

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.

10 As the blossoms bathed their bodies in Night's dew, so too chaste
 Pramīlā 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
 20 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!"

30 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, Mandodarī, 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
 40 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.

Giriśa, at home on Mount Kailāsa, grew sullen. That
 Dhūrjati, 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,
 50 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 Daśānana."

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

With a smile Śūli called to mind brave Virabhadra. 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

70 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 Nikaṣā."

80 Through the sky went the warrior Virabhadra, 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.

90 That warrior went inside the sacrificial temple and
 saw the Indra among warriors on the ground, alas, like
 a blooming *kiṃśuka* 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—Vīrabhadra 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
100 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
Lañkā, 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
110 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 Karbūras, died today in war!"

120 As when deep within the woods a Niṣāda 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*, Virabhadra 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!"

130 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 *kiṃśuka* tree felled amidst the woods from the
power of Prabhañjana. 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
 140 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,
 150 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
 160 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
 170 hand among his clouds; shouting menacingly, the hero
 Asilomā, commander of the cavalry, appeared;
 and Biḍālākṣa, 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 Caṇḍī, 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 Ugracaṇḍā.

180 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, paṭṭiśa,
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
190 were atremble—from that roar of Bhīmā—for once again
it seemed that Caṇḍī had been born and thundered angrily!

Back at camp that champion, the sun among the solar clan,
startled, addressed his boon friend Vibhīṣaṇa 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
200 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 Vaidehī. 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
 210 Indra among sons, Laṅkā's lord dons the charioteer's
 attire. Tell me, how are you to rescue Lakṣmaṇa 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. Kiṣkindhyā's lord came forward, striding with
 the saunter of a king of elephants; then came warrior
 220 Aṅgada, wise in ways of warfare; Nala and Nīla,
 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.

Hailing 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
 230 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
 Lañkā—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,
 240 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
 250 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
 260 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, Rājalakṣmī
 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.

270 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
280 of yours is freed of fear—wicked Rāvaṇi 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
290 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

300 battle, I shall war with him upon the battlefield, kind
one. I fear not Rāvaṇa, Mother, stripped of Rāvaṇi."

Much impressed, Ramā 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-bannered

310 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
320 ranks in heaven seem so vacant in their absence?" Śacī's
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
330 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 Mandodarī rushed into the court,
340 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, Indrāṇī 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
 350 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 Mandodarī? 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—
 360 "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
 370 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. Cruellest Fate this day has
 at last turned utterly against me, and that is why the
 380 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 Kṛtānta'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
 390 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 Kārbūras would wish to go on living. Hero
Meghanāda was the pride of our own Kārbūra 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 Raghus, boisterous, thundered back. And the Indra of the
400 heavens shouted from on high. Vaidehī's husband became
incensed, as did Saumitri the lion, and Sugrīva,
Aṅgada, Hanumān, and the other valued generals,
all Yamas to the Rākṣasas—Nala, Nīla, and high-
minded Śārabha—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.
410 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 Vaikuṅṭha. 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 Ramā, sea
 420 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
 Hirānyakaśipu. Vāmana, as the dwarf, you dwarfed
 Bali's pride. I lived, my lord, by your grace. What more can I
 430 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
 440 your servant. That god-like sovereign among charioteers,
 Lakṣmaṇa the lion, slew fierce Meghanāda today
 in battle. Beside himself with bitter grief, the treasure
 of the Rākṣasas vowed to kill in combat Lakṣmaṇa.
 Indra, with bravado fit a warrior, vowed to defend
 him. Alas, any moment now the deadly battle will
 begin in golden Laṅkā, O Pītāmbara, 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
 450 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 Prabhañjana, 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
 460 spying 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. Cintāmaṇi

(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

470 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

480 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
490 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,
500 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-bannered 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.

510 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.

520 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 Maithilī. 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

530 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

540 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
 550 they see a herd of deer. Asilomā, livid, keen sword
 in his hand, surrounded with his horses Śārabha, 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;
560 golden Laṅkā tottered; the ocean roared. That hero, spouse
of Śacī, drew up his array of troops, magnificent.

Out came the Rākṣasas' 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
570 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!
580 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.

590 With hands together, cupped in supplication, and bowing
to that champion, Lan̄kā's monarch solemnly spoke, "This thrall,
my lord, worships day and night Śaṅkarī 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, Lakṣmaṇa 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
 600 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
 610 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 Rāvaṇa 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,
 620 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
Vajrapāṇi 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.

630 That throng of warriors fled, giving up disgracefully. Just
then the foeman of the Daitya clan came forward, irate,
like Karṇa 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
640 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, Kuliśī, the thunder-flinger, enraged,
seized a thunderbolt. At that very moment Garuḍa
650 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 Prabhañjana,
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.

660 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 Vaidehī. 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
670 Rākṣasas—now from his chariot, now on the ground.

The Puṣpaka 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
680 on the run, once they caught sight of their lordly Rākṣasa.

The son of Añjanā, having bested in a battle
the Rākṣasa warrior Biḍālākṣa, now appeared—that
Hanumān, mighty like Prabhañjana, 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
690 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 Kiṣkindhyā'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
 700 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,
 Kiṣkindhyā'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
 710 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 Śaktidhara? 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
 Ūrmilā, your spouse! For I am now about to feed your
 flesh to beastly carnivores. The earth will soak up rivers
 740 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
 750 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,

760 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 unailing arrows, runs rapidly
 toward him, so did that hero, king of the Rākṣasas, leap
 770 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, Śaṅkarī, 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."

780 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 Rāvaṇa, "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
790 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 Satī'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,"
800 in the poem

The Slaying of Meghanāda.