Frontispiece:
Rāma enthroned, Kānṅrā School, early 19th century A.D., National Museum.
RĀMO VIGRAHAYĀN DHARMAH:
RĀMA EMBODIMENT OF
RIGHTeousNESS
Affectionately to the memory of

The Rt. Hon’ble V.S Srinivasa Sastri, P.C., C.H., LL.D.,

the world-renowned silver-tongued orator

who sang the glory of Rāma
FOREWORD

I consider it a great privilege and indeed a unique honour to be asked to write a Foreword to any of the works of this most distinguished scholar of our ancient history and culture. In fact all his works are veritable treasures on Indology, placing posterity in a deep debt that can neither be forgotten nor ever cancelled.

Born of a family of Vedic scholars who by custom and heritage were devotees of Rāma, it is noteworthy that Dr. Sivaramamurti’s father had composed a charming kāvyā poem, Sundararāmāyaṇa on the glory of the ideal Prince Rāma. It was therefore expected of Dr. Sivaramamurti to one day produce some outstanding literature on his family Deity Rāma and I can understand his feeling in asking me to write this foreword, as Rāma is also my family Deity. The learned author had delivered a series of lectures at the L.D. Institute of Indology at Ahmedabad on Rāmo Vigrahavān Dharmah: Rāma Embodiment of Righteousness, and these lectures have now been published in the form of an exceedingly valuable book.

Rāma has ever been the exemplar of all that has been cherished in India as ideals in life since our ancient scriptures have always held man’s character (chāritra) as above every other factor. Among the purushārthas, as Rāma himself has pointed out to Bharata, no one can overlook the importance of the others, while all of them should be guided by the true principles of dharma. Dr. Sivaramamurti has in all his books always stressed the study of literature and art, holding that one is a commentary to the better understanding of the other. In this book he has not only enlivened visually by a number
of specially chosen illustrations from sculpture, painting, numismatics and epigraphy the text that he has pointedly quoted, stressed and elaborated, but has, in addition, drawn attention to the interesting versions of several poets that have elaborated, deviated or given new colour to many a passage of Vālmīki. Thus, for example, Kālidāsa, Kumāradāsa, Bhavabhuti, Bāṇa, Murāri, Kshemendra, Rājaśekhara, and a host of others that have given new dimensions to Vālmīki’s immortal epic, have been freely cited which heightens the intrinsic value of this unique academic study. Dr. Sivaramamurti, while approaching the theme with devotion, has objectively assessed the glory of Rāma, showing how the highest ennobled mortal rises to the eminence of the greatest of celestials, Purushottama.

I have no doubt this book will be received as an acquisition by the religious minded, an asset by the academician and of absorbing interest by the general reader.

6 Akbar Road
New Delhi
January 22, Vasant Panchmi 1980

Nagendra Singh
AUTHOR'S PREFACE

At the invitation of Dr N J Shah, Director of the L.D Institute of Indology at Ahmedabad, I delivered a series of lectures on the theme ‘Rāma Vigrāhavān Dharmah’—Ramā Embodiment of Righteousness, on 27th, 28th and 29th November 1978. With the kind permission of the Institute, the text of these lectures is now published with suitable illustrations.

Rāma has ever been the ideal and the supreme illustration of exemplary character. In India, where the highest store was laid on ethical values in the conduct and behaviour of man, in both the closer circle of kith and kin and the larger sphere of society and the world itself, the illustrious prince of Ayodhya has been the beacon light to illumine the right path of virtue.

The ancient rulers of India had specially arranged for the exposition of the quintessence of the wisdom of the epics to a large and eager audience of listeners in the Vyākhyaṇa mandapa, pillared hall of exposition, in every village, that provided auditory education, the simplicity of which was matched only by its excellence, and which bore fruit in promoting not only knowledge but also in building up character that made India a great nation of sacrifice, action and ideals.

This short study of Rāma’s essential noble qualities, kalyāṇagunas, is offered at His feet as a posy of flowers in grateful remembrance for showing the path of how to live.

For the photographs illustrating the book, I am thankful to the
Archaeological Survey of India, the National Museum, the Madras Government Museum and the Archaeological Department of Andhra Pradesh. To the Archaeological Survey of India, the National Museum and the Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Academi, I am beholden for their kind loan of colour blocks that have given a special charm to the book. To Mr. B.S. Bhatt, Guide Lecturer in the National Museum, my thanks are due for kindly preparing the Index.

To the L.D. Institute of Indology, I am grateful for the kind accord of permission to publish the book. To Mr. Baxi of Kanak Publications, the Publisher, and to Mr. Chhoteylal Jain of Navchetan Press, the Printer, I am beholden for expedition and the tasteful production of the book. I have no words to adequately express my gratitude to Dr. Nagendra Singh, Vice President and Judge of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, for so graciously bejewelling the book with his enlivening foreword.

New Delhi
January, 1980

C. Sivaramamurti
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Rāmo Vigrahavān Dharmah:
Rama Embodiment of Righteousness

Dharma was considered the highest principle in India and it is under the shade of dharma as a chhāyāvriksha, that life on earth itself was to have its peaceful tenor. Dharma is the most beloved, vatsala, and so we have the appellation dharmavatsala for those who love and follow dharma assiduously. Dharma is likened to honey itself as it is so sweet. The Brihadāraṇyakopanishad describes dharma as honey for all beings even as all beings are like honey for dharma. The shining immortal purusha in dharma and the dharma itself within oneself, shining and immortal, is the purusha of individual self, as this very dharma is the self, is the immortal, is brahman and is in fact all:

अप धर्म स्वयं भूतानां मधु ।
अस्य धर्मस्य स्वरूपं भूतानि मधु ॥
यत्रवाय अस्मि धर्मं तेजोमयोमूर्तम पुरुषः ।
यत्रवाय अभ्यासं धर्मं ॥
तेजोमयमूर्तम पुरुषः अथवः स योज्य आत्मा ।
ददमूर्तमः इद च इद सर्वं ॥

Brihadāraṇyakopanishad 2, 5, 11

In the Mahānārāyanopanishad, it is given that righteousness is the glory and mainstay of the universe. In this world people approach the righteous one. By righteousness sin is got rid of. In righteousness everything is established. Hence, righteousness is considered the highest:

धर्मः वित्तस्य जगां प्रतिष्ठा ।
बोधे धर्मस्य जगां उपस्थितः ।
धर्मः यात्रां प्रतिष्ठितः ।
तस्मादर्थं परम बद्धितः ॥

Mahānārāyaṇopanishad 79, 7
When Yudhishthira is questioned by dharma, he replies that he would never act disastrously towards dharma. On the contrary, he would take the utmost care to protect it as dharma protects. Dharma, taken care of, protects, and, transgressed or assassinated, destroys:

धर्म एव हलो हृदि धर्मो रक्षित रहितः ।
तस्मादवर्ग न द्विजामि मा मौ त्वं धर्मो हलो वधितु ॥

Mahābhārata 3, 313, 128

This line dharma rakshati rakshitah appears as a motto engraved on the seal of a royal official of the Gupta period which was discovered at Basarh, ancient Vaisālī, during the excavations there about seventy years ago (Fig. 1). One of the most fervent appeals in the tenth century A.D. for the resuscitation of dharma that was already getting eroded fast, is found in a passage in the second chapter of the Kusamānjali where the deterioration of the highest standards of virtue and moral code and its continued attenuation is graphically presented. Towards the end of his long and effective peroration, Udayana gives a picture of dharma as a bull or a cow, originally fourfooted, now limping along in great agony on a single foot. Formerly dharma was firmly resting on its four legs. Slowly, as dharma deteriorated and got weakened by the attenuated power of penance, it had only three legs to rest on, and when bright philosophic thought and discernment (jñāna) withered, dharma rested in great pain only on two feet, but now with the attenuated sacrificial activity (yajña) dharma stands on a single leg, purely by the power of dāna or the spirit of giving away. Even this foot, being affected by a footsore as it were, resulting in such forbidden activities as the game of dice, drink etc. disfigured by the dirt of lack of faith, pierced by a thousand thorns in the shape of lust, greed, anger, etc., and with its vitality sapped slowly day by day, is unable to stand on this feeble leg, stumbles here and there and almost appears to fall:

पुर्व चतुष्पदंस्म आशीत ।
तत्स्तमूलयामाच तपस्वि विभरत ।
ततो म्यमिति जाने ह्विपात ।
सम्ब्रति जीतिति यज्ञ वनक्रापात । सोपि पादो दुरामतादिविपिकाकाशयायहतीथितोश्रद्धामालकलस्वतः:
कामकौशिकीशिवशिवार्षित: प्रत्यहचम्पचीमानवीर्येतत इत्तत: स्वल्लिक्षोपम्यस्यः ॥

Nyāyakusumānjali 2, 3
This fervent appeal by Udayana shows, in the light of this seal, the highest place of honour given to dharma in private and public life and upheld as the greatest protector. Kings had made provision in ancient India, as we learn from inscriptions, for the reading and exposition of important portions of the great epics, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, that have built up the character of a great nation during the centuries that have run into millennia. Portions like the anusasanaparva from the Mahābhārata, where Bhishma expounded the highest principles of ethical life, sanatasūjātiya and viduramiti of the udyogaparva, yakshapraśna of the vanaparva, and several other such portions expounding dharma from the Rāmāyana, have constituted the main beacons of education in ancient India that believed in sruta, learning by hearing rather than by mere study. The sculptors and painters vied one with the other in depicting episodes illustrating the highest ethical values in life as sources of inspiration for life itself. Such representations had great effect on the people, as it is emulative spirit that provoked people to act like the uttamapurusha or those of the highest character Krishna has given in the Gūḍā that the common folk could always follow the example of the highest and the most righteous as the standard set to be followed.

Bhagavād-gītā 3, 21

A visitor to Udayagiri in Bhilsa, ancient Vidiśā, cannot but be struck by a look at the monument of the earliest antiquity in that region, the Garuda column of Heliodoros which has an inscription that mentions how it was erected for Vāsudeva, the god of gods, by a Greek from Taxila, son of Dion, a Bhagavata, devotee of Vishnu, who had come as an ambassador from the great king Antialkidas to Kaśiputra Bhāgabhadra, king of the region (Fig 2). Apart from the interest in this inscription as revealing the faith of a Greek in the Bhagavata cult and his creation of a pillar (Fig 3), there is yet another important eye opener to understanding the mind of the individual in ancient India that was turned towards dharma, in what is seen in a small inscription on the same pillar. This inscription mentions three immortal precepts as self restraint, sacrifice and alertness which when practised lead to heaven (Fig 4).
The verse forming the source of this is interesting. It is the discourse of Sanatsujāta, the learned young sage, who impresses on Dhṛtarāṣṭra that dama, tyēga and apramāda are the receptacle of immortality as the wise seers know them emanating from truth that proceeds them all:

दमस्त्रावरोप्रामादश्र एतेषवमृतसाधितम्।
तानि सत्यमुखायात्मक्षारणाणि ये मनोपि:॥

Mahābhārata 5, 48, 14

The pillar itself being as early as the beginning of the second century B.C., the text of the Mahābhārata even then so revered and quoted is indeed most hoary.

The subjects of Dilīpa never swerved even a hair’s breadth from the path trodden from the time of Manu himself, just as the wheel of a chariot does not move out of its beaten path when controlled by a wise charioteer. So Dilīpa was the wise upholder of the laws of Manu:

रेखामार्गसध शुल्कादामनोच्छतेन: परस्।
न भ्यतीयु: प्रजास्ततम नियमतस्मिन्त्वत्य:॥

Raghuvaṁśa 1, 17

Raghu being the great progenitor of the race, vamśasya kartā, was so righteous that Kautsa, the young Brāhmaṇa who had come to beg of him the impossible fee for his teacher in gold, felt that it was indeed no wonder that the earth gave of her all for a ruler who stood for righteousness, but it baffled him indeed to find that his power was so great that even the heavens would yield him any desire of his (Fig. 5):

किमत चित्रं यदि कामसथुंशुं हेतु स्थितस्थाओपि: प्रजानाम।
अचिन्तनीश्चुद्राः तव प्रभावो मनोपितं छौर्यि वेन दुधा।॥

Raghuvaṁśa 5, 33

In describing Atithi, the son of Kuśa, who came to the throne
as a young boy, his glorious qualities of dharma are recounted. His very appearance made his people feel at home with him, and he was so lovable, with his face bright with lustre, wreathed in smiles as he spoke lovingly, that all those who depended on him like his subjects, felt that he was the very personification of confidence:

प्रतापमुखराग त स्मितपुरुषविभाविणिष्म ।
मूर्तिमवस्मयत विद्वातसमजीविन ॥

Raghuvarsha 17, 31

This is exactly like the picture of Rāma given by Vālmiki (Fig. 6). As a king, he would not leave any cases to be looked into by others, however much they were qualified for judgement, but would himself personally consider them, and, being the friend of the righteous, vigilantly looked into the pleas of both the complainant and the complained against, and that circumspection resolved even those of most doubtful nature requiring careful analysis:

स धर्मस्तवः शर्मवर्त्यक्षविक्ष्य ॥
ददश सशयायानु व्यवहारमतिव्रृत ॥

Raghuvarsha 17, 39

He was so devoted to dharma, that the rest of the purushārthas were determined in terms of dharma, but yet he would not mitigate the importance of any of the three. He did not violate dharma by stressing artha or kāma. Nor were the latter two mitigated for the sake of dharma itself. He did not either overlook wealth in preference to desire nor desire in preference to wealth. He was thus equal in his evaluation of all the three:

न धर्मार्थवर्द्धाच्या व्ययम न च हेतु तो ॥
नार्यं वामेन नाम वा होयन सद्वास्तिनु ॥

Raghuvarsha 17, 57

When Rāma was leaving for the forest, Kausalyā though greatly overcome by grief, was sure that Rāma would be protected by the very dharma that he so assiduously guarded. In blessing her son, she called on dharma, so punctiliously protected by him with
attuned mind and careful insight into the nuances of its observance, to protect him:

वें पालवसि धर्मं वें भुवया च नियमेन च |
स वै राजवशार्दुल धर्मस्तवामस्मिरक्षतु ||

Rāmāyanā 2, 25, 3

It may be recalled that Dushyanta who suddenly falls in love with the charming girl of the hermitage, Śakuntalā, wonders whether he is right in so allowing his mind to lovingly think of her, if she were not his compeer for bridal relationship. His doubt is whether, if she were the daughter of Kaṇva, it would not be sinful for him as a Kshatriya to think of her as his wife to be, but somehow immediately conscious of being the dharmika king that he is, he has such self confidence that he justifies his thought by obseving that unless she was such as could be won by a Kshatriya his mind attuned to dharma would not have even thought of her:

असंशयं शान्तपरिग्रह्यमा यदार्थस्तवामस्मिरक्षतु मनः ||

Abhijñānaśākuntalam 1, 19

Kuśa, the worthy son of Rāma, roused from his couch at midnight, with the lights bright and still, by the sudden appearance of a damsel, never before seen by him, but in attire appearing like one with husband far away and separated, and addressed by her with hands brought together in reverence with a hail for his victory while greeting him, and excited by wonder as his chamber was still unbolted, making her presence as mysterious as the sudden appearance of an image in a mirror, questions her, 'O auspicious one! who are you? and whose wife? How have you entered the door still unbolted though I cannot see any supernatural powers in you? Tell me this, but do bear in mind that the progeny of the self-restrained Raghus is ever totally turned away from the womenfolk of others':

का त्वं गुरुः कस्य परिग्रहो च कि वा मद्ययागमकारणं ते ।
आचृत्व सत्वा वशिष्या रूपम् मनः वरसीविमुखश्रृवृत्ति ॥

Raghuvaṃśa 16, 8
But ultimately it happened to be the goddess of Ayodhya, who, when Rāma with all his beloved people of Ayodhya entered Sarayū, was left deserted and forlorn, and personally came to call back to Ayodhya the lord of Ayodhya, Kuśa, to whom she was like a consort even like Rājyaśrī. This is to illustrate the mind of the prince that was so meticulous in following the dharmā, paramārthānukhatva. It is this, in which, about Rāma, Sītā has the greatest confidence. In fact, when she strangely enough reminds Rāma of three things that she had learnt from him, tvaṭta eva śrutam mayā, she advises Rāma to desist from killing even demons unprovoked. She mentions the three evils born of passion, falsehood, passion for women other than one’s own and cruelty without provocation:

वोपयक व्यस्तात्मक नामाज्ञान वस्तुत ।
समवाचावल परस्त तत्साद्भुक्तारुपोऽ।
परवाराभिनवन विना वेर च सौरता ।
भियालवम न हे भूत न भविपितः सार्य ॥
कुलोभितरण स्त्रीणा परेया धर्मनाशनम् ।
तव नासित मघुपद्यान न चासूहै कदाचत ॥

Rāmāyana 3, 10, 3-5

Sītā is so confident about Rāma’s ekapatnīvratatva that her remark is:

वृत्तोपनन्तरण स्त्रीणा परेया धर्मनाशनम् ।
तव नासित मघुपद्यान न चासूहै कदाचत ॥

It had never been and could never be the trait in Rāma that he would even have a glance at a woman other than Sītā. It is no wonder that Kuśa, born of that parentage, has the same trait and warns the woman before him, that he could help her in anything, but only if she was come with no evil intent towards his attitude to any woman.

