

Valmiki Ramayana – Yuddha Kanda – Chapter 75
CHAPTER 75

The Monkeys Burn Lanka

In order to make know what should be done next, the glorious Sugreeva spoke the following words to Hanuman: “Since Kumbhakarna and Ravana’s sons have been killed, Ravana can no longer put up any defense. As such, taking blazing torches, all the swift and mighty monkeys should immediately storm the city of Lanka.”

The sun having set, those stalwart monkeys headed straight towards Lanka during that dreadful night. Attacked from all sides by monkeys with torches in their hands, the rakshasas who were guarding the gates suddenly ran away. The jubilant monkeys set fire to the gateways, rooftops, streets, alleys and palaces. The fire burnt thousands of buildings, so that palaces the size of mountains collapsed on the ground. Aloewood, costly sandalwood, pearls, shiny gems, diamonds and coral were incinerated. Linen, beautiful silks, wool, gold ornaments and weapons were also being burnt.

The raging fire destroyed many different kinds of buildings, the saddles and trappings of horses, the chain mail worn by elephants, the decorations for chariots, coats of armor for warriors, leather padding for elephants and horses, swords, bows, bowstrings, arrows, lances, goads, spears, blankets and rugs made from animal hair, tiger skins, musk perfume, palaces inlaid with pearls and gems, and stockpiles of all kinds of weapons. The fire also destroyed all kinds of picturesque dwellings. The fire burnt tens of thousands of houses of the rakshasas, who were very attached to their homes. Wearing coats of gilded armor encrusted with gems and garlands of flowers, the rakshasas were trying to protect their homes. Some had eyes quivering from drinking liquor, walking slowly due to intoxication. Some were dressing with the assistance of their wives. They were furious at their enemies. Some were carrying maces and pikes in their hands, others were eating and drinking. Some were sound asleep with their loved ones in opulent beds. Others were running around panic-stricken with their sons as the conflagration flared up again and again.

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The fire consumed huge mansions that were solidly built, luxurious and spacious. These were in the shape of full moons or crescent moons and were lofty. They had latticed windows and were supplied with furniture throughout. They were inlaid with gems and coral and appeared to touch the sun. They resounded with the cries of herons and peacocks, the playing of Veenas and the jingling of ornaments. They looked like mountains. Enveloped with flames, the arches looked like a mass of clouds girt by lightning. Enveloped with flames, the houses shone like mountain peaks covered with forest fires. Being burnt while sleeping in their mansions, lovely women abandoned their ornaments and cried out in distress. The houses engulfed in flames collapsed like mountain peaks struck by Lord Indra’s thunderbolt. As they burned, they shone from a distance like the peaks of the Himalaya Mountains burning on all sides.

With its rooftops burning at night, Lanka looked as if it were adorned with Kimshuka trees. With its elephants set free by their keepers and its horses also, Lanka looked like the ocean swarming with alligators at the end of the world. Seeing a horse set free, an elephant became frightened and ran. The freed horse saw the frightened elephant and also became frightened, turning back. The reflection of the burning city on the ocean made it look as if the water was red. An hour after the monkeys had set fire to the city, it looked like the earth engulfed in fire at the horrible end of the world. The loud shrieks of women enveloped by smoke and burnt by fire could be heard at a distance of one hundred yojanas. Eager for battle, the monkeys would unexpectedly assault those rakshasas who rushed out of the city with badly burnt bodies. The shouts of the monkeys and the wails of the rakshasas caused all directions, including the ocean and earth, to resound.

Their wounds healed and un-bewildered, the two great princes, Rama and Lakshmana, grabbed their excellent bows. Then Rama drew back His excellent bow and produced a tumultuous twang which terrorized the rakshasas. While stretching His bow, Rama looked like the Supreme Lord stretching His bow comprised of the Vedas. The twang of Rama’s bowstring could be heard above the shouts of the monkeys and the wails of the rakshasas. The three sounds—the monkeys shouts, the Rakshasa’s wails and the twang of Rama’s bowstring—filled the ten directions. The arrows released from Rama’s bow caused the main city gateway, which resembled a peak of Mount Kailasa, to collapse.

