

from great hunger and thirst and if they returned with no tangible information about Sītā, Sugrīva would kill them. They preferred death by fasting on the seashore to death by the sword of Sugrīva.

Having decided thus the monkeys spread darbha grass on the extensive plain of Mahendra mountain and lay on the grass to die. In a large cave in the mountain was living Sampāti. The huge bird Sampāti was starving without food and was not able to fly as it had lost its wings. But it dragged itself to the mouth of the cave and saw the monkeys lying there awaiting death, and it thought of eating the monkeys one by one. The monkeys, who understood this idea of Sampāti cursed their fate and sang the praise of Jaṭāyu.

Hearing the word 'Jaṭāyu' Sampāti approached the monkeys, who related to him the object of their journey. Being told about the death of Jaṭāyu, Sampāti shed tears and told the monkeys as follows:-

Jaṭāyu was my younger brother. Our mother was Mahāśvetā and father Sūryadeva. On account of the boon of our parents I was King of all the birds and Jaṭāyu the crown Prince. As our brotherliness grew thicker our haughtiness due to our power and speed also increased. Once we flew up towards the orbit of the Sun to see him, our father. In his youthful enthusiasm my younger brother, Jaṭāyu, climbed higher up in the sky leaving me behind. Due to the heat of the Sun his wings lost their power and energy. Then, to save him, I flew up above him and shaded him. Therefore he could descend to the earth without his wings being burned and thus killed. But, my wings got burned and I fell down on the Mahendra mountain and got my legs broken. Thus I lost the power either to fly or to walk.

I stayed here as the attendant of Niśākara Mahārṣi, who could divine the future also. He told me the story about Rāma's incarnation. He told me further that monkeys in search of Sītā would come here when I should tell them where Sītā was and that then I would regain my health."

After telling the monkeys the above facts Sampāti, with their cooperation, performed the obsequies of Jaṭāyu. Then the King of birds (Sampāti) raised its head and surveyed the ocean and he saw the following: Mountain Subela in the heart of the southern sea; the plain at the heights of the mountain constituting the base of Laṅkā; in the centre of Laṅkā there was Rāvaṇa's capital; nearby the ladies' quarters; near the quarters the aśoka garden; at the centre of the garden the śirī'apā tree and under the tree Sītādevī.

As soon as Sampāti had finished telling the monkeys the above details he regained his health.

Sampāti told the monkeys another story also as follows:- Rāvaṇa once abducted a Yakṣa beauty from Alakāpuri and carried her away in his Puṣpaka Vimāna. Sampāti clashed with Rāvaṇa on his way and destroyed his plane. But the plane, which was self-generating came again into existence. Sampāti threw away by its beak the Candrahāsa (Rāvaṇa's sword) and kicked his crown down. At last, at the request of Rāvaṇa, he and Sampāti signed a non-aggression pact. That was the reason why Sampāti could not fight Rāvaṇa in person.

27) *Hanūmān saw Sītā.* Aṅgada said that for the search for Sītā in Laṅkā as told by Sampāti, some one should jump across the ocean. Though many a monkey tried to

do so it was Hanūmān, who succeeded in crossing the sea. At one jump he reached the heights of Mahendragiri whence he took another jump forward. But, midway Surasā, mother of the nāgas, swallowed him, and he came out through her ear and continued his journey towards Laṅkā. When he had advanced some more distance an evil spirit called Chāyāgrāhiṇī obstructed his way by a mysterious attack on his shadow. Hanūmān quickly understood what had happened and killed the evil spirit with one kick of his left foot. He again continued his flight. But, he very soon became weak and exhausted. Then Mount Maināka emerged from the ocean and fed Hanūmān with fruits and roots. He reached Laṅkā at dusk. He defeated Laṅkālakṣmī, who tried to prevent his entry into the city. In fact Laṅkālakṣmī was Vijayalakṣmī, who had been cursed by Brahmā. (For details see under Vijayalakṣmī). After defeating her, who was thus absolved from the curse, Hanūmān saw Sītā seated under the aśoka tree. But, none saw him as he was perched on a tree.

28) *Hanūmān's return.* That night Rāvaṇa dressed in all splendour visited Sītā and tried to secure her favour by soft words and cajolery, all to no purpose. Then he threatened her with punishments, which too proved to be of no avail. After instructing the Rākṣasa women that Sītā should be somehow brought round within a month's time, Rāvaṇa returned to his palace. Rākṣasis surrounded Sītā and described to her the greatness and various merits of Rāvaṇa. Sītā continued to sob. Then came there Trijaṭā, daughter of Vibhīṣaṇa, the great devotee of Viṣṇu, and Saramā, to console Sītā. Trijaṭā had boundless devotion towards Rāma and great love for Sītā. She repeated to Sītā certain dreams she had had.

Left to herself Sītā began saying to herself various things regarding her past. She referred to her infancy, beginning of youth, wedding, stay at Ayodhyā, forest-life and life in Pañcavaṭī and wept over her recurring thoughts about them. Hanūmān, who heard Sītā's soliloquy completed Sītā's story by relating, from his place on the tree, about Jaṭāyu's salvation, salvation given to Kabandha and Śabarī, alliance with Sugrīva, killing of Bālī, expedition of the monkeys in search of Sītā, meeting with Sampāti, himself (Hanūmān) crossing the sea and his finding out Sītā. Hearing the words of Hanūmān, Sītā looked up in astonishment. Immediately Hanūmān came down the tree and presented the signet ring at Sītā's feet. When she examined the ring her hands shook and tears dimmed her eyes. Hanūmān talked to her in detail and told her that he would, if only Sītā permitted him, carry her on his shoulders to Rāma. He told her further that if she did not welcome the idea of thus returning to Rāma, he would return with Śrī Rāma and others, defeat Rāvaṇa in war and take her back. Sītā was not convinced about the power and prowess of Hanūmān. He then increased his body in size so that his limbs grew into the size of a mountain, hands into that of trees, head into that of a mountain peak, tail into that of a river etc. His breathing became akin to a storm. Then he roared in such a manner that even the very ends of the world shook and the people of Laṅkā were awakened by it.

Sītā was now absolutely convinced of Hanūmān's bonafides and faithfulness. She handed over to him her Cūḍamaṇi (ornament worn on the head) to be