We know that Gautama won Ahalyā as his wife in divine appreciation of his steadfastness of mind which could not be moved even by the fabulous paragon of beauty that Ahalyā was. She was specially created with fascinating physical charm and left alone
in his charge and in his hermitage, and yet the sage would not so much as even glance at her, least of all be emotionally stirred by her beauty:

Viśvāmitra was to Rāma very much more than a master, and so he would implicitly obey the sage, with the full confidence that what he felt as *dharma* was really to him also *dharma*, especially as his father had completely put him in his charge.

This very Viśvāmitra, who attained the impossible position of *brahmarishi* by his penance, could only reach that eminence after so many obstacles that disturbed his penance every time by the lure of a nymph of extraordinary charm like Menakā or Rambhā, and every time he had to withdraw himself from this snare only after he had been ensnared, and it was thus his achievement only after considerable loss of time. It is in this, the highest control of self and sensory organs, that Rāma is singled out as the greatest among the *vāsis*, *vaśinām uttamaḥ*.

Sītā, in upbraiding Rāvaṇa, accuses him as outrageous, *nikṛita-prajña*. She tells him that one who was not satisfied with his
womenfolk and with his mind fickle and wandering and deluded
with base intent would court grief and disaster at the hands of the
womenfolk of others by his contemptible passionate approach:

अतुष्ट स्वेपु दवेशु चपल चलितेवर्गम् ।
नवति निग्रिष्ट्रस परस्ताः परामर्शम् ॥

Rāmayana 5, 21, 8-9

On the other hand, Rāma’s character is such that he would
even forgive the thief that stole his wife When Vibhishana seeks
his protection, Rāma assures the monkeys that he would certainly
grant protection, to Vibhishana, and even if it were Rāvana himself,
the base pilferer of his wife, he would yet grant him protection
That is the magnanimous and dhārmik spirit of Rāma whose power
was ever for protecting the weak, having no malice even towards
his worst enemy Here is Rāma’s great admonition to the mon-
keys It is a great evil desisting from protecting those seeking
refuge It is unworthy of heaven, defamatory and the annihilator
of all might and power I shall follow the precept of sage Kandu,
so that the fruit of my act would be in accordance with righteous
conduct, worthy of fame and heaven To one who even once seeks
refuge and beseeches pronouncing himself as mine, for all beings
whoever they be, I grant assurance of protection to fear from none
Bring him along I have already given him protection whether
it is Vibhishana or even if he were Rāvana himself in person (Fig 7)

एव दोपो महानान्न श्रपनामामर्कणे ।
वस्त्यं वाचवर्गम च वलिचित्रविवातानाम् ।
बरियाजि वयाष्टि तु कण्ठोत्तरमुत्तमम् ।
धर्मित च वस्त्यं च स्वर्गम स्मातु प्लादयम् ॥
साक्षद भृपनाय तबासीतिः च वाच्ये ।
अन्य सर्वसुभोम पदामेवदृश्य सम ॥
अल्यपैं ह्यर्येह दसम्यश्च गया ।
विनिष्पणो वा सुप्रीत्य यदि वा राज्यं स्वयम् ॥

Rāmayana 6, 18, 31-35

This is one of the most thrilling utterances of Rāma entirely
swayed only by principles of dhārma, completely free from any
malice even towards one who robbed him of his dearest sweetheart,
seperation from whom was worse than lingering death for him; but for Rāma dharma was more important. He assures Sītā that having given word of protection to the sages in the forest, he would not only give up his own life but even Sītā herself, whom he loved more than his life, and even Lakshmana he would sacrifice if it came to that, but he would never swerve from his word assuring protection to the sages (Fig. 8 and 9):

अप्यांह जीविलं जहां त्वा वा सीती सल्लक्षणाम्।
न तु वाक्यं प्रतिश्चुत्य व्राह्मणानां निषेधतः॥

Rāmāyaṇa 3, 10, 19

Hanumān is one of the best judges of people and being the most intelligent, he could always analyse even the fine shade, and moods of emotions and attribute them to their immediate principal cause (Fig. 10). That is why he could appreciate the great temperament of dharma in Sītā and assess her accordingly. On two occasions, Hanumān has specially commended Sītā as the most worthy of Rāma, as no one else but she the dhārmik wife of Rāma could think or express so. That is his wonder and appreciation every time. As a measure of safety, so that nothing could be left to chance, and, having met her, Hanumān innocently and with the best of intentions suggests that he would carry her away to Rāma. It is here that Sītā reveals in her reply to Hanumān what a great and noble personality she is (Fig. 11 and 12). Anyone else in such a plight could have welcomed escape, but Sītā was not anxious for any such escape out of her almost insurmountable difficulty. Sītā tells him that she was fully aware of his might and strength, his speed, comparable only to that of the wind, and lustre as of fire, all wondrous indeed, since no ordinary person could have crossed the ocean with ease and met her. She was quite conscious of his power to carry her also to Rāma but she felt it was improper, and gives the reasons. The first few were such as could probably be even overcome, but the final clinching one was the principal cause of her negating the offer. His speed would sure make her faint and from dizzy heights she could fall into the ocean and become feed of the whales and crocodiles. She could create the doubt that she was his consort. She could be pursued by demons of immense valour set by Rāvana, and he could be fought by
armed warriors, himself unarmed. There could be no certainty of success either. Even while fighting, she could, by the tumultuous action, fall from his shoulder and they could carry her back as she fell, and all his great effort would probably go in vain. But above all, even granting that he could overcome all the demons, Rāma’s fame and self respect would be tarnished by Hanumān fighting the rakshasas. The rakshasas could hide her somewhere where Rāma may not find her. The very life of Rāma was centred in her and the entire family would perish if he perished. But more than all this, because of her devotion to her lord, she would not touch the body of any other man, whoever it be, though, however, such touch by Rāvana was as she was helpless and unable to resist and protect herself being forcibly abducted (Fig 13 and 14). If Rāma punished Rāvana by annihilating his entire family and regained her, that would be worthy of him. On this Hanumān being overjoyed at such a reply remarks, ‘you have spoken well O auspicious one! not only is this in tune with feminine grace but also with that of the amiable, disciplined one that you are. A woman, frail by nature, cannot, as you say, cross the ocean, a hundred leagues in length. But the second reason given by you that you would not touch any other than Rāma is indeed befitting the wife of so great and saintly a person as Rāma. Who else but you would have made such a statement? Surely the scion of the Kakutstha family (Rāma) would be informed of this as well as your action and speech in its entirety. I had, however, suggested this only because I wanted to do what could make Rāma happy, my mind moist with affection and with no other intent.

तत् स कपिलादृश्तस्मेत बालायेन हापित।
गीतायुबाच तद्भव रामय बालायवभारद।।
युक्तकाय त्वमा देवेन भापित शुभविशाय।।
महुष्ठ्र स्वीकाराय सालोकोता नित्ययो च।।
स्वीकारण त्वं समपथि सहार भ्यत्विद्विंदुः।।
भारतदिखाय वित्तिण्डे सत्योपनमस्तस।।
द्वितीय कारण यज्ञ चतवृति विनियातिते।।
रामालंकर्तव्य नाप्पुरिं सरस्यस्मिति जानिभ।।
एतस्ते देवी महुष्ठ्र पर्यास्तस्य स्मारितम।।
बा आयत्वा ल्यास्ते देविस्मु वृत्तार्जुनस्यहृदम।।
A second occasion when Hanumān appreciates Sītā is when she forbids his punishing the rākshasī demonesses that were so cruel to her as they guarded her on the orders of Rāvaṇa in the Asoka grove. Hanumān not only gives glad tidings of Rāma’s victory to Sītā, having come specially to convey her this news, but he also expresses his desire to punish the wicked demonesses by torturing and tormenting them as they deserved. But Sītā, reputed for her ethical attitude, replies in thought couched in dharma. These demonesses had been acting on the orders of their king, completely controlled by him, having no volition of their own. Who could be angry with servants who have always to obey orders? Owing to some ill luck, probably for some misdeeds of mine in an earlier birth, I have suffered all this while, enjoying the fruit of it as was ordained for me. It is only on the orders of Rāvaṇa that they threatened me all the while (Fig. 15), and now that Rāvaṇa is no more they would desist from indulging in it any more. No one could partake of the sin of the evil committed by another. People with character should take note of this and act accordingly. Sinners or saints or even those that merit capital punishment should always be treated with compassion. There is no one in this world that has not erred. Rākshasas, who could assume form according to their wish and derive pleasure in tormenting, cannot be accused of doing any wrong even when they commit sin. Hanumān listens to this and again befittingly replies Sītā the worthy wife of Rāma. Hanumān exclaims that she is the befitting dharmapati of Rāma famed for her dhārmik thought:

एष्टुपर्यं हनुमता धरेषी जनकात्मजा ।
उपच धर्मसहितं हनुमतं सश्रविनी ॥
राजस्वरूपसयानां कुवेर्तीनां पराजया ।
विशेषानां च दासीनां कः कुप्पाहानरोत्तम ॥
भास्यवैवृत्तिप्रेपे पुरा दुर्श्चरितम च ।
संवेषति प्राप्यते सवर्ष हृषिपुद्दवे ॥
प्राप्तवें तु दशायोपायं वैततिनि निश्चितम ॥
दासीनां रावणश्च भरणयासीं दुर्वेषा ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 5, 38, 1-6
It is not only an indication of what Sītā herself personally is, but also because of the dharma that she had seen Rāma act and also learnt from him. She explicitly says on one occasion that she had learnt these ethical principles pertaining to dharma only from him. This is a message she sends to Rāma through Hanumān, and accuses Rāma, without realising that he was not indifferent to her, but only did not know where she was and who had carried her away, so that he could strike the culprit and do her justice. There was no wanton cruelty on the part of Rāma in the form of any indifference towards her suffering. It is fortunate that Hanumān hastens to correct her. This is the text of Sītā’s message to Rāma, ‘It is from you that I have learnt that aversion to cruelty is the greatest dharma. I know you to be immensely potent, exceedingly powerful, abundant in enthusiasm to act righteously, knowing no end to your endeavour, unruffled, deep and noble like the ocean itself. You must therefore be compassionate towards me; and wholeheartedly come to my succour as possessing a protector like you, I should not appear helpless.’

Rāmāyana 6, 116, 37-47
Hanumān’s reply is very effective. I declare this on an oath. Rāma is quite against the slightest grief you may experience. When Rāma grieves Lakṣmaṇa follows suit. Somehow I have now found where you are, and it is no time to grieve. This very minute you would see the end of all your sorrows; and the two princes, the compeers of tigers in their might, with abundant enthusiasm to see you again, would reduce Laṅkā to ashes:

Even when her nose was cut (Fig. 16), Śūrpaṇakhā, when describing Rāma, first to Khara and Dūshaṇa in Daṇḍaka itself (Fig. 17), and later, to Rāvaṇa himself in Laṅkā (Fig. 18), cannot but portray him as nothing less than a saintly sage and as not only knowledgeable in dharma but also practising it. The two brothers, as she put it, subsisting on such simple fare as roots and fruits, are the very embodiment of peace and penance, practising all the time the most virtuous life:

Śūrpaṇakhā’s description of Rāma to Rāvaṇa is again equally interesting. Fourteen thousand gigantic, terrific rākṣasas, exclaims Śūrpaṇakhā, all powerful and terror-striking in appearance, fully panoplied and fighting from chariots, were entirely annihilated by an unprecedented shower of sharp arrows by Rāma, fighting them alone and singly on foot, in an hour and a half, and among the killed are their leaders, Khara and Dūshaṇa. Thus Rāma gave
protection to all the sages of the forest and made Dandakā a paradisial haven to live in. I am the only one left off alive though maimed, as Rāma, who knows dharma so well, would not even apprehend not to talk of allow the taking away the life of a woman.

Earlier even before the arrival of Šūrpanakhā the rakshasa Akampana runs to him post haste and describes the glory of Rāma and his bestowal of powerful protection to dharma represented by the sages in the Dandakā forest. Akampana, the unshaken, was indeed so shaken by the dazzle of Rāma's victory in the cause of dharma for protecting the sages, on the accomplishment of which, he was welcomed by Sitā, her face wreathed in smiles.

that only on an assurance of protection by Rāvana, with his quivering slightly assuaged, he could describe Rāma's enthusiasm for protecting the sages of Dandakā, and through them dharma. He could, Akampana felt, roll up the sky itself with all its luminous stars and planets. He could raise up the earth even if it were sinking in the waters of the deluge, or he could even shatter the shores of the ocean to drown the earth enveloping it in a flood of waters of the deluge as it were. With his arrows he could stop the fury of the ocean or even the movement of the wind. It is impossible for you to overcome Rāma as it is like the sinners trying to win heaven. This is not only an appraisal of Rāma's almost supernatural powers that even when witnessed by his own eyes, it was yet difficult for him to believe his own personal experience of it. The last line in his statement is indeed significant as he was.
convinced beyond doubt that it was as impossible for evil-doers to overcome Rāma, the very personification of righteousness, as heaven is impossible for sinners to win:

सताराणहन्तकां नप्रस्तापवसादयते ।
असी रामस्तु मज्जली श्रीमानलसुदरस्महीमू ॥
सितवा बेलां समुद्रस्य लोकानाप्लावयेहिमु ।
वेगं वापि समुद्रस्य वाकुं वा विध्वंसिष्ठ ॥
सहस्य वा पुन्तोऽकानु विनिमेष महानवम: ।
शक्ति: स पुन्नस्याचारः सप्तो पुत्रार्ध प्रजा: ॥
न हि रामो दशमीव शक्ति जेतु त्वया युधी ।
रक्षसं वापि लोकानं स्वर्गम: पापजनंतिरि ॥

Ṛmaṇya 3, 31, 24-27

But it is Mārīcha’s appraisal of Rāma that reveals the truth of Garuḍa’s statement that Rāma is the beloved one to even his worst enemies:

सबे राष्ट्र धर्मं रिपूंशामपि वसल ।

Ṛmaṇya 6, 50, 56

Mārīcha really tries his best to convince Rāvaṇa that it is as difficult to overcome this great personification of righteousness and valour as for the opulent to enter heaven, impossible like the camel the eye of the needle, as uttered by Jesus in Biblical context. In his mental distraction at the disfigurement of Śūrpaṇakha, Rāvaṇa really raves as he tells Mārīcha, whose help he seeks against Rāma, when he describes him as the one who had killed his entire army of ṛaṇhaśas, reason enough for abusing him as a curse of dark spot on the Kshatriyas, devoid of character, cruel, foolish, greedy and consequently void of self control, transgressor of dharma, and the very embodiment of unrighteousness, going contrary to the good of all beings, using his extraordinary power only to kill unprovoked in the forest:

स हुनता तस्य सैन्यस्य रामः शतिपांसन: ।
हुःशील: करक्षशस्त्रीश्यो मूखो तुद्मोमिसितेत्रियः ॥
त्वक्षधर्मं द्वा वर्णमाम्या भूतानामहिते रतः ।
येन वैं विनारणे सत्त्वमानिष्य केवलम् ॥