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Seeing Rama’s arrows falling on the mansions and houses, the rakshasas lost their enthusiasm to fight. As the rakshasas were getting ready to attack and roaring, night fell on them like the night of universal dissolution. The great Sugreeva ordered the monkey leaders: “Monkeys, attack the nearest gate and start fighting! Anyone of you who leaves the battleground to escape fighting should be apprehended and killed for disobeying the royal command!” When those prominent monkeys took up positions at the gate with bright blazing torches in their hands, Ravana became furious. He threw all the ten directions into confusion when he grimaced and looked like the personified wrath manifested in the limbs of Lord Rudra.

In his anger, he sent out Kumbhakarna’s two sons, Kumbha and Nikumbha, along with many other rakshasas. Under the command of Ravana, Yupaksha, Shonitaaksha, Prajangha and Kampana sallied forth with the two sons of Kumbhakarna. Roaring like a lion, he further ordered those rakshasas as follows: “Go this very minute!” Exhorted by him, the rakshasas sallied forth from Lanka with their shining weapons, roaring again and again. The rakshasas lit up the sky with their personal splendor and that of their jewels, and the monkeys did the same with their firebrands. The light of the moon and stars and the shimmer of the ornaments illuminated the sky. The light of the moon, ornaments and planets thoroughly lit up the troops of the monkeys and rakshasas. The ocean with its waves shone even brighter with the light reflected on its waters by the flames of half-burnt houses.

That Rakshasa army had terrible prowess and courage. It was adorned with flags and banners. It had fearsome horses, chariots and elephants, and was crowded with different kinds of foot soldiers. The warriors carried shining pikes, maces, swords, spears, lances and bows. It looked eerie with its shining weapons and resounded with the tinkling of decorative bells. The warriors’ arms bore various golden ornaments. They were brandishing axes, waving huge weapons and fixing arrows to bows. The air was perfumed with the scent of sandalwood paste, flower garlands and wine. The army was crowded with formidable warriors and rumbled like huge clouds.

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Seeing that Rakshasa army had arrived, the monkey army marched forward to meet it and roared very loudly. Dashing forward impetuously, the Rakshasa army directed itself toward the hostile monkey army, like a moth rushing into a fire. By brandishing iron clubs and thunderbolts, the army shone even more brightly. The frenzied monkeys who were eager to fight then rushed upon the night-stalkers, hitting them with trees, boulders and fists. As the monkeys were approaching, they were knocked down by the sharp arrows of the rakshasas. With their heads smashed in, their ears bitten off and their limbs broken by the blows of boulders, the rakshasas wandered about.

Even so, other fearsome-looking night-stalkers hacked at the monkeys from all sides with sharp swords. One combatant struck another as the latter was striking still another. Another combatant threw down an opponent who was throwing down another opponent. Another combatant rebuked an opponent who was rebuking another opponent. Another combatant bit an opponent who was biting another opponent. One said: “Fight me! Then the opponent began fighting with him. Then another would interrupt saying: “I shall fight with you! Why do you bother yourself? Just wait!” Thus did the warriors talk to each other. Thereafter a most frightful battle ensued between the monkeys and rakshasas. Weapons were dodged, weapons dislodged armor, lances were raised and fists, pikes, swords and spears were employed. The rakshasas killed seven to ten monkeys at a time. Similarly, the monkeys killed seven to ten rakshasas at a time. Blocking the Rakshasa army, whose hair and clothes were disheveled and whose armor and flags had fallen, the monkeys surrounded them.

Thus completes 75th Chapter of Yuddha Kanda of the glorious Ramayana of Valmiki, the work of a sage and the oldest epic.

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