, once they caught sight of their lordly Rākṣasa.

The son of Añjanā, having bested in a battle
the Rākṣasa warrior Bīḍālākṣa, now appeared—that
Hanumān, mighty like Prabhaṅjana, howled fearsomely!

Just as heaps of cotton fly in ten directions, blown by
the forces of the god of winds, just so ran Rākṣasas
helter-skelter, on catching sight of that warrior, Yama's
likeness. Angered, Laṅkā’s sovereign, with his sharpest arrows
harassed that champion. Hanumān grew agitated, like
a mountain seized by tremors. That Indra among warriors
called to mind his father's feet at this time of jeopardy,
and, from pure joy, the wind bestowed his own powers on his
son—as likewise the sun endues the moon, that beloved
of lotuses, with a gift of his own rays. But the fine
charioteer Naikaṣeya, mighty, by virtue of
great rudra tejas, warded off that son of Pavana—
Hanumān beat a retreat, fleeing from the battlefield.

Then along came Kīśkindhīya’s sovereign, having put to flight
warmonger Udagra. Smiling, the lord of Laṅkā spoke,
"Have you not forgone the pleasures of your kingship at a
rather awkward moment, barbarian, to come to this
golden city? Was not your brother's wife, that Tārā, your
guiding star?¹ Why would you abandon her and come away,
here among the brotherhood of charioteers, hey you,
Kīśkindhīya's lord? I let you go. Now run along to your
homeland. Why would you want to make of her a widow once
again, you fool. What other 'husband's brothers' does she have?²
With a ferocious roar, hero Sugrīva answered back,
"Who is there in this world, Rākṣasa king, who acts opposed
to dharma as much as you do? Lusting for another's
wife, immoral one, you plunged your entire line into
utter ruin. You, Rākṣasa, are a disgrace to the
Rākṣasa clan. You shall die by my hand today! I will
rescue my friend's wife, after putting you to death right now!"
With that, the hero let loose a shout and hurled a mountain peak. That mountain crest darkened skies as it sailed along; but with arrows finely honed that skilled charioteer, king of Rākṣasas, reduced the pinnacle to rubble. The crown-jewel among Rākṣasas then strummed his bow again, and, with a hideous howl, that champion pierced Sugrīva with his keenest arrow. That high-minded one, in pain from the devastating wound, fled away. In utter panic, the Raghu forces scattered to the four directions (with a gushing, rushing noise, as when waters break embankments). The gods, not in possession of their powers now, fled with the humans, as with smoke fly burning embers when blown briskly by the god of winds. Right in front of him that Rākṣasa saw god-like Lakṣmaṇa. Hero Rāvaṇa, frenzied when in combat from the wine of valor, yelled in a threatening voice—champion Saumitri, at heart fearless, shouted back with a sound like that made by an elephant in rut. That skilled archer, maddened, twanged his bow named Devadatta. "At last, Lakṣmaṇa," said Rāvaṇa with rage, "we meet on this field of war, lowly human! Where is god Vajrapāṇi now? and the peacock-bannered Saktidhara? and the sovereign of the Raghu clan, your brother? and king Sugrīva? Who is there to save you now, wretched lout? At this moment of
impending death, think on both your mother, Sumitrā, and
Urmilā, your spouse! For I am now about to feed your
flesh to beastly carnivores. The earth will soak up rivers
of your blood! It was an ill-fated moment when you crossed
the sea, foul one, and, dressed every bit the common sneak thief,
slipped into Rākṣasa quarters, stealing there that jewel
of a Rākṣasa—priceless throughout the entire world."

Roaring wildly, the sovereign set an arrow, resembling
fire’s flame, to his bowstring. With snarls of a vicious lion,
growling, leonine Saumitri answered back, "I was born
a Kṣatriya, sovereign of the Rākṣasas, so I have
no fear of Yama. Why do you try to frighten me? You
are distraught today, grieving for your son, as much as you
are capable, charioteer. But soon I shall end your
melancholy and send you where your best of sons resides."

There ensued a monstrous battle. Gods and men looked on in
sheer amazement at both of them as over and over
again Saumitri, with aggressive shouts, parried volleys
of sharp missiles. The Rākṣasa king, astounded, spoke, "I
commend you on your warrior's skills, lion-like Saumitri!
Good charioteer, you show more might than Śaktidhara,
but there is no escaping from my clutches on this day!"

Then remembering his best of sons, that champion flung,
with extreme malice, his missile by the name of Śakti!

That monstrous leveler of enemies, like a streak of
lightning, brightened up the skies and gave out with a clap of
thunder. In horror, gods and men shivered. Lakṣmaṇa, like
a star, plummeted to earth felled by that deadly blow. His
godly weapons clanked and rattled, dulled, coated with bloody
streams. That noble one lay there, like a mountain wrapped in snakes.

Just as deep within a woods the hunter, having shot the
best of deer with his unfailing arrows, runs rapidly
toward him, so did that hero, king of the Rākṣasas, leap
from his chariot and run to seize the lifeless body.

All around there swelled a hue and cry. With gasps of sorrow
both god and human charioteers gathered round champion
Saumitri. In their home on Kailāsa, Śaṅkari, at
the feet of Śaṅkara, said, "Lakṣmaṇa has fallen, my
lord, in warfare with the sovereign of the Rākṣasas. There
lies Sumitrā’s child, sprawled out in the dust. You have pleased the
Rākṣasas, you who are devoted to your devotees.

You humbled Vāsava's warrior pride. But, my lord, I beg
of you, Virūpākṣa, preserve the corpse of Lakṣmaṇa."

Smiling, Śūlī said to champion Virabhadra, "Restrain
the lord of Laṅkā, warrior." And with the swiftness of a
heart’s desire, Virabhadra went, then spoke gravely in the
ear of Rāvana, "Go back, Rākṣasa king, to golden
Laṅkā. What need have you in this battle with a slain foe?"

The dream-like godly messenger then disappeared. Roaring,
that lion of a champion ascended once again his
chariot. Rākṣasa martial music issued forth, and
with resounding voices Rākṣasas yelled. The Rākṣasa
legion marched into the city—as ferocious goddess
Cāmuṇḍā, victorious in battle, having vanquished
Raktabija, returned shouting, dancing wildly, a smile
upon her bloody lips, her body drenched in streams of gore!
As the gods en masse sang Sati's praises, so the bards with
joy extolled in victory songs the Rākṣasas' army!

Meanwhile, bested in war, the sovereign of the gods, in a
fit of rage, strode through the godly ranks on back to heaven.

Thus ends canto number seven,
called "felling with the Śakti weapon,"
in the poem

*The Slaying of Meghanāda.*