

RĀMĀYANA AND LANKA

PARTS I & II

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BANGALORE CITY:
PRINTED AT THE BANGALORE PRESS
1940

go round it as a preliminary to swearing mutual friendship (*Kishkindha*, Sarga 5, verses 15-17). When therefore, Kabandha advises Rāma to put down his weapons when meeting Sugrīva (*Āraṇya*, Sarga 72, verse 21), and to swear friendship before a blazing fire (Sarga 72, verse 17), it is clear he must have received his instructions from Hanumān, and his parting words to Rāma were, 'make friendship' (*Sakhyam kurushva*) with Sugrīva (*Āraṇya*, Sarga 73, verse 45).

Following Kabandha's instructions, the brothers reached the western shore of Pāmpa after passing the night on the crest of a hill. There, on the western shore, they met the ascetic Śabari in her pleasant home amid trees, and were hospitably entertained by her. Going down to the lake, Rāma first plunged into a deep pool known as the Matanga Saras apparently to cool his burning limbs (*Āraṇya*, Sarga 75, verse 14). He then started to cross the Pampa for the R̥ṣyamūka hill which rose on the opposite shore 'not very far off' (*Āraṇya*, Sarga 75, verse 7). From the description of Pampa in the last Sarga of *Āraṇya*, and the first of *Kishkindha*, it was evidently a broad, placid, shallow cirque lake, thickly overspread with multi-coloured lotuses and water-lilies (*Āraṇya*,

Sarga 75, 'verse 13), as well as floating semi-submerged trees (*pāri-plava-drumām*) (*Kishkindha*, Sarga 1, verse 126). One thing is certain, that Vālmiki's Pampa Saras cannot be the Tungabhadra river near Hampe with 'its rapids, boulder-strewn channels, and narrow gorges, and surrounded by a barren tree-less tract of granitic hillocks'.

WAS THERE A CAUSEWAY ACROSS THE PAMPA?

The last verse of the *Āraṇya* says that it was a great distance (*mahadvartma*) across the Pampa to R̥ṣyamūka, that the passage comprised a good long causeway (*sudūra sankramam*) as well as troublesome stretches of sandy waste (*pratikūla dhanvanam*), and that the lake itself was interspersed with wooded islands full of birds of all kinds. 'Sankrama' is a causeway. All causeways round Dwāraka were 'broken' (*bheditāḥ*) as a measure of defence against Śālba's invasion (*Mahābhārata*, *Vana Parva*, *Adhyāya* 15, verse 14). In the *Kādambarī*, Bāṇa, who flourished in the seventh century A.D., speaks of the lotus lake (*Padma Saras*) of Pampa, 'where even now' (*yatra adyāpī*), chakravāka couples meet the eye of the 'passer-through' (*madhya-chāriṇā*) like embodiments of Rāma's curse. The madhya-chāri traveller and the

chakravākas on either side, strongly suggest a causeway across the Pampa.

The *Kishkindha Kāṇḍa* begins with the crossing of the Pampa by Rāma, and the meeting of Rāma and Sugrīva in the R̥ṣyamūka hill. It was at this meeting that Sugrīva produced the bundle of jewels dropped by Sītā. Not long before, according to the text, Rāvaṇa had crossed the Pampa, and Sītā had dropped her jewels in view of five Vānaras seated on a hill-top. Pampa and R̥ṣyamūka, a high hill and a lake, are thus important, and what is more, *adjoinîng*, landmarks on the Janasthāna-Lanka route. The way across the Pampa was therefore a cart-track with Matanga's grove to the west, and the hill-fort of R̥ṣyamūka to the east. The road evidently passed right under the brow of the hill, and the Vānaras, as was natural, were sitting by the roadside above the head of the Pass, watching men and carts pass. It would appear therefore that as the asses plodded up the steep ascent, Sītā secured her jewels in her upper garment of yellow silk, and dropped them right in front of the Vānaras, unnoticed by Rāvaṇa (*Āraṇya*, Sarga 54, verses 1-3). It is thus clear that *both Rāvaṇa and Rāma crossed the Pampa and passed by the R̥ṣyamūka hill.*