Ṛmaṇya 3, 36, 11-12
Mārīcha, though terribly hurt by and mortally afraid of Rāma, and would fain gladly see his end, still for the very good of Rāvana disabuses his mind of wrong notions of Rāma, by narrating just the bare truth about him and requests him to desist from encountering such a deadly foe, that only forebode ominously disaster for him. He emphatically denies that Rāma was abandoned by his father. Rāma never and in no manner transgresses any rules of dharma. He is neither self-seeking nor wild in character and is certainly not a blot on the Kshatriya race. He is not devoid of the essential virtues of dharma. By his very adherence to dharma he enhances the joy of his mother Kausalyā. Rāma is not cruel nor does he act contrary to the good and welfare of beings. Finding that his father had been ensnared by Kaśyayī on a point of adherence to truth, being so steadfast in dharma, he undertook to save the word of his father and reluctantly only was allowed to leave for the forest to satisfy Kaśyayī and maintain the honour of his father, giving up not only the kingdom but all the pleasures therefrom to enter the Dandakā forest. Let it be emphatically repeated again that Rāma is not wantonly cruel. He is anything but unlettered, being exceedingly wise. He is just the opposite of one given to abandon, possessed of such great self control. Hence you should not, just on a wrong hearsay utter what is indeed falsehood. Let me correct you and tell you that Rāma is the very embodiment of dharma, most saintly and of unfailing valour, assuring victory as always his righteousness prevails. He is the emperor of all the world like Indra over the entire domain of the celestials:

न च विद्या परिश्रमिति नामयो दृष्टि च न।
न लुक्को न च दु पशीति न च कृत्यपापम्॥
न च धर्मामुष्कमति वौगल्यात्मकवर्धन।
न तीर्थयो न च भूतानां विज्ञापित्वे रत।॥
बल्लभेषत दित्ता दूरस्तु कृष्णेपि सत्त्वबद्यतम्।
सर्वामौर्य: धर्मसमातु व्रत प्रभुविदार्थेन वनम्॥
कृष्णेषु निर्वसायादिगुट्टयस्माः प्रथमम्।
हिन्दु राज्य च भोग च प्रविष्टो दशप्रवाहनम्॥
न प्राप्त कर्षणस्य तांत्रिकाचार्यं विद्याकोऽनैतिकिम्।
अनुसूत दु धृत वैच नाच लक्षतुप्रसादिम्॥
In Mārīcha’s discussion with Rāvana to dissuade him from fighting Rāma, Bhaṭṭī lays stress, no doubt on the valour of Rāma, but valour used for the protection of sages and their activities in the path of dharma. It is only Khara and Dūshaṇa who had fought with him that know Rāma’s valour (Fig. 19). The sages who could successfully accomplish the completion of their sacrifices by the protection afforded them by Rāma, know equally well his valour:

Bhaṭṭikāvyā 5, 37

Bhaṭṭī again repeats Rāma’s unstinted enthusiasm in protecting the interest of dharma represented by the sages. Śūrpaṇakāḥ learns from Lakshmaṇa about Rāma as the protector of the sacrifices of sages. He is the destroyer in battle of the desecrators of sacrifices and the promoter of the growth of dharma by assuring protection to the sages, their wives who join them in the sacrificial rites and their cattle that contribute the sacrificial offerings:

Bhaṭṭikāvyā 4, 27

Kshemendra even goes to the extent of making Mārīcha hesitate to attack so righteous a person as Rāma and on that score also dissuade Rāvana. Rāma appears almost endeared and most lovable to Mārīcha by his extraordinary qualities including his inclination to dharma. Rāma is of lovable character, is the end of the prosperity of wicked foes, is the abode of all great qualities; how can we harm him? This he addresses to Rāvana:

Rāmāyaṇamaṇjarī 3, 7, 16
Even at the last moment when Śuka is sent as a spy by Rāvana, he returns and advises him not to fight Rāma because he is convinced that he does not swerve the least from dharma and dharma is so steady in him that it is entirely unshaken. His words are exactly this. He excels in valour, but more than all this is his steadfastness to dharma:

रामायण 6, 28, 19

At the last minute even in despair the maternal grandfather of Rāvana himself tries to plead with his grandson to desist from fighting Rāma a dharmātmā for whose victory even the deva-pishis celestial sages and the celestials also pray. Please give up fight with him and try to make peace:

रामायण 6, 35, 11

He points out that as Rāma has completely devoted himself to dharma, Rāvana and all the hosts of rākṣasas are equally wedded to adharma. It is surprising that Mālyavān, himself a rākṣasa, is so objective. Dharma, he says, is the one chosen by the gods and adharma by the asuras. Dharma always finally envelops and destroys adharma. When dharma overcomes adharma, the aeon itself is kṛita. When adharma overcomes dharma, then the evil aeon Kali starts. You have roamed all over the different worlds, destroying dharma and have embraced adharma. That is why our foes are strengthened, and so your adharma that is on the increase is now slowly swallowing you up like a monstrous python:

रामायण 6, 35, 11
Kshemendra puts this very pithily. *Dharma* is the abode of victory and sinful immoral action is the path to destruction. The celestials are ever on the side of *dharma* and naturally their desire is always victory for Rāma who is a *dharmātmā*:

नवयायाततं धर्मं: पांच वर्षं क्षयस्य च।
धर्मेष्यो स्तिता देवा रामस्य विजयविविषं: ||

*Rāmāyaṇamañjarī* 6, 371

Rāvana himself has a taste of Rāma’s *dharma* which itself not only puts him to shame but almost makes him hate himself for having been placed in a position to be treated so magnanimously by Rāma. Rāma is fully conscious that Rāvana was unjustified in fighting him, a foot soldier, from his chariot and in full panoply. Still finding Rāvana in no state to fight, so tired and reeling even as he fought, advises him to go back, rest, refresh himself and continue the fight from his chariot the next day:

गच्छनुःजानामि रणारुपित्स्वम्: प्रविष्ण राविचरराज लक्ष्माम्।
आश्वास्य नियोहि रथी च धर्मी तत्तद् वल्न द्रष्यसि: मेव रथस्य: ||

*Rāmāyaṇa* 6, 59, 143

It is the extraordinary vigilance of Rāma in the cause of *dharma* and steadfastness to it in spite of its apparent impotence to save its adherent, while *dharma* looked almost like carrying to the top of the pinnacle of glory the very transgressor of *dharma* and the upholder of the highest *adharma*, that at a stage, Lakshmana’s faith in *dharma* is almost shaken, when he finds that Rāma, so adhering to *dharma*, suffers all the while and Rāvana, so completely flouting *dharma* and guilty of the highest *adharma*, is exceedingly happy. He exclaims to Rāma upbraiding *dharma* for not protecting Rāma. This *dharma* is indeed fruitless, incapable as it is of protecting you who have always trod the path of virtue with absolute control of all your senses. We cannot experience *dharma* as we see before us beings both mobile and immobile. If it were as these,
you would really not be in distress. If adharma were really as real, Rāvana would have gone to hell, and you, wedded to dharma, would never have experienced sorrow. But really Rāvana has no sorrows and you have all of them. Dharma and adharma are opposites of each other. I feel that dharma is best understood by dharma and adharma by adharma. If the wicked acting wickedly reap the fruit of wickedness and not of goodness (dharma) and the good enjoy the fruit of dharma that would really stand to reason by the nature of the fruit obtained. But as I find that fortune favours those who are firmly established in adharma and those ever wedded to dharma suffer the most, I feel that both dharma and adharma are really quite empty and meaningless:

शुभे गृह्यन्ति तिथिण्यत त्वामायं विजितेन्द्रियम्।
अनन्तमधूर्यैन न शक्मोन्ति वातु द्रामी निरवधिन्॥
भूतान्त स्वासरणा च जगमाना च द्वार्यन्तम्॥
यत्राहितं न तथा धर्मस्तेन नास्तोन्ति मेन माति॥
मयेन स्वायत्र स्वयं जगम च तथापिन्यम्॥
नास्तंत्रंत्र भुतान्तवधिः न निस्प्रह्ते॥
धाताः भवेदवृजी रावणो गरुरानवेतु॥
भवाः धर्मी धर्मयुक्तो धैर्य ध्यसत्मानायानुत्॥
तस्य च ध्यसत्मानायानं च गते श्रवयि।
धर्मी ध्यसत्मानस्व महत्तंदिकीभिः॥
धर्मोपमेत्यादीगमं चायंस्मान॥
धर्माण धृतेस्ववमत्याद्वयं ध्यस्तिद्वित॥
यदि धर्मो धृतेस्ववमत्यादानं जता॥
धर्माण धृतां धर्मस्तेन चैन शाल्क ध्यवेतु॥
स्वताः प्रथम्ययेन धम्माण्येन प्रतिद्वित॥
निश्चलं धर्मोत्ते शास्त्रीयाभ स्वस्वादिते निर्येतु॥

Rāmāyaṇa 6, 83, 14-21

The same elaborate analysis of dharma and adharma by Lakṣīmaṇa as given by Vālmikī is beautifully given also by Kshemendra with appropriate similies to enliven his narration. It is in the context as in the Rāmāyaṇa, where, Rāma, as if his earlier suffering was not enough, has a dreadful apparition of Śītā being killed, in reality, only an illusion of Śītā created purely by the magical power of Indrajit. When Rāma faints on hearing of the death of Śītā as Hanumān and others had witnessed, and feels
overwhelmed with grief, Lakshmana laments. Alas, there is so much of adherence in this world to immaculate life and character, but it all appears to be in vain. It is as devoid of fruit as an impotent one longing for a son. Fie on dharma! as it is apparent that the most righteous persons, in no way deserving sorrow, are ever tormented by it. Salutation to sin, those indulging in which are always rewarded with prosperity. My revered brother has so meticulously guarded dharma which is not only a fraud but a promoter or misery. Of what use is it when it does not protect one of noble equanimity even in the worst of misfortunes? On the dictate of dharma, my revered brother gave up an empire just on the word of his father, and by thus renouncing he lost his wealth and prosperity, possession of which alone could put down every misfortune. For the lofty minded one of noble birth, suddenly deprived of wealth and prosperity, all troubles multiply to shrivel him up, like one whose appetite is killed by digestive disorders. Again as every action depends on wealth available for it, like a courtesan to be gained only by pelf, every desirable act becomes impossible for one penniless, while it is increasingly facilitated in the case of those who could afford it by their opulence:

अहो वन सदाभारे लोको मित्याव सादरः ।
पर्यये वुनो वस्त्र कथितारस्ति फलोदयः ।।
धिकृ हर्म यद्चुः साही धर्मश्च दुःखरामिनः ।
नमः पापाय संस्कृतो वसिष्मुखसुद्यो जनः ।।
आयाः क्षुरो मित्याव क्लेशव यमरक्षितः ।
कि तेन कृष्णकालेषु योः न रक्तस्त धीरात्मः ।।
धर्मांतुराधारयोऽयं त्वकं राज्यं पितृभारिः ।।
ब्रह्मान्तो नवत्तामाध्यामाध्याम्यध्यास्निविविभइः ।।
विद्वेष्टस्य सहस्त्राधारयोऽयं दयाबच्छेदः ।
सन्ताने रविद्रव वर्धनेचोपोऽश्रायोऽपि केशवम् ।।
निवर्तनेच दरिद्राणां प्रत्येकं सस्मादाम् ।
धनाधीना: फ्रासव वेद्य शरीरिनासः ।।

Rāmāyaṇamāṁjari 6, 10, 79-84

In the text of Vālmīki, Sumantra in great grief, though in a wording milder than of Lakshmana, expresses his profound agitation and almost a shake in his faith of dharma in seeing Rāma’s great suffering in spite of all his goodness. Sumantra feels and expresses
to Rāma that all the rigour of celibacy practised by Rāma, his
great study of all the best to be learnt, his unbounded compassion
and righteous and straight conduct indeed had borne no fruit,
when he experienced such distress:

न सन्तक्षतवांति स्वाधीन वा प्रवादय ।
मार्गवर्त्तयोगिनिः तता चैविक्तमागतम् ॥

*Rāmāyana* 2, 52, 19

But it is only a momentary feeling of despair. Very soon
when he aims his arrows at the most formidable foe, Indrajit, who
had captured and humiliated Indra himself, the lord of the celestials,
Lakshmana is so convinced of Rāma’s adherence to dharma and
dharma’s potency that he pronounces the oath that if Rāma were really
the embodiment of dharma and wedded to truth, as the son of
the great and veracious Daśaratha himself and in valour without
a peer, O! arrow, kill this offspring of Rāvana:

भगवान सप्तवर्ष रामो शासकरिविकर ।
पीठे चतुर्भृत्र परर विद्र रावणिन् ॥

*Rāmāyana* 6, 91, 73

And the arrow does it.

It is not without reason that Daśaratha evaluates Rāma so
highly. As Vālmiki gives it, though Daśaratha was proud of all his
sons that were like four arms emanating from him, all the four being
of exceptional merit and most beloved (Fig. 20), yet Rāma, among
them the most lustrous and surpassing the best in noble qualities,
excited most the affection of his father, like the Almighty the
love of all beings on earth (Fig. 21):

गर्व एवं तु श्वेतोपातात्सनानरः पुरुषंयशः ।
स्वतारण्तिनां तारास्त्रीय इत्य वाडु ।
तेषवामिन महुतेन सामो यतिकर हितु ।
स्वप्रमूर्तिवभूतानां दमून शुण्यतेर ॥

*Rāmāyana* 2, 1, 5-6

Daśaratha cannot help expressing himself with pride has admi-
ration for Rāma. You are born to me, O Rāma! as my most beloved offspring, without a peer on earth:

रामायण 2, 4, 13

How could it be any different when the Lord who could hold the entire universe in His womb decided (Fig. 22) to dwell in a chosen human womb to alleviate the distress of the celestials famous by the appellation of Rāma to humiliate the lord of the foes of the gods by severing all his heads with a single arrow (Fig. 23):

Janakiharaṇa 2, 75-76.

Even when advising Rāma how he could conduct himself as a crown prince, Daśaratha cannot help saying like Śukanāsa admonishing Chandrāpiḍa in the line.

विदितवेदित्वथायातितसवेशात्संव नात्वयप्युपदात्वात्मसित ।

Kādambarī

Though you are by nature very noble and disciplined, possessed of extraordinary good qualities, still because of my affection for you, I am offering you words of advice, though to you with such excellent qualities this is quite redundant. It is only my anxiety born of affection that makes me say so:

Rāmāyana 2, 3, 42

Kumāradāsa expresses the same idea in an equally charming manner. What is a counsel to you who are by nature so charming in conduct! Yet for my own mental satisfaction, excessive attachment foreboding meaningless fear, I offer you advice,
But Daśaratha’s advice is the quintessence of wisdom. People well protected shower treasures and elevate the king that is a hero, a judge of the best in men, competent in statecraft and free from attachment:

शूर पुरुषसार्जन मीलो फळमृणयनम्
वर्धविन्ति नृप वोग शयसारसिति प्रजा

Jānakīharaṇa 10, 21

Kshemendra makes Daśaratha proudly announce even to Janaka how happy he is to think of Rāma as a bridegroom answering all the four requisites. Just as gold has to be tested in four ways by rubbing on the touchstone, by breaking, by heating and by beating, the excellence of a person is tested by four factors, his family, character, qualities and actions:

अया चतुर्भिन्न कन्य गीतवते नियोजितमण्डऺेनान्तवताहै
तया चतुर्भिन्न पुरुष गीतवते हुजूजन चोलो गुणवन् वर्णणम्

Rāmāyaṇamañjiri, 1, 5, 27

A commentary on this is almost given by Bhavabhūti. Enlightened by Viśvāmitra about the two princes in his company, Kuśadhvaja remarks that assuredly the birth of those two boys could not be in any family other than of the Raghus. Where else except from the milky ocean could the moon and Kaustubha gem be born:

नायम रूपवाद्गतत्त्वसूक्तिवृत्तमो कश्मा
दृष्टांगवाद्वृत्ते जगा चद्यरौस्तुभयो बुन्त: 

Mahāvīracharita 1, 23

Viśvāmitra appreciates and commends him for his description of the family of the Raghus. You are the right person to extol the great family of the Raghus, that are never tired of performing righteous deeds, whose fame is pure and unsullied, and who have their goodness rewarded with the highest of prosperity:
Though Parasurama comes terribly enraged on learning Śiva's bow broken by Rāma (Fig. 24), the moment he sights him there is an intense feeling of love and admiration for the little boy, outshining all in every way, and he actually exclaims but within himself, O Rāma! Rāma! you soothe the eyes and equally please the heart, and you are so pleasant by your good qualities beyond comprehension. Really you steal our heart. By a look at you who are a wondrous hero excelling all, my body is horripilated and my chest scathed by the tusk of Ganeśa on one side and marked by the thrust of the arrows of Skanda on the other truly craves for a close embrace of you:

राम राम नवनामिरामतरामजस्य सहृदया समुद्रहर |
अनुमत्त्वंगुरामणीयमः सर्वमेव हृदयंसमोकिति मे इ |
हेरुवदत्तस्मलोलितिकौकीमति कवो विशारधविशिष्यत्रलंकितं मे इ |
रोमाचंपुकुंकितमिधुदुःकीर्तिमानान्तु सत्यं व्रतिस्स परिण्यस्मिवच्छिन्ति त्वाम् मे इ |

The form of this heroic boy difficult to assess in its magnitude of magnificence with its wondrous accomplishment of actions of no mean order, draw me so close to him and why do I still fret. O! indeed it is wonderful! The form of this boy is as it were a treasure of the merit arising out of the offering of the highest protection to the entire world that is so dear to him, and shining in it are the charm of prosperity, a lustre born of the highest ethical qualities and righteousness itself, a nobility, victory and triumphant valour. He looks as if he is the very science of archery personified to protect the worlds, or like dharma in physical form to protect the penance of the Brāhmaṇas, or the accumulation of success in its entirety, the come together of all great qualities in one form, a great heap of the collective merit of the entire universe in tangible shape:

अभासक्तस्य चरितातिथियाः श्रवणस्यदुधृतैर्मयमः हृदस्य तथाप्यानस्या |
कोज्जय वीरशिवकाण्डांस्यमे महाजात्यसारसमुदायम् पदार्थ: मे इ |

Mahāvīracharita 1, 26

Mahāvīracharita 2, 37-38

Mahāvīracharita 2, 39
Murāri while describing how touched Paraśurāma was at the look of Rāma whose very form amazed him, yet, makes him mistake the reverential attitude of Rāma for an unwillingness to fight and upbraids him. Your birth is in the family of the blazing sun. Your education in archery is from the great Kauśika. By giving up your duty as a warrior you are creating almost a permanent adamantine blot on your race. The reply of Rāma though undoubtedly heroic is still with a smile. O reverend Sir! What you say is true, I am born in the family of the lord of light, famed no less for wariorhood as for scholarship in the Vedas. From the reverend Viśvāmitra I obtained my knowledge of the use of arms. Whether it is felt and expressed as famous or infamous by anyone, born of this family, I cannot indeed dare use a weapon against a Brāhmaṇa. It is only of this impropriety I am afraid:

Viśvāmitra admires Rāma when he had completely overcome Paraśurāma (Fig. 25). Our child Rāmabhadrā is so pleasing by the splendour of his heroism, his humility, his attitude bent in reverence to the venerable sage, his remarkable elevation through his eminent qualities, yet so abashed after having eradicated the pride of Paraśurāma, that he looks like a disciple standing in the presence of his preceptor after committing his first offence:
Mahāvīracharita 4, 20

It does bespeak volumes of Rāma’s humility, when in that situation, he begs of Paraśurāma to forgive him for his lapse towards him. Oh! venerable one! whose feet are saluted by the highest Vedic seers, treasurehouse as it were of Vedic knowledge, penance and austerity, greatest of all ascetics! please do forgive me for transgressing my limits of humility just because of circumstances, I offer you my salutation with my hands brought together in worship:

Mahāvīracharita 4, 21

But the noble Paraśurāma who is cured by Rāma of his inordinate ego and pride tells him that he had done him only good. What you have done, says Pāraśurāma, is the right thing. Your taking up the bow to teach me a lesson has not been in vain. It was the right thing to do and in fact is no insult. It is very difficult for a surgeon to remove an excrescence without locating and cutting the corporeal frame of a being. Similarly a ruler with his weapons acts as a doctor:

Mahāvīracharita 4, 23

Praśurāma commends Rāma and praises him in the presence of Daśaratha and Janaka. This is that Rāma who, though fierce in his valour, is cool and pleasant in his attitude, whose victorious order of punishment has reached its climax on the son of Jamadagni (Paraśurāma). Both the kings Daśaratha and Janaka are amazed at his magnanimity and exclaim ‘How noble your affectionate utterance.’

Mahāvīracharita 4, 24

28
Parasurāma feels so penitent for his overweening pride cured by Rāma that he requests Vasishtha and Visvāmitra to suggest for him a measure of purification. Oh elders! Rāma, himself of great self control, has humbled me. You should suggest for me the proper antidote by penance to overcome the great sin of insulting elders. You are the seers who have seen what is dharma in the earliest scriptural text of the Veda and with your knowledge increased a hundred fold have written smritis like Manusmṛti, Yajnavalkyasmṛti and so forth. Vasishtha feels so happy that he assures him that he had really now come back to their own Vedic home and that he was not only freed from all guilt but in fact purified. Visvāmitra assures him that Rāmabhadra, as he learnt, had already removed his sin. As the ruler’s punishment like prayāschatta is the destroyer of all sins as those learned in dharma know it, and what more was there beyond what was said by Vasishtha himself to explain his stand in royal presence.

Mahāvīracharita 4, 25

वसिष्ठ—अथ न धीरित्याम्या ूर्द्धे जालोधि ।
तत्तात्पूर्व वृत्तिः ।
विश्वामित्र—अप्पहतं वे विद्य प्राप्तम् राममदेनः ।
महत् प्रायात्मित्वात्वा राजस्विदस्मिन्ते निविज्यमालंगकारायो ।
वि पुनःवदनमवान् वसिष्ठ प्राप्तास्लिन्यो ।

Mahāvīracharita 4

Rāma is so meticulous about dharma that even though he is convinced that Tādakā is a menace to the world, he feels very strongly that a woman should not be killed. That is why Visvāmitra has to argue and persuade him to kill Tādakā though a woman. You are indeed a peerless prince, righteous in outlook, but you need not consider twice the fact that she is a woman whose killing is forbidden. For the good of the classes and masses a royal prince has to act and perform deeds irrespective of how they appear, kind
or cruel, just because the innocent people have to be protected. That the protector of the people has to perform acts that may be holy or unholy, is the ancient rule of conduct of those upholding the burden of royalty. There is an ancient legend of how Indra destroyed Mantharā, the daughter of the demon Vairochana, who was planning to destroy the earth itself. You should therefore give up this abhorrence, and acting on my precept, you should kill her. Rāma replies suitably that as ordered by his father, and on account of his reverence for paternal precept and because this is a command from Viśvāmitra himself, he would act and without any further thought about it. But even so, on sighting her, Rāma goes back into his original frame of mind, the natural instinct of avoiding feminine slaughter. I cannot make bold. This demoness is protected by her feminity. I feel like destroying only her power and action. And again Viśvāmitra has to call his attention to overcome his compassion, reminds him that she is sinful and most wicked:

न हि ते स्त्रीवच्छते घृणा कार्यो नरोत्तमः।
चातुर्विचष्टिहिर्ययं करत्वं राजस्वूनुः।।
नूृत्सस्तमन्वृत्सं वा प्रजारक्षणकारणातः।
पापं वा सदोषं वा करत्वं रक्षता सता।।
राज्यभारेन्युक्तानामेव धर्मः सनातनः।
अर्थेष्य जसहि काकुश्च्य धर्मों ह्यस्य न विचरते।।
श्रृण्ये हि पुरा शक्रो विरोचनमुत्तं दृष्ट।
पृथिवीं हनुभिमिच्छती मन्त्यरामभ्यसूदयतु।।

Rāmāyāṇa 1, 25, 17-20

तस्मादेता घृणा त्यक्तवा जहि मच्छासनानूपः।

Rāmāyāṇa 1, 25, 23

न ह्यो नामुमस्ते हस्तु स्त्रीवच्छति रक्षितामः।
वीर्याचार्य गाति चाचि हनिष्यामीति मे मति:।।

Rāmāyāṇa 1, 26, 12

अलं ते घृणया राम पाधृवा हुष्ठचारिणी।।

Rāmāyāṇa 1, 26, 21

In this context, Bhavabhūti, puts it laconically in two lines but effectively by bringing in as a witness of Rāma’s hesitation
to kill Tādakā the preceptor of Rāvana, the old rākṣasa Sarvamāya, who wonders at the hesitation of Rāma as he argues, ‘but reverend sir, this is a woman’, and Kusadhvaja is stuck with wonder at this and exclaims, ‘You are indeed Rāmabhādra born of the noble family of Ikṣvākus’. Even the rākṣasa cannot help saying even more than that. This is really the noble son of Ītāratha who is not only not in the least shaken by the sight of the devastating appearance of Tādakā that is almost like a calamitous portent, but instructed to destroy her, hesitates to attack a female. When Viśvāmitra points out that the entire assembly of sages there would be destroyed in a minute, Rāma replies ‘Yes, reverend sir, you know best. As you can best examine all the blemishes in an action, your words take rank with the text of the Veda and when something is accepted by you as the right action, that becomes acceptable to me in the matter of merit and sin.’

Mahāvīracharita 1, 37

Mūrṣi again describes this situation in a slightly elaborated way. Rāma with hesitation exclaims ‘O reverend sir, do you want me to kill this woman!’ Just then there is the tumultuous cry of the sages terribly frightened by Tādakā. It is the voice of Śunas-sepa who was almost a son to Viśvāmitra. Rāma replies requesting him to just wait a minute. ‘Your command is as important to me as Viśvāmitra’s. There is no need for you to appeal to him in the matter. For me, there is no difference between Madhuchchhandha, the son of Viśvāmitra and yourself, his adopted son.’ Viśvāmitra now reminds Rāma the calamity that is imminent, and as Laksmanauminates in his mind as to why his elder brother is still hesitant even after the command of Viśvāmitra, when it was apparent.
that a word of the rishis would always follow the code of dharma, Rāma also simultaneously ponders within himself that by the very command of his guru, the sage, his action even in killing a woman would not be sinful and against dharma. ‘This shame in killing a woman which is just momentary, being there just for a while and disappearing the very next day, is now overcome by me by closing my eyes to it. The only hesitation is when for a long while the curious people beat the drum of my shame, I feel only hesitant to think of now shamefaced would be our family preceptor Vaśishṭha who is the lustre incarnate of dharma and is the witness of everying in the world.’ When, however, he hears just then the wild cry of the demons and the demonesses ‘Stop your sacrifices! O fools! here is the sharp edge of our sword. This is the short cut for you to go to heaven,’ he is enraged, holds his hands in reverence to Viśvāmitra, and says ‘Born in the house of Daśaratha, and holding the bow, I only hesitated to malign the family of the blazing sun by a fresh new shoot of blot. It is only hence that my mind hesitated to kill a woman. But your word is for us the deciding factor of dharma to set us in action:

Ram:—हिन्द्वतमाम्!
(नपथे)
अन्तर्माम्यमन्नाम्यम्। भोस्ततात् विध्वानिं दिनम्यामहे। प्रहीत्यताम्बिज्ञात्यत्वा लार्ताविं।

Ram:—वालयः शुनाशेक! मुद्दतं धीरोरे भव।
अलं विलिकित्त्वा गुमुखवेवः विखिष्टव्यारर्जव गरीयसि न।
न कौशिकस्य त्वरिः परमपुरुषे पुरूष मुच्छ्यदसि वा विष्णप।।

Anargharāghava 2, 57

विख्वानिं:—वल्स! कठमुखचरोत्तरेण। नत्वरं नदीवानाध्यामोपाः।

Anargharāghava 2, 58

लक्ष्मण:—नीमास्ते क्षित्याब्यय नौस्वामुक्तानांति
वाचमेपायुर्यीणकं हि शास्त्रमेवान्वते।।
राम:—गुमुखिद्वादेव निर्नामाभो नारगाय स्वीच्छोपिनि स्वतेङ्गमय।
अद्ब्य स्थितवा व्योगमिलुभिर्हर्ष्यार्जान्त्वाभिमृम्भिताभीष्टव।।

Anargharāghava 2, 59

कि तु। दोष्ट्रं प्रजासमृदिकोऽकृतीनुभिरहितमेवत्तेत्वम् ताद्यमाते।
व्योतिमैयेन वपुषव जगदंतसाधी लज्जाप्ने। कुजुबुज्ज्यावन्ते विष्णुः।।

Anargharāghava 2, 61
Rāma now acts accordingly (Fig 26)

In innocently explaining to Rāvana disguised as a hermit whom, however, she took to be an ascetic in reality, Sītā answers his question by telling him that she was the wife of Rāma, an abode of good qualities, wedded to truth and purity, heroic in appearance and always striving for the good of others, who gave up an empire just to save his father’s word to Kaikeyī. Rāma would always give but never receive, would ever speak the truth and spurn falsehood. This is the noble guide-way in action for Rāma ever wedded to dharma

Rāmayana 2, 47, 17-18

That he would give and never receive is a very important statement that merits as it were a scrutiny of the deeds of Rāma to better understand his life so ennobled by his actions and appearing a commentary on it as it were. There are two important incidents that illustrate this pointedly. The first is where Guha meets Rāma. Guha is the chief of the Šabarās, the hunters, and it is on the banks of the river Gangā. He feels so honoured by the presence of Rāma in his territory, approaches him with great reverence and affection, brings a variety of rich food, soft cushions and couches and fodder for the horses, and requests Rāma to accept his hospitality. After embracing Guha, enquiring of welfare in his territory and appreciating him for coming on foot as a mark of respect, Rāma politely tells him of his inability to accept anything from any, and hence his grand hospitality though offered with affection. He reminds him that he was wedded to the life of a hermit in the forest, wearing bark garment with seat of kusa grass and fruits and roots as food. I shall accept your hospitality only in regard to my horses, the beloved ones of my father. When they
are happy I am equally so. Guha immediately orders this to be done. And clad in bark garments, Rāma with his upper garment worn in upavīta fashion performed sandhyā, and after partaking of only water, brought by Lakshmana himself, as fare for the night, lay and rested on the ground with Sītā, while Laksmana and Guha kept watch. Rāma would not accept from a dear friend even a simple thing like food as a pratigraha, offering.

\[\text{Yadā bhava kūṃchita śītaya sūmakaśīlpatamā}
\text{Sarva tadrajaśāmīm n hi vartā pratiṣṭhā}
\text{Kūṃchārajatāhāṃ falaśūlaprayāṃ ch māmā}
\text{Viśrūḍha praśāḥ tu tapasya vannopauryām}
\text{Aṣṭavaṃ vādneṣvāhāṃī śāmśyen karnachītām}
\text{Eṣata bākā saṅkho bhāvyāmāṃ suṣūcitaḥ}
\text{Aṁte hi ṛṣita rājak śāmśy esaḥ}
\text{Eṁte: suṣūcitaṁ ṛṣaṇīṃbhāvyāmāṃvaramāntām}
\text{Aṣṭavaṃ pratiṣṭām chādneṣ vām śūlanaśaṃ}
\text{Guhūstāvīcūt pūrṇapārśvāmāṃ dīvyaśāmśita}
\text{Tatstāriṣṭaṛaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūlaśūлаśūlaśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūлаśūلاśūلاśūلاśūлаśūلاśūлаśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśūلاśুلاশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাশুলা�ুলাашুলা} 

\[\text{Rāmāyaṇa 2, 50, 43-50}\]

The other instance is when Rāma visits Agastya after ending Śambūka. The sage offers him a magnificent bracelet of gold prepared by Viśvakarmā himself, fit only for Rāma, celestial in his glory. You alone are the fittest to wear it, more than even the celestials including Indra, shining like the sun in all his lustre. This should be accepted and worn by you. In reply, Rāma of the noble Ikshvāku family replies, thoughtfully considering the code of conduct of a Kshatriya, ‘Receiving a thing, O venerable one’, says Rāma ‘is not forbidden for a Brāhmaṇa, but being a Kshatriya how could I receive it and that too from a Brāhmaṇa. The sage now persuades Rāma by recalling how on earth in the dim past, when there was no king and the people wanted one for protection, begged of the supreme being to provide them with a ruler like Indra for the celestials, Brahmā ordered the Lokapālasiṣṭas to give a part of
their quality to the king who was created and called Kshupa and he had the essential parts of the four Lokapālas. That is why the king rules as Indra, promotes well-being like Varuna, makes prosperous like Kubera and metes out justice maintaining order like Yama. Agastya now calls on Rāma to receive this of him in his capacity as Indra. Again the nobility of Rāma is such that though he understood dharma so well, when he finds that a great sage, who is the repository of the knowledge of dharma, explains to him a special point in dharma, he takes it as the final word, even as he took it in the case of Viśvāmitra’s command to kill Tāḷakā, though a woman:

Rāmāyaṇa 7, 76, 30-36, 43-48

Rāma would not receive even the small bracelet offered by so great a sage as Agastya. It is this same venerable sage that is described by Nīlakanṭha Dikshita as the one who drank up in one gulp the ocean, the receptacle of the lord who sleeps on it, from whose navel arose the lotus, out of which came forth the creator of the entire universe, in the context of the great sage as one of
the hundreds of a venerable concourse of disciples of that Lord who teaches in silence under the banian tree, to whom the poet offers his salutation as the one Lord beyond whom he could think of none else:

य: लण्डा जगता यतोभयमभतीवस्य नामिर्मुख्येः पथ स तच्च यश्रुलक्षयांचछः सहाये: क्षणादुः।
तादृशा: वलत: पुराणमुनयो यविक्षुप्यव्येः शिवता: स स्वामी मम देवत तत्त्वतीर्थी नम्नापि नामनामेऽऽ।
Śivotkaršamāṇjarī 23

It naturally indicates the highest veneration that Rāma had for him, and yet the greater veneration for the dictates of dharma could make him pause and hesitate, almost refuse any gift from anyone including Agastya himself. It is no wonder, therefore, that when Śarabhaṅga offers divine lokas for Rāma, as he, out of love for him, who was accustomed only to a life of a prince and had never experienced a hardship, felt he should not suffer nor even Sītā or the younger one Lakshmanā, and wishing them all joy and happiness, hoped to help them in this, by providing them to enjoy pleasures of a celestial character, so much greater than even the earthly ones, he only gets a reply from that noble prince that whatever celestial spheres were to be obtained would be won personally by himself and very respectfully refuses to accept any from others, including even those like the great rishis whom he venerated so much. Śarabhaṅga tells him that he had just been requested by Indra to grace heaven by his presence, but knowing that Rāma was close by and approaching him, he would not go to the world of even Brahmadeva or any other without seeing Rāma and welcoming him as his beloved guest, a tiger among heroes, completely wedded to dharma and most saintly in character. ‘I have won. O Rāma, eternal dwelling in auspicious celestial worlds like that of Brahmadeva or Indra. All these which are mine, I am giving you, please have them.’ But Rāma, learned in all the dharmaśāstras, replies most respectfully, ‘O venerable sage, I shall myself win all those celestial worlds by my own effort. I only request you to kindly suggest to me where I can dwell here in the forest:

ममेष्व वर्दो राम ब्रह्मालोकं नितीपति।
जितमुप्रेषे तपसा दुष्प्रकाशतांतर्याति।
अहं ब्रह्मा नरव्याष्ट्र कस्मात्मानमहस्त:।
ब्रह्मलोकं न गच्छामि त्वामदुष्प्रेष्वा भ्रातुतिपिम।॥

36
And with wonder Rāma sees the great sage enter the fire to shuffle the mortal coil and ascend heaven, having finished his purpose of seing and welcoming Rāma (Fig. 27).

Another instance is Sūtikshna, who similarly offers him lokas. As Rāma approaches the hermitage of Sūtikshna and bows to him, he welcomes him as a great hero and as the foremost upholding dharma (Fig. 28). ‘By your presence in this hermitage, it is now really occupied in the true sense. Even though invited by Indra, the great lord of the celestials, I have refrained from ascending heaven as I have been awaiting you. Indra, who had come to me, informs me that by my deeds of merit I have won all the celestial worlds. It is my desire that all these celestial spheres where the celestial sages dwell, should be given to you by me so that you could be happy there with your wife and brother. Rāma, with great veneration and respect speaks to this sage of truthful utterance even as Indra addressing Brahmā himself. Again here he politely refuses the offer and tells him that he would win these worlds by his own effort, and that he just wanted only his guidance regarding a place to dwell in the forest. I know you to be kind to all beings ever wishing for their welfare as I have been informed by Sārabhānga:

स्वामत बहु ते बीर राम वर्णश्रृंता वर।
आधभोण्ड त्स्वय श्रापं सराय द्व स्रापसः॥
प्रत्येकाःस्थोतामेव नाहोरे सहरसः।।
देवलोकारते बीर देह त्स्वय महीतले।।
उपायमि च मा देवो महादेव पुरुषवर।।
सर्वं लोकारु जित्तामु महा पुण्यन कर्मण।।
तेतु देवपिन्यवेदु जितेतु तपसा मया।।
मलसादातु समार्कव्य विह्वस्य सर्वश्रण॥

Rāmāyana 3, 5, 28-34
Normally in life, wherever there is extraordinary beauty, there is immediately a reaction towards it. Dushyanta, for example, amazed at the charm of Śakuntalā falls in love with her on the spot, but being a dhārmika king, he wonders whether he was justified in thinking of her as a possible bride, and finally consoles himself by the fact that having always been righteous, his mind, attuned to dharma, could not yearn for an impossible match going against dharma and his doubt is assuaged by the certain hope that Śakuntalā should be of a parentage possible to be wedded by a Kshatriya like him:

Abhijñānasākuntalam 1, 19

In the case of Rāma, his spirit of dharma is so high at the zenith that, having not only strung the bow but even broken it and having won Sītā, a paragon of beauty, to win whom was a dream with all the princes on earth, some of whom had even attacked Janaka for imposing such an impossible condition for Sītā as the prize, that Sītā herself wonders but still appreciates Rāma’s attitude as he was in no hurry to accept her unless she was chosen as his bride by his father. That is why, towards the end of the Bālakāṇḍa, there is a significant verse, which explains that Sītā was the dearly beloved wife of Rāma, as she was his spouse secured for him by his father himself:

It is significant that Rāma as a dharmātmā has a charm not only for beauty but also a greater charm for good qualities composing
character; and the line that follows explains this, that both by the extraordinary quality of Sītā’s beauty and her personal qualities, Rāma’s love for her multiplied ever so more (Fig. 29), that made him later run after the golden deer, she loved so much to have (Fig. 30):

॥ गुणारूपगुणाल्पके श्रीतिमूलोपवर्षेत ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1, 77, 28

It is no wonder that Sītā makes a special note of this and when talking to the great sādhī Anasūyā (Fig. 31) specially expresses her wonder that though Rāma had won her by stringing the bow, he would not still accept her till there was Daśaratha’s approval.

Anasūyā who had heard of the impossible stringing of the mighty bow of Śiva and the winning of Sītā by Rāma (Fig. 32), desired very much to know more of it from the mouth of Sītā herself and therefore expressed her eagerness to know all about what happened. Sītā explained at length her miraculous appearance from the earth, her celestical beauty and impossible perfection in form and spirit that made Janaka choose a way of giving her away as a bride worthy of her rare perfection. He imposed the condition of the stringing the great bow of Śiva vouchsafed to him by Varuna. Janaka’s proclamation brought the princes to peep at the bow, but alas! only to assure themselves that even in a dream they could not even move it in the least, not to talk of lifting and stringing it and so, a whole princely congregation, anxious but disappointed, had bowed to the bow and quietly left in despair, till Rāma came on the scene so very long after, along with Viśvāmitra to witness the sacrifice performed by her father, where the bow was shown to the two princes to satisfy their curiosity to have a look at it. But in a minute the heroic hand of Rāma not only took it up and strung it, but in the twinkling of a moment, it was broken into two. Janaka, true to his word, immediately took up the water vessel, to empty it on Rāma’s hand to gift her to Rāma as his bride. But, the wonder was that even as she was offered, Rāma would not accept her without knowing the mind of his father, the lord of Ayodhyā, and so, her father-in-law, the aged Daśaratha, was immediately invited by Janaka, and it was only on his assent that the wedlock was finalised (Fig. 33 and 34). It is such a wonder for Sītā, but nevertheless a pride as well, that her husband was not easily lured by
Frontispiece:
Rāma enthroned, Kāngrā School, early 19th century A.D. Naţional Museum.

The married princes and brides welcomed in Daşaratha’s palace at Ayodhyā and bowing to Kausalyā, Cuddapah school, 18th century A.D., Hyderabad Museum, Hyderabad.
even the charm of the goddess of prosperity herself than which her own beauty was not a whit less, as she was celestial in charm, and as Śrī herself almost incarnated as Vālmīki has it (Fig. 35 and 36):

देवताभि समा ह्रे सीता श्रीरिय सहिष्णी ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1, 77, 30

Sitā śrīr iva rūpini of Vālmīki is aptly elaborated by Venkata-nātha, who describes her in the words of Rāma in separation, as dear to him like his eye, as she appeared the very goddess of prosperity, possessing the treasure of the emotion of love, with eyes sparkling like the saphari fish, chiselled brows, lovely in her curly tresses, slim, high-bosomed, of burnished golden hue, in the bloom of youth, in gait so charming as a swan, attenuated in her waist, and perfect in the disposition of every limb:

सा मे दृष्ट शक्तियमात सतनामू तूसंगी वधी दुस्मन्तामसत सततजास्माताभा ॥
वाला युवादतिसंगातम वेदिमथा वराण्डी भुव्वराख्य निधिमधियस्य थेयदीर्घतेव ॥

Hāṁsasandea 2, 10

Rāma’s own appraisal of Sitā’s beauty touches the peak, when he says that he is not surprised at the fierce discharge of the arrows of flowery-arrowed Cupid on him so much, as his wonder if he would shoot the arrows on himself, if only he happened to see the rare gem of Sitā’s fair form:

चित्तवेणि तथा मदात्मभेतत्तित्त्वा सिद्ध ब्याहुतिरप्रवचनासू ॥
पुरुषेऽति सीताधर्मि वीदम रज्ज पुणायुद्ध स्वास्तमि शताप्तामू ॥

Jānakiharaṇa 7, 18

Kshemendra calls such beauty the pleasance of Cupid, her slim creeper-like form ravishing, her bosom entrancing, her very look enthralling:

हरिणी सा तनुवता हरिणी च पुञ्जली ॥
दृष्टकर्त्ता हरिणी सत्ता वभी स्मरस्वहरिणी ॥

Samayamātrikā 7, 12

And Sitā makes all this detailed account so vivid to acquaint Anasūyā of not only the triumph of her beauty, but the greater
triumph of Rāma’s attitude towards dharma wherefore the parent’s wish even in the choice of his partner in life was to be absolutely respected:

असंचालण्यं मनुष्येष्वरं यलेनापि च शिरवादुः।
तत्त्वं शक्ता नमवितस्तु शवनेष्वरं नराधिपता।
तदनु: प्राथमे पित्रा व्याहवत्तु सत्यवादिना।
समवाये नरेन्द्राणं पूर्वोपायन्य शारिवावाः।
इदं च धनुर्धाम्य सज्ज्यं वं: कुस्ते नरः।
तत्र से दुहिता भायां भक्तिपात न संजयः।
ततच वृद्धन्वा धनुः श्रेष्ठं गीर्वादे भगिरसिनिगम्।
अभिमाबं नूपा जमुनाकस्तस्य मवोऽने।
सुदीर्घसाय बालस्य राजवृः यद्वात्नितः।
विनिम्यिनेन सहित्वा संजयं इदं संगमतः।
सिद्धेयांतरसाध्येन तदान्तम न वीर्यवानु।
वथां समारोयं भक्तिदितु पुरुषामाल वीर्यवानु।
तेन पुरुषवते वेणं मयं भवं हित्रा धनुः।
तत्स शवेष्वभवन्तीष्म: पतितशशानेनिति।
तत्रोपहृं च तत्र रामाय पिता सत्याबिसस्थितः।
सिद्धिता दानुष्ठान्यं जलभाजनमुतमम्।
दीर्घाणां न वु तदा प्रतिज्ञातरह राघवः।
अभिसार दितितस्याध्याधिपति: प्रथोः।
तत: वथुपायमान्यं वृद्धं दासरथं नष्ठू।
सम पिता तवूं दतार रामाय बिविदतमने॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 118, 40-44, 48-52

It is no wonder that to Rāma, of such lofty character unassailed even by the most extraordinary physical attraction, Sītā could herself remark ‘falsehood is impossible in you, never was nor ever can be even a desire for ravishing feminine beauty in other than your own spouse, which is a sure destroyer of dharma:

भिव्यावाभं न ते भूतं न सचिन्यति राघव।
कुस्तोभिरप्रण सुवीरां परेयां धर्मनायकम्।
तत: नास्ति मनुष्येष्वरं न चासुते कदाचन।

Rāmāyaṇa 3, 10, 4-5

This is such a significant passage that Kshemendra repeats it in his version of it; falsehood, loss of character and cruelty towards
living beings are the three most detestable crimes and are entirely opposed to action calculated to merit fame. In your case, falsehood can have no genesis in you, and equally so, how can there be the impossible disaster of your noblest traits making up your character? I can only remark that your present cruelty towards the rakshasas who have not provoked you is probably unjustified.

असं दीनविभृत्त प्राणहिता य दहिनाम्॥
प्रहस्त पातस प्रत्य या बमोहिद्वम् ।
जमापुरुषमयेते शीर्षतत्वसय का वभा ॥
तारे निविदारेरे हिमा रस पु नाविचा ॥

Rāmāyanamaṇḍārya 2, 418 419

Again the nobility of Rāma is seen in two extraordinary events, first when he speaks in a rather severe tone to Sītā when she is brought after his victory over Rāvana. The most pathetic scenes in the Rāmāyaṇa are those of the lament of Rāma on separation from Sītā whom he loved ever so much and who was all the time constantly in his mind. Rāma is so infatuated, that, unable to find her when he returns, after all his fastidious search in the hermitage and the neighbourhood, with his eyes red and swollen by grief, running from one tree to the other, from one hillock to another, pitifully lamenting, caught in almost an ocean of mire and slowly sinking in it, begs as he sees the kadambe tree whether, fond of kadambe flowers and being so close to it, whether the tree had a message to give of her, asking of the bilva tree, thick in its shade of leaves whether it had seen Sītā clad in yellow silk, or whether the arjuna tree of whose flowers Sītā was so fond was seen by it, or the kakubha tree rich in its sprouts and flowers, whether the tulaka which flowers also Sītā loved so much and which was ringing with the hum of swarms of bees had noticed Sītā, or the asoka, the karmikēra, or the mango, or the nipa or the bakula, or the punnaga, and not only the trees but even the animals like the deer, as he sees them, remembering his own deer-eyed beloved, the elephant, remembering her shapely thighs resembling the well-shaped proboscis, almost gone mad by his intense passion for his spouse so beloved. Such a Rāma, to think of Sītā as a nobody in the face of his great act of dharma, when, in spite of himself and his full knowledge of her innocence, he could set an example
and make the world understand that character and a fair name were higher than anything else in this world, even life itself, and speak to Sītā in such a way that she determines immediately to put an end to her life by entering the fire, is indeed a triumph of character:

It is a wonder indeed that Rāma, frantically searching for her everywhere, and unable to find her, enquires even of the river Godāvari and addresses the Vanadevatās (Fig. 37) and, finally, is so disappointed by the utter silence of the atmosphere of the sylvan surroundings that could give him no clue to the whereabouts of Sītā, that the intensity of his grief shoots up into an amazing unprecedented blaze of anger in which he makes a statement terrible beyond description. His ire is aroused almost with dharma itself for not having protected her. ‘Poor Sītā is either stolen or killed, or gobbled up, and alas! dharma has not protected her when carried away or eaten up. What are those gods who could dare do me this harm. All the beings in this world unknowingly treat insultingly without understanding, even the very creator of the universe, the most mighty, and of the utmost compassion. The celestial lords of the world probably think of me as powerless, just because I am so soft, ever intent on the welfare of the world, restrained, and so full of compassion. How sad O Lakshmana! that this great quality of mine has itself turned out to be my

Rāmāyaṇa 3, 60, 10-14, 23-24
disability and blemish. Now, and this very moment, I shall put an end to everything, annihilate the rākshasas, suppress the cool silver shine of the moon, blaze forth like the sun, suppress all my desirable qualities, allowing only my heroic lustre to shine, and allow no yakṣas or gandharvas or pīṣāchas, rākshasas, nor kinnaras nor even human beings to have any taste of happiness! Look! I shall fill the entire sky with my arrows and barricade every passage of the celestials stopping the movement of any in any of the three worlds. I will control the planets, cover up the moon, destroy the fire, stop the blow of the wind, and put an end to the lustre of even the sun, blow up the mountains and their peaks, dry up the lakes, fell the trees and the creepers, destroy the ocean, render the entire expanse of the three worlds one deluge, if the mighty celestials render not to me my Sītā unhurt!:

हुताः पृथ्वी या मोहना या भक्तिता यातपरिनी ।
न परमेश्वरस् सीता श्रीयमाणा मः ।
भक्तिताय ति वैमद्धा हुतामयानि सद्भण ।
के ति सोबरेश्वर भूमि पार्था सीम्य समेष्टिरा ॥
न्वारीयाति लोकार धूर्त बल्लेिविनयः ।
वामावधयवर्फुर् गर्भभूजताति सद्भण ॥
गुरु लोकाचिह्ने गुरु शत्र बल्लेिविनयः ।
नित्यवोमिति मयादेव गुरु मा नित्येष्वरा ॥
मा भाय पि गुरो देव धर्म दयां परम तद्गण ।
अर्थी सर्वभूतातिः स्रष्ट्राभिषयः प ॥
गहलबच्य गोविण्यस्त्र महानू मूर्त वद्भिद्वशः ।
गहलबच्य गुणानु सर्वनि मम तेन प्रतागवे ॥
नैत नयना न गन्तव्या न विसाजा न वापासा ।
विनिःरा या मनुष्या या गुरु प्रार्थिति नद्गण ॥
गमायमेघपूर्णमानाह पम तद्गण ।
ति सपा वर्त्यानि घाति तेतोत्तमाविनयः ।
संस्करद्रूपाः गमायमावार्तिनिवार्तरुपः ।
विप्रात्तात्लमरुपार्थश्वासस्य रवदाविनयः ॥
विनिमिततात्लाम मुन्यमायतागाढः ।
व्यग्रदेवमुच्याः स्विद्वान्ताविनिवार्तरुपः ॥
वैवर्णव्य तु वर्त्यानि गुरुनि बलाद्वरणा ।
न तत्ति गुरुस्तिः सीता प्राणायानि गद्वसवः ॥

Rāmāyāṇa 3, 64, 53-63
Rāma has even to be almost brought to his senses from the zenith of his grief nearly bordering on madness. Lakshmana reminds him, ‘you should not destroy the universe for punishing the act of one. The rulers who are most powerful to act are the softest and the most patient. You are the very refuge of every being on earth and are the ultimate protection to all. Who in this world would approve or justify the loss of your beloved wife? Neither the streams, nor the ocean, nor the mountains, the celestials or the gandharvas, or even the demons are equal to the task of harming you, like the gentle ones who could never injure the sacrifices. We should therefore make a search for her and not act rashly (Fig. 38):

रामयाण 3, 65, 9-12

It is that Rāma who, again, even at the seashore, as he had reached the fringe of the ocean, at the far end of which was Laṅkā, calls on the southern wind, and exclaims ‘O! gentle wind! that have blown and touched soothingly my beloved one on the other side, blow on me, let me have your touch on my body! Let me have this joy as of sight cooled by moonlight! It burns my limbs indeed, like poison drunk, to recall how my beloved one could have called and cried for me, ‘O my lord’ as she was carried away. Night and day, my body is roasted in that flame of passion, the fuel of which is my unfortunate separation from her, and the mounting flames my incessant thought of her misery:

रामयाण 6, 5, 6-8
Rāma, as put by another poet, desires to have his limbs embraced only by that breeze that has had the touch of the body of his beloved, soft as the surisha flower, as otherwise he would have it quit at once

श्रेयो वदि विनायक स्वप्न भवता वियोपतुकुमारस्।
तह्यातिं भस्माश्वस्य तूम न चेलवत।।

Unmattarāghava 21

It is that same Rāma, for whom dharma was so high, and who had the highest concept of a righteous king as would set an example of action and character, that tells Sītā, brought to his presence, not in the sad and pitiable condition in which she was in the Asoka grove, but fresh after a bath, decked in jewels and arrayed in robes against her will, but just in deference to the command of Rāma on the manner in which she was to appear before him, completely unmoved by her unparalleled beauty and even by her highest and noblest character, which was only too well known to him, and deeply fixed in his mind, that not only spoke harshly to her, but even as he was looking on allowed her to enter the fire. The fire itself had to be afraid of it, and all the celestials, the highest and the lowliest even among them, assembled to witness this unique wonder, including even Pārāśar from heaven, and to exclaim ‘how is it O Rāma! like a common and ignorant man in the street, completely insensible of all sense of propriety, you look on in utter disregard the daughter of the noble lord of Videha. You are the lord of the universe and we, that are only the guardians of the quarters have to remind you of it’ (Fig 39 and 40)

वेदकाये न वैदेषी मानुष प्राणतो यथा।
हत्यको लोकस्मैत स्वामी लोकस्य राजव।।

Ramāyana, 6, 120, 10

As Brahmā spoke explaining the personality of Rāma himself and his beloved Sītā, the fire god sprang up from the flames, holding out Sītā as an offering to Rāma, the flower garlands on her fresh as ever, as well as her jewels, and her surpassing beauty, and all these matching only her dignity, as she rose. And the celestials, the witnesses of the world in all its activity, addressed Rāma to
tell him how immaculate was Sītā, a captive in Rāvana’s household, with her mind ever on Rāma, helpless, tormented by separation from her beloved, frightened by a troop of ogresses surrounding her, alternately cajoled and frightened, but ever steadfast in the only thought on which her mind concentrated, Rāma and none else. She is pure, unblemished, receive her back. Oh! scion of Raghu’s family! This is not only what I tell you but is my command as well’ said Brahmā. Rāma, glad at heart but overwelmed by grief, stood for a while in silent contemplation, his eyes filled with tears, his mind ever on dharma, lustrous and heroic, spoke as the foremost exponent of dharma ‘Certainly Sītā is the most flawless in the three worlds, but for ever so long, she was kept in Rāvana’s palace. If I had taken her back without testing her purity, even good people on earth would have said that Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, infatuated and passionate and hence unbecoming in his behaviour, has taken her back. Though I know that she is single-minded in her devotion to me, entirely acting in unison with my wish, for creating faith in the three worlds, and wedded to truth as I am, I could even suffer Sītā’s entering the fire:

स विद्वृय चित्रां तं तु चैवेद्वीं हृद्वाहन: ।
उत्सस्यो सृतिमानायु गृहीत्वा जनकान्तिर्मण: ॥
तत्त्वादित्यसंह्र्द्रायो तत्त्वान्वयनहृद्वाहन: ॥
रक्षमम्बरपर्य वालां नीकुल्लिन्वतदर्मण: ॥
अविलम्बमालोच्यां द्वारापी मनसर्वली: ॥
दद्री रामाय वैद्वीतीयेंकं ज्यत्र विभागव: ॥
अश्रीररीत्र तदा राम साधी लोकस्य पावक: ।
एषा ते राम वैद्वीतीय चतवर्ष्यानो न विबटे ॥.......
तत: श्रीतमता राम: शुद्धविव्यवात्ता वर: ।
दध्येयो मृच्छ धमोत्तरायामायव्यलोच्यान: ॥
एवंमुखो महात्मेजा सृतिमातृंदृशयवि�铬: ॥
अस्वाभवविद्वेषस्य रामो धर्मपूर्वां वर: ॥
अववयं नित्य लोकेषु न चतुर्वत्तान्तिति ।
द्विष्कारलोपिता हीयं रावणात्तुरे ग्रुहा ॥
बालन्ति: सल्लु कामाज्ञा रामो दशाराज्ञ: ।
इति वश्वति यथा सत्को जानिकामविव्योऽवि ॥
अनन्तह्वाः भूत्तं मत्तितपरिवित्तनी: ।
अहमप्यवभज्ञांमि मैथिलीं जनकार्तिर्मण: ॥
The words uttered with one accord by the celestials assembled on high and Rama’s reply thereto in Sundaresvara’s poem cannot escape attention, ‘O Lord! hero of the Raghus! how is it you do not yourself the Supreme Being realise your own self, the encompassing spirit of the universe that you are, and how do you view unconcerned the daughter of Videha falling into the fire like sacrificial libation holy by the utterance of hymns’

Sundararamayana 14, 32

O! lord of libations! I know indeed the character, noble family and conjugal devotion of this miraculously born one, yet I had to almost appear indifferent to her to repel calumny from common folk by setting an example

Sundararamayana 14, 46

The other instance is, again where Rama had just begun a happy life as the sovereign of the earth with Sita as his queen, yet, would still set an example to the world in his act of virtue, placing duty above everything else, and abandon Sita, not because of the slightest blemish in her, but only because, as the sovereign of the earth, he should not have a word said by even the lowliest that his high position was used to cover any tarnished act. He was fully aware of the fact that the common folk would follow the example set by the highest and the best, even as Krishna has it in the Gitā

Bhagavadgita 3, 21

Rama in one of his conversations with his friends, insists on
knowing from them all that was talked about in the town or in the country outside, questions again and again to know the truth of how his people felt of his rule, his life, his conduct and so forth. His only desire was to keep his people happy. When he learns of the wonder that they expressed about the exploits of their noble king, even the laying of the bridge on the ocean (Fig. 41) unheard of anywhere even among the celestials, and finally this delicate question of the magnitude of the passion that Rāma could entertain in his heart for enjoying Sītā instead of detesting her, how he could bring her back who was carried away by Rāvana by force to his far off island and kept in the Ašoka grove, and grumbling that now they would have to put up with whatever their wives did, as what the ruler did, the ruled had to follow as an example set. Rāma feels so upset over this that he immediately makes up his mind, calls his brothers, all of them, explains his position in clear terms, Lakshmana himself having being a witness of her entry into the fire and her return unscathed, and the entire divine demonstration of her immaculate character, and finally, just because he did not want that his great and noble family should be spoken of lightly, or an example, however misunderstood, ruin the whole kingdom in its action as a reaction to his act, he decides and commands Lakshmana to conduct Sītā the very next morning and abandon her on the bank of the river Gaṅgā in the vicinity of Vālmiki’s hermitage, as Sītā had, in her then state of pregnancy, expressed a fond desire to visit the penance groves and hermitage of sages near the river that she loved so well.

हृत्या च रावणं संस्थे सीतामाहृत्य राघवः।
अमरं पुष्टः कहत्या स्वविश्व पुनरालयतः।
कौदृष्टं हृदये तत्स्य सीतासमभोगजं सुखम्।
अष्क्कारोप्य तु पुरा रावणेन वलादृताम्॥
लंकामपि पुरा नीतामोक्तविविक्ता गताम्॥
रक्षासं वशमापन्तः कथं रो मो न कुस्तते॥
अस्माकमपि दारेपु तहतीं भविष्यति।
यथा हि कुस्ते राजा प्रजा तमानुवर्तति॥

Rāmāyaṇa 7, 43, 16-20

जानासि त्वं यथा सीम्यदण्डके बिजने वने।
रावणेन हृत्या सीता स च विक्र्विविषी मया॥
Rāma is so attuned to dharma, and his outlook on everything is so objective and unbiassed, strictly adhering to the highest principles of virtuous perception, that he would completely eliminate his own preference for good or bad, ruling it out at every stage. Even from his childhood his perception is a true one. He sees the right and the wrong of everything and guides not only his juniors but sometimes even his elders who, as circumstances required, may have to be respectfully reminded of a correction in their outlook and opinion in any vital matter.

We can take an instance. Bhavabhūti highlights this trait of
Rāma in a situation that is purely his own creation in his Mahāvīra-
charita, but which, nevertheless, shows the dispassionate outlook
and judgement of Rāma. It is a situation where Kuśadhvaja, younger
brother of Janaka, with his nieces Sītā and Ürmilā, is in the
company of Viśvāmitra, accompanied by Rāma and Lakshmanā,
when Sarvamāya, an aged rākshasa, arrives on behalf of Rāvaṇa
to demand the hand of Sītā in wedlock for the lord of the rāk-
hasas. The very mention of the name of the rākshasa creates a
disgust in the mind of Sītā and Ürmilā. King Kuśadhvaja and Viśvā-
mitra who would not be discourteous allow him to be ushered into
their presence, and the rākshasa announces the demand of Rāvaṇa.
Lakshmanā is taken aback and, aside, remarks to Rāma, ‘Look my
brother, this lord of the night-prowlers longs for this divine damsel’.
Rāma’s reply to this is ‘A girl yet unmarried is a common object of
longing for any to ask for, without let or hindrance; and there is all
the more a claim for the victor of the world, who is the great grand-
son of Brahmā himself’. Lakshmanā at once remonstrates. ‘It is
your excessive goodness, my brother, that you express admiration
for even our natural mortal enemy, this night-prowler, the one who
destroyed the three Vedas, lowered the lustrous prestige of the
Kshatriya race, and killed the saintly king Anarāṇya of our Ikshvāku
family’. Rāma replies, ‘As an enemy he may necessarily be one who
could be killed, but he should not be spoken of as if he were just a
low commoner when his penance is in an abundance beyond measure,
his heroic valour most uncommon and his stature lofty as a hero’.
Lakshmanā at once retorts, ‘What is his heroism when he has not the
character of a great hero’. Rāma again corrects his brother Lakshma-
ṇa. ‘What could we say in justification for it that, though learned
and well-informed in the right and wrong of things, he had fallen
from the path of virtue and behaved thus towards so great a one as
Anarāṇya, except that we should ignore it. It is indeed impossible to
have all good qualities in one single person. But let us consider his
great valour, his conquest of the entire universe without a single
obstacle except the son of Jamadagni (Parāṣurāma) who had almost
in sport won easy victory over even the six-faced Kārtikeya. Who
else could boast of such heroic valour?’ Herein lies the greatness of
Rāma, that he could foget a thousand blemishes but appreciate one
outstanding virtue if ever he beheld it anywhere. He could even
forgive Rāvaṇa who killed Anarāṇya, his own ancestor, in his action

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that was unworthy of a hero, specially as the aged king was engaged in a sacrifice and was for the time of the essence of Isvara himself as yajamâna. His boastful challenge calling him to fight knowing full well that he was aged and saintly, and as sacrificer not free to fight, though representing the best of Kshatriya blood, was wholly unjust. Yet Râma would only see the good in others. It is even as Śiva would suppress poison in his throat and proclaim to the world the cool and soothing light of the moon by placing him prominently on his crest:

Follies are not proclaimed and are suppressed unexpressed in the throat itself, but merit is acclaimed by placing it high on the head and almost worshipping it. Râma is ever noted for this noble trait.

Râmâyâna 2, 1,11

It is this magnanimity of Râma that Kâlidâsa so effectively describes when he makes Râma fight Râvana not with a contempt as the thief that stole his dear wife, but as a great hero of whom he thought highly, as the victor of the Lords of the quarters, as the
devotee par excellence that offered his own cut heads to Śiva (Fig 42) and as the mighty armed that shook even Kailāsa mount itself (Fig. 43):

रघुवंशः १२, ८९

We can take other instances of the same trait in Rāma when he tries to correct the views of others, both his juniors and elders. When Lakṣmana exclaims to Kausalyā, that he could see none in this world, who could, even behind the back of Rāma, think ill of him, even his enemy or even one abandoned by him would still never speak ill of him, or be able to find any demerit. How and on what account and in pursuit of what dharma could his father abandon such a son, almost divine, straightforward, restrained, beloved even to his enemies, he was at a loss to know. But Rāma immediately corrects him and tells his mother, who also draws attention to his knowledge of dharma, and insists on his obeying her wish as that of the mother, that he should stay with her or allow her to go with him. ‘I have no power to transgress father’s words. With my head on your feet I bow and request you that I must be allowed to go to the forest’. He appeases Lakṣmana so roused to anger as to go to the extent of saying ‘even a parent autocratic and ignorant of right and wrong in action, and treading the path of sin should be arrested’. Rāma reiterates. ‘Dharma is the highest in the world. Truth is established in dharma and father’s action is based on this dharma and thus arises his word that I should go to the forest. Father is truthful, ever wedded to it, his highest valour is adherence to truth. Father is afraid of only one thing, the evil that could follow him to the other world by his swerving from truth. I must free my father from that dreadful fear’. Rāma advises Kausalyā also. ‘You should not abandon father either and come with me: abandoning the husband is the most cruel act on the part of a woman. You should not even in thought act so detestably. So long as father is alive, you should, all attention, look after him. This is an ageold dharma, and the greatest. Bharata is also of the very essence of dharma and sweet to every living being. He would indeed satisfy your every wish, as he is ever wedded to dharma:

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रामायण 2, 21, 5-6

रामायण 2, 21, 30

रामायण 2, 21, 41

रामायण 2, 22, 9

रामायण 2, 24, 12-15

रामायण 2, 24, 22-23

It is no wonder that against such wonderful exposition of dharma by Rāma, Kausalyā herself cannot but call on that dharma itself to protect him, and the very first utterance in her svastyayana for Rāma is 'may that dharma that you so assiduously ever protect take care of you'.

रामायण 2, 25, 3

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Bharata in great grief places his version of understanding the dharma before Rāma and pleads that he should come to the rescue of the fair name and great character of Daśaratha which may have momentarily lapsed into an unworthy behaviour by his excessive emotion towards Kaikeyī, just to please the whim of a woman, as old age blurred his vision. I would not blame father, great as a parent, great in action, aged, and now no more. He is as a god unto me and I would not blame him in any assembly. Still, who could have done such an act of sin as this opposed to dharma and artha just to please a woman. Yet he himself was so learned in dharma. Judge this, Oh Rāma! as you are yourself learned in dharma. There is an old saying that approaching death blinds ones vision to all realities. Our father in doing what he did has clearly vindicated this belief. You should therefore look into this correctly, give up this illusion and determination. You should revert whatever have been father’s lapses. That is the real offspring that straightens up the lapses of the parent. You should therefore protect all of us from this sin, my mother Kaikeyī, my father, my relatives and friends, all our citizens of Ayodhyā and all those from the entire empire, please protect us all. Where is this life in the forest and what is the life of a Kshatriya! Where are the locks of a sage and where is the act of protection by a ruler! You should not resolve on this unbecoming act. The first act of a Kshatriya king is to get crowned, by which alone as a king you could with all your wisdom protect the subjects. Who would abandon this immediate action which is clearly and perceptibly one’s duty, to pursue the life of a saint, the fruit of which lies beyond the ken of this vision? In learning, in my order of birth, in my position in every way, I am just a boy compared to you. How can I protect this earth, when you are there who could do it best? A boy is just immature in his knowledge and qualities. You should also remove the infamy of my mother and protect our revered father from a great sin. With my head on your feet I beg of you to please be compassionate towards me and towards all our people, like Śiva towards all beings; but if you refuse this, and are determined only on dwelling in the forest, I shall also go along with you:

गुः किंवा वासु च वुद्रवीच्छ राजा प्रेत: पितेषि च।
तात्र न परिश्रेयं देवं चेति संसदि।
को हि धर्माध्येयो न लिङ्गैः न कर्म विस्मय:।
स्त्रिया: प्रियं चिकोपुं: सच ्उच्छ चर्मं चन्त:।

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In reply to this, Rāma has a wonderful exposition of the right and wrong in action in the light of dharma. In the battle between the gods and the demons, the king, our father, pleased with Kaikeyī, gave her two boons. Reminding him of them your mother of immense charm had asked that noblest among men, our father, your coronation and my banishment. The king, bound by his promise, had to grant her both; and on the bidding of our father I am here in the forest for fourteen years in accordance with the boon. You should also accept the other and render our father's word truthful by your speedily getting crowned. For my sake, you should please release our father from his debt of truthful utterance. Our father who knew dharma so well needs must be protected by you, and you should equally gladden your mother. There is an ancient saying about the fathers and forefathers sung by the famous Gaya in Gayā itself. The
Bharata himself is astonished and wonders at the equanimity of Rāma, and even before he addresses Rāma to persuade him to come back, he cannot help exclaiming, ‘Who could be there in this world like you who could overcome all your enemies, even the strongest,
but yet are unmoved and neither depressed by grief or elated by joy. You are most welcome to the oldest and the wisest, and it is those very ones that you enquire to resolve your doubts:

Rāmāyana 2, 106, 2-3

It is purely with the idea of winning over Rāma to come back to Ayodhyā that the great sage Jābāli had spoken in a strange manner, a philosophy that was totally obnoxious to Rāma. Very respectfully Rāma corrects him. As Rāma was the foremost among the truthful, with his mind un tarnished by all that he had heard, and entirely in his own dhārmik opinion, Rāma speaks out to Jābāli. 'Reverend Sir, you had, for gaining your dear wish, my return, spoken to describe an act of blemish and unworthy as the thing to be done and as good in itself. One whose act is unworthy and sinful taints his character and loses all respect in this world. Whether born of a high or low family, whether a hero or possessing the ego of superiority, one is proclaimed in the world as pure or sullied only by his character. If, as an evil one, I pretend to be good, appear holy completely fallen in merit, totally unworthy dissimulate as worthy and lacking in character appear as of character, practice adharma in the guise of dharma and obtain the fruit of turning the world turbid by abstaining from all acts of good and auspiciousness and acting against the moral codes, who in this world, that can reflect and distinguish good from bad, would regard me, when, by loss of character, I defy the good of the world? Whom could I follow and by what action could I reach heaven obtained only by the meitorious? If I continue to live in a state of violation of my vow and acting in untruth, quite unbridled, the whole world would follow me in that, as in whatever manner a ruler acts, his subjects also would act. Truth and compassion are the noblest age-old kingly qualities. Hence the empire itself should be rooted in truth. The world is established in truth. The great rishis and the celestials have always regarded only truth as the highest. In this world it is the one who utters truth that reaches the zenith. People dread the untruthful one as the sight of a serpent. The highest dharma in this world is truth, and it is the root
of everything great and good. Truth is almighty in this world. In
thrust is the highest prosperity established. Everything has its root
only in truth. There is no higher place in the universe than that of
truth. Whatever is given away, sacrifice and worship, penance per-
formed, Veda studied, are all rooted in truth. Hence one should
ever be wedded to truth. The one who protects *satya* rules the world;
the same protects the honour of the family, and finally is lauded in
heaven. One who acts the opposite sinks into hell. Therefore, why
would not I follow my father’s dictate, keep my word and promise
and maintain veracity by acting truthfully? Neither through greed nor
illusion, nor ignorance or blinding darkness would I break the bridge
of truth of my father by which alone could he cross over to the other
world of beatitude. I shall remain truthful in maintaining my word
of honour. Neither the gods nor the manes would approve the untrut-
ful, the fickle and the quivering in *dharma*. So we have heard.
Having come to this mortal world of action, one should do only deeds
of merit:
The citizens themselves are so pleased with Rāma for his reply to Bharata and sage Jābāli’s exhortation, inducing him to return with them, that they applaud his dhārmik reply, and with one voice acclaim, ‘We all know Kākutstha (Rāma) so well. Rāghava has indeed spoken very well. This noble one stands steadfast in fulfilling the word of his father and hence we are unable to move him from his resolve:

काकुस्त्ममिति नित्यमपि सम्पन्नं विशेषं राजय।
एषोऽयं ज महाभाग, पितृवंशं तिथियं।
बत एव न शस्त्रं स्तर्वे व्यापरतिचितमभस।

All the rishis, the siddhas and the invisible celestials praise the dhārma of both Rāma and Bharata (Fig 44 and Fig 45), as they listen with horrorification the conversation of the brothers, and wonder not only at their coming together but at their attitude towards dhārma. They praise them as noble ones that brought honour to the family of Kakutstha and exclaim ‘Fortunate indeed is he whose sons these two are, who not only know dhārma but who have established the victory of dhārma. Having listened to them, we love them both all the more:

सत्यावेशार्थी तोके सत्ये पदा प्रतिष्ठित।
सत्यावेशार्थी सत्यावेशार्थी पदा प्रतिष्ठित।

tamasthamitaḥ prajñāya rāmaṁ prajñāya
bhrisitaḥ kākummaḥ saṃsārito bhūgya
anvṛttatattvavāpī bhāṣanāc prasārasya
lōḍha nārāyaṇāc kākuttama prāśvabhir.
Rāma’s final word to Bharata is ‘The colour and glory of the moon could recede from him or the snow-covered Himalaya shed the snow, the ocean itself trespass its shore-line, but I shall not break my word which I had given to my father:

लक्ष्मीचन्द्रद्वेष्याः हिमवान् वा हिमं त्येवित
अविलासासरो वेषां न प्रलिङ्गामाहं पितूः।

Rāmāyana 2, 112, 18

He however satisfies Bharata by giving him his pādukas (Fig. 46 and 47).

Rāma’s words of wisdom are remarkable, when he corrects Lakshmana, beyond himself in rage and upbraiding even his father in the presence of Kausalyā and even suggesting the correction of the lapses of elders as he puts it, calling for Rāma’s thoughtful handling of the situation by drawing attention to his mistaken notion of dharma, when he could be so illogical as to criticise his own father who had no selfish end to gain except his complete surrender to truth. In this situation, and in the case of Bharata where, strangely enough, Bharata has his own seemingly logical argument to call back Rāma to rule the empire, pointing out that thereby he would be rendering a service by wiping a blot on Daśaratha’s name as one who blindly acted infatuated by his emotion to Kaikēyi, as also Rāma’s reaction and suitable reply to the misguiding philosophy of the sage Jābhali, whose only purpose in his strange talk was to induce Rāma’s return, Kshemendra’s handling of all these situations is indeed most interesting and requires to be compared with Vālmiki’s version to which it acts as a very suggestive complement. Rāma reminds an angry Lakshmana of what really dharma is and therein points out his folly. ‘Render your mind clear and pure, ward off anger by patience, the normal behaviour of a great one is to act appropriately. Truth renders beautiful those wedded to it and to volour, just as noble birth beautifies eminent position of purity and power. Reverence to elders, courage in sorrow, patience in anger and compassion in helplessness, these are
the immaculate flowers of fame that are the garlands of the treasure of sovereignty. Where are the good ones and where wickedness, where are great qualities and where crookedness, where is discrimination and where mad ferocity, these opposites are far apart. Friendliness, lack of jealousy, patience, courage, fixedness of purpose, constancy, these are the treasureheaps of good qualities in the wise ones. Understand that fate alone is responsible for this my banishment. In this there is no human endeavour. Why should you exhibit this agitation in anger. Know that whatever goes wrong even with the best of efforts, and whatever ends fruitfully without the slightest endeavour for it, is all by the wonderful power of karma and it is the manifestation only of fate:

रामायणमान्यारि 2, 849-865

Rāma’s reply to Bharata’s request to return and his argument for that is indeed another noteworthy epistle. ‘All that integrate should necessarily disintegrate, mounting high should end in a fall, company necessarily means final separation. Life surely ends in death. Wealth, prosperity, love and friendly coming together and years of life, all these fall caught in the moving wheel of mortals. It is the nature of the existing ones to go out of existence, and it is the very nature of life that it would certainly end. There is no solution of overcoming the power of destruction, and time that moves down cannot be overcome and put back as the flame which goes up cannot be turned down. Thus observing your mind and other desires and
knowing everything as disintegrating, the good and wise ones remain dispassionate. The limit of all existence is decay and disappearance. The limit of life is death. But lack of discrimination has no limit as it is only through that is born illusion. It is only by the right path indicated by dharma that the one who performs deeds of merit reaches heaven. Our father whose merit and fame is unending in its abundance has not in the least to be worried about. I should never abandon the fulfilment of the command of our father, established always in truth. Who is it that can call himself wealthy by the treasure of truth and yet abandon truth? O Bharata! as a son please protect the truth of our father whose treasure of fame was his adherence to truth. Truth far transcends in its glory everything, the holiest spots, the highest penance, the most staggering sacrifice and the most meticulous yajña ritual.

Rāmāyaṇamañjarī 2, 237-244

Again, though Rāma is opposed to the strange philosophy couched in the words of Jābāli, he controls himself and very respectfully
answers the great sage. ‘O reverend Sir’ out of your overflowing affection towards us, and your eye of love, you have spoken what may appear logical and befitting. Still what is the use of a mortal who is fouled by straying from truth like a lamp without the flame, like the body bereft of life. What is the use of wealth and prosperity for one who is devoid of and slipped from truth and fallen in character. Like the moonlight for the blind, like a garland for a corpse, if a king through covetousness crosses the limit of dharma, undoubtedly all his subjects are lost in a deluge as it were which uproots all of them. Like detachment in the wise and old, like propriety in the case of the great, like immaculate character in noble ones, truth is the ornament of rulers. O reverend one, I would never give up truth on any account of greed. Even fortune obtained by one devoid of truth perishes. All enjoyment is transitory like ripples and waves, and all wealth is soiled by greed. For all mortals truth is the highest immaculate glory that lasts aeons. Having their natural seat at a depth, water and wealth cannot stay on the surface at an elevation and dry out, unspent. The good, that are pleasant because of their contentment and move in the path of truth, have only their discrimination as their treasure that upholds them and not the wealth that is maintained by adharma. The kingdom free from sin is alone charming for those whose utterance is ever truth. Where is that treasure and wealth to be used which is contaminated by the mire of untruth?

\begin{verbatim}
भाृवानिवासस्यास्यमां स्नाप्नछुद्या ।
उपवासेऽन्ति केवल भवतोऽविद्यम् ॥
तस्यामृति गस्य विशिष्ट सवुप्येव कारणम् ।
वाम्ब्वासुपपैशपं यवेऽस्वज्ञमणुः ॥
पुस सत्यविष्टिनः सत्यविष्टिनः कि प्रिया ।
अस्मिन चतुर्वेद्य तालवेद्य गतायुप ॥
राृजा हेदाम्माचरी तोमाहुर्दम्म हरताते ।
उप्योगी तालवेद्य सर्वस्या निहता प्रजा ॥
ईस्रायैव बृहदाब्धिष्यति सहदासिद्ध ।
पुरविशीलिवारसवा सा राजा विशुपणमः ॥
न लोकात्स्याहुः भगवन्हुः बुधम्मुक्तः ।
प्रजा अपि विन्ययस्य सत्यविष्टिनः सम्पद ॥
तराम्मुर्यः शोभा कारणमलक्ष धनम् ।
रत्नात्स्यापि धन्तव यत् सत्यः च देहिनाम् ॥
\end{verbatim}

65
Rāma is ever on the right path, never eager to attain his end by any except the fairest means. With all his overwhelming grief by his separation from Sītā and with all his eagerness to search for her and find her, Rāma is so just and objective in his outlook that he himself suggests to Sugrīva that, from the month of Śrāvana, when Sugrīva himself was beginning his life getting crowned a king, started four months of the rainy season when no endeavour was possible; and therefore he rules out all possibility of search for Sītā by the monkeys set in different directions. He suggests that as he had promised his father to be away in the forest, he would not even for a moment enter a city, much less stay in it. He politely refuses the respectful invitation of Hanumān to come and stay in Sugrīva’s palace. He would fain stay in the cave of the mountain Riśyamūka and await the month of Kārtikā, when alone there could be action initiated again. This is a suggestion emanating from Rāma himself. Rāma is so mindful of the convenience of others and also of propriety that he would rather suffer the pangs of separation than hasten unjustified impossible action:

With the advent of autumn, the whole atmosphere was so pleasant, the woods and dales all around were so green and colourful with flowers, and life itself was so gay, inspiring joy, with the birds
and animals on the move, that it made Rāma’s miserable existence all the more unbearable. In the excess of his grief, he almost gets upset with Sugrīva for his being so lost in pleasures as to forget his duty to keep his word and search out Sītā. The only one who could understand was Hanumān, and he had even advised Sugrīva that it was time that he acted to help Rāma. Hanumān rightly remarks that though Rāma, as an outstanding hero, could by his arrows control even the celestials, the asuras the greatest nāgas, he would, still not act rashly and would wait patiently expecting Sugrīva to fulfil his vow.

काम खलु धर्म शतक गुरासुरमहोरभावम्।
वो त्यागद्वित्र त्वात्मतिना व वास्ते�॥

Ramāyana 4, 29, 22 23

Rāma feels so much about Sugrīva’s inaction that he expresses how detestable is ingratitude. That meanest of mortals in this world, who by a promise raises a hope in one who requests and seeks help, especially when obliged to him for a good turn done, and does not keep the word, is indeed detestable. Whether auspicious or sinful, a word given, truthfully fulfilled, is indeed worthy of a hero, and he is to be really acclaimed a noble one. Those friends, who, having their own objects gained, do not in turn fulfil the objects of others are ungrateful, and even the cannibals would not eat their corpses.

अष्टप्रसन्ननानां दूष्यं चायूपकारणाम्।
वासान वमुर्वम यो हृति व तोके पुरुषपनम॥
धृम वा रन्दि वा पाप यो हि वाकयुद्धविरितम्।
सत्येन परीर्कुटित्व व बीर पुरुषोत्स।
इत्यादि हृदयन्त्यन्त्यन्त्यन्ति न भवति ये॥
ततो वृत्तानां श्रुतादि हृदयानां हृदयानोखोरुज्ज्वते॥

Ramāyana 4, 30, 70-72

The poet Sundarēśvara describes Rāma as contrasting the noble and the ignoble by describing how unasked the laden cloud unburies itself filling the rivers, tanks, lakes and wells with water and silently disappears having enriched the earth by its bounty, leaving the world wondering at the magnanimous action of the noble one, while having received bounteous help and with mind lost in trivial pleasures the
king of the monkeys does not so much as even remember the promise he made nor even him that sought his help and realise his action as unworthy of gentility:

Rāma in his great grief, feels that he is slighted, and he becomes almost enraged with Sugrīva for his complete inertia and almost total forgetfulness. He feels so slighted for the reason, as he imagines, that he is helpless, shorn of a kingdom, insulted by Rāvana, downcast, exiled, lovelorn, and more than all seeking his help as his refuge. These Rāma considers the reasons for Sugrīva as king of the monkeys insulting him. 'Hence', says Rāma 'knowing that this is the time to search for Sītā and, with his object fulfilled, he forgets his own promise to help, and wickedly enough does not even remember it. You should therefore go to Kishkindhā and tell that chief of monkeys, who is acting foolishly indulging in trivial pleasures, that the way that Vālī went is not altogether closed. Remember your word and stand by it and do not go the way of Vālī.' This so enrages Lakshmana that, snatching his bow, he starts with the determination to end Sugrīva so ungrateful and untruthful. But Rāma suddenly checks his own grief and anger, realises that his expression had roused Lakshmana to action which, however, the noble-minded Rāma could never allow to be accomplished and, Rāma, himself a hero who could overcome the most invincible enemy, talks to him softly and with a clear mind. 'One like you Lakshmana, should not commit a sin like this; the one who by his nobility controls and annihilates anger is indeed the highest among men. You, always accustomed to do the right thing, should not do this. You should nurse the same affection and love with which we originally met him. Avoid harsh utterance and couch your language in sweet words. We should only remind Sugrīva that the time of action is fast being lost by delay:

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\text{Sundararāmāyaṇa 10, 42-43}
\]
Kshemendra even more effectively has put the true feelings of Rāma, the conflict between grief, anger and righteousness eliminated, and Rāma’s innermost righteous mind standing out in all its lustre. In his advice to Sugrīva, Hanumān mentions that Rāma would never remind him ‘Rāma is the very ocean of propriety and nobility. He would not himself call for action. On the other hand, even though tormented from separation from his beloved one ever so long, he would even willingly submit himself to death, but would not make a request. The highest and the noblest would instantly act to perform even impossible deeds to help others. But in an action pertaining to themselves they would refrain from making a request and would be silent on it.'
Here again Kshemendra describes Rāma’s appease of Lakshmana roused to anger and starting threateningly to end Sugrīva. ‘Oh Saumitri! do not be angry with him. Leave him alone to be himself the one to blame. The good are graceful and honey-sweet in their mind towards even those who err. It is because of affection that a friend is so styled, even if it were for only once that their minds have met. Even when a friend’s faults are discovered by the passage of time, he should not be disfavoured. Good men completely fraternise and make to completely win over even the wicked by their own good behaviour, even those that act unworthily, by their own truthful action. Even the enemy is won over by doing a good turn. Those, that punish trivial faults by a death sentence, and express their pleasure by no special effort to reward, would be abandoned by people who come to know them to be clever in finding faults and would not come to their aid when they are in trouble, like the servants of the greedy that are established in their own illusory glory of ego and importance:

सीमित्रि मा कृष्णसत्रसि सं एवास्तययवादभक्त।
सतं कुतापराचे ग्रासामुद्राशिवायः।
प्रणयात्सुधितयुक्तं स्वदेशः नित्यतः।
कालेन दृष्टविशेषं नाहुम्लेव विमनानाम्॥
अनाधयमयं वृत्तेन सत्येनवृत्तकारिणाम्।
स्मिन्नन्युक्तकारणेन कस्तिकुर्मति साधवः॥
बलेनि दोषे प्राणपुष्पो लुष्टो वैविनिधाते॥
प्रकृतिष्या: प्रसादे वेष कृष्णश्रवे सत्य सस्स्तति:।
दोषप्रहारदर्शिणां विरचन्यं सुखुम्बनान:।
सिस्मिन्नमामसत्त्वस्य चुव्वानामिच सेवकः॥

Rāmāyaṇamaṇḍājari 3, 77-81

One of the great incidents in Rāma’s wanderings in the forest is his encounter with Vāli, where his killing of Vāli is questioned by Vāli himself on his deathbed. When Vāli goes to meet Sugrīva for the first time, there is no intervention by Tārā, but when there is a second call from Sugrīva and Vāli rushes again, his dear wife Tārā is upset and tries to stop him. She tells him that, so completely routed, Sugrīva would not have called again without securing adequate help; and, having come to know through spies, she warns him that Sugrīva, having obtained the protection of the two unassailable
heroes of the Ikshvāku family, there was no chance for him to escape if he chose the warpath. Rāma is the vanquisher of all enemy forces like the fire of deluge arising for it. He was the sheltering tree of all the good and the refuge of everyone in peril, the only protection of all the afflicted and the one receptacle of renown, abundantly equipped in the highest knowledge and deliberation and steadfast in fulfilling the direction of his father. He is a mine of good qualities like a mountain receptacle of all metal ores. Hence, enmity on your part with so great a one as Rāma, invincible and immeasurable in his valour on the battlefield, is unwise. Though you are a hero, yet I shall tell you something which you should not belittle. Listen and act, and what I tell you is for your good. Hasten to crown your brother as the heir apparent. Hero though you be, you should not quarrel with your younger brother. I feel that the most proper thing for you is to seek friendship with Rāma and Sugrīva, abandoning all enmity. This younger brother of yours is to be treated with love and affection. Wherever, here or there, he is ever your closest relative. There can be no one so close as a relative as he on earth. Freely give unto him, honour him and, by your worthy treatment, bring him so close to you that there could be none between you both. Give up this enmity and let him be close to you. I do not see any other way out for you except your making up with your brother by affection and kindness. If you would do something agreeable to me, knowing me to be your best wellwisher, I earnestly entreat you to act very well thiswise.

राम परवलामर्दी गुणानिष्ठितविरित
निवाश्चुस‍साधूनामाप्नाना परा गति
शर्माना संयस्वर्वव यद्यस्मात्रैभाजनतः
शानविशालानं निलक्रे निर्दग पितु
ध्वनाघनणिविश्रूँि‍ते गुणान्याप्नाहरे महारथ
वेद शभो न विरोपत सम तेज महालम्ब
दुस्मयामेवान राजेन रसमेशसु
चूर चत्यामि ते हि चिन्तच्चेम्भस्माविबित
शून्यता निमत चैव तव बक्ष्यति यदितसे
सीराजनय सुप्रीवं दुपू तान्वलिवित
विवह मा कृष्णा वैर आया राजसु यवीससा
मह दि ते शम श्र्य तन रामेश सोहद्रसु
Vāli is so enraged with Sugrīva for challenging him, that he makes this clear to Tārā, refusing to make amends with his brother (Fig 48). But he asks her not to worry on his account as he expected no peril from Rāma, so convinced is he that Rāma knows and acts according to dharma and he would never do anything sinful:

न च कायमो वियादतर्मि राष्ट्रं प्रति सम्भले।
धर्मस्वस्त्वृक्षस्तु कर्म पापं करिन्द्रियति।

Rāmāyāṇa 4, 16, 5

But when Vāli falls by the arrow of Rāma that hits him in his chest and mortally wounds him (Fig. 49), he rails at Rāma and tells him in unequivocal terms condemning his attitude but marshalling arguments in what he considers a just exposition of his own deserving case. “You are a royal prince, famous for your loving eye towards everyone, born of noble parentage, great in strength, valour and character. What indeed is it that you have achieved by killing me from a hiding place, specially, when I was engaged in battle with another, hitting me in my chest by an arrow? Your fame is sung all over the earth by all living beings as the most compassionate and as wedded to accomplishing the good of others, full of kindness and great in enthusiasm, befitting in action and steady in deeds of merit. The greatest qualities of kings are self control, peace, patience; saintly conduct, forbearance, truth, valour and capacity to punish culprits. Having these great qualities in mind and your high and noble birth, I came out to meet in battle Sugrīva, though dissuaged by Tārā, as I believed that you would not fight me when I was engag-
ing another, and specially when I was unaware of your presence. When I could not see you, I thought that my reckoning was correct. I did not know you as with soul killed, a wicked one with misleading banner of merit, a sinner camouflaged like a well hidden by grass growth, a sinner in the garb of a saint, like fire covered with ashes. I did not know that you were just shrouded in a veil of dharma. Neither in your kingdom nor in your city anywhere had I done any wrong unto you nor insulted you. Why have you killed me, innocent as I am without a blemish, a wild monkey moving in the forest, living on fruits and roots?

Rāmāyaṇa 4, 17, 14-23

Rāma so questioned by Vālī replies him appropriately and coolly. Without knowing dharma, artha, kāma and proper worldly behaviour, how is it you rail at me in childish fashion? The entire expanse of territory here with its hills and dales, mountains and forests, with all its denizens, animals, birds and humans, are under the rule of Bharata the king, wedded to dharma and
satya, knowing the true nature of dharma, kāma and artha, efficient in rewarding and punishing good and bad deeds. At his behest and on his behalf, we and other rulers like me move along from one place to another only to enhance the glory of dharma. When such a one as Bharata, to whom nothing is dearer than dharma rules the earth, how could one dare do any wrong? Given to passion, you have not followed the proper path of justice. Being an elder brother in the position of a father, on a level with the physical progenitor and the teacher of the highest knowledge, you should have treated your younger brother as your son or disciple if you had followed dharma. Dharma indeed is very subtle and not easily understood. It is in the form of the conscience of everyone which knows what is right and wrong. Fickle by nature, you have acted on the counsel of monkeys devoid of continence, and like one born blind led by similar ones are unable to see. I should put it even clearer to you as you should not just blame me clouded by your anger. You may see for yourself why you are killed. You have abandoned our ancient honoured way of life and committed the heinous sin of living with your younger brother’s wife. I see no other way of admonishing you except by punishment for your deviation from the path of merit and the true way of the world. Being a born Kshatriya ruler I cannot tolerate any passionate outrage on a sister or the wife of a younger brother. My friendship with Sugrīva is as with a brother to restore him his wife and kingdom. I have given him my word with fire as my witness and cannot but fulfil it. There is also yet another important reason which if you understand logically you can no more rail at me. The greatest rājarishis learned in dharma go ahunting. To catch or kill animals and birds, they use various contrivances like nets, ropes, pitfalls, clad themselves in camouflaged dress, and invisible or visible hunt animals running, frightened or carefree, aware or unaware, whether for their flesh or without any such need. Whether you were fighting among yourselves or not, in whatever attitude, as an animal, a monkey, you could be my target:

धर्मम्यच काम्यं च समयं चापि लीकिकम्।
विविधाय कर्म्यं वायुर्मामिथार्य विगतंसे...।
ईश्वरारिणां शुभिः सशोभणकानना।
मुफ्तिक्षितमुष्ण्यां निग्रहप्रगहार्तिः।।
लां पालवति धर्मात्मा भरतः सत्यवान् अद्योः।
धर्मकार्यार्थनाथो गिरहानुग्रहे रतः॥
नयमव विश्वसावै कल्पनो तत्त्वोऽं शुक्लादमूः।
विश्वासः यथा ब्रह्मः स राजा देशकारस्विवः॥
तस्य धर्माः प्रतिदेशाः वर्धने च पारिश्वाः।
चरितो वसुधा इतस्ता धर्मास्वतानालम्बितः॥
तस्मिन्न्यपतिलावैः भरते धर्मस्वतः।
पालस्वयंहि सूर्यं कस्मर्देम्निनिःश्रुतः॥
ते वर्ध धर्मविविधस्त स्वामीः परस्ये सिष्यता।
भरताः पुरुषकर्म निन्दीतीतो यथाविचित्रः॥
तः तु सिद्धन्मतमाः च कर्ममाः च विगीतहस।
कामकान्नप्रायानां न सिष्यते राजकर्मिनः॥
वेद्यं आचा विष्टं चैव यथा विद्या प्रयच्छितः॥
समस्ये विद्या सेवा धर्मवेदनामिनः विचित्रः॥
जनविद्यासमस्य जन विद्याविशिष्टाद्विनः॥
गुरुवं ज्ञानस्वार्थस्य विचित्रः सर्वसास्त्राक्षरानमुः॥
हस्तमया समस्या सार्थम् वात्सर्वपुकर्ष्टानमिनः॥
जानकालं च ज्ञानार्थस्यैव विद्या ज्ञानस्य विचित्रः॥
न हि मा केवल रोपार्यं विगाहितप्रभुवः॥
तदेवतैः परशुरामास्य विचित्रः सर्वसास्त्राक्षरानमुः॥
प्राचुनामिनि भाषाभाैस्य पत्तला धर्मं सनातनम्॥
कर्त्त्वं तः प्रकाराणस्य सुमृद्गस्य महाकालः॥
कर्मस्य चेतसः कामादु चुप्पामस्य वास्तवंदेव॥
तद्विविधाय सर्वसास्त्राः स्वामिः प्रतिचालितः॥
त न हि धर्मस्विविधाः तोम्रस्वविवाहदेवुः॥
कद्विविधाः परस्यामि निन्दृतु हृदस्यैव॥
न न हि संगमे पाप वास्तवोद्वृत्तः सुन्दरः॥
ओऽसी भगवती वास्तव प्रायं वात्सर्वयं ये।...
अनेन तत्र कामास्त्राः वेदो वर्ण स्मृत॥
धृष्टिबेंच च मे स्वयं लक्षणन यथा वर्ण।॥
दाराब्रजसागरस्त्राः विवेयस्वरस्त्राः स मे॥
प्रतिवा च मया दत्ता च वर्णाकृष्णिया॥
प्रतिज्ञाय च तथ वर्ण समधेवनाखितिसामुः॥
तदेवि वाराणि सर्वमहांबिर्मिन्नाविद्वाहे॥
शासन च यथूस्त्र तदनादनुकम्यातामुः॥
सर्वश्च धर्मं इत्येव प्रायत्नस्य लिप्ते॥...
After listening patiently Vālī realises that Rāma is right in every way. The necessity of Rāma’s action lay in his guilt that lay in his raping his brother’s wife. Secondly Rāma had to keep his word to Sugrīva whom he treated as a friend and brother by restoring him his wife along with a kingdom won. The third point was the right of the princes to hunt animals not necessarily always by fighting in front of them and killing them in any position or situation by any contrivance, and Vālī is so completely convinced of his guilt and the justification in Rāma’s action, that with folded hands he accepts his guilt and addresses Rāma ‘Oh! best among men! undoubtedly, it is exactly as you say. How could I, so lowly, reply one so lofty as you. Forgive me for my earlier remarks uttered by my own delusion and overlook this my fault. You know the true essence of things, always bent on the good of the people. Your mind is ever clear in achieving a purpose through proper methods. You should protect me who had strayed from dharma by your righteous words as you comprehend dharma so well. I am not so worried about myself nor even of Tārā or the others as I am concerned about my son Aṅgada of golden bracelet, foremost in good qualities, fondled by me from his childhood, who would in great grief miss me so much and would wither like a tank with its water completely dried. My only son, my beloved, born of Tārā, is very young and immature, but yet valiant, deserves your protection. You are the protector and the teacher of the right path. As you love Bharata and Lakshmana, so you should treat Sugrīva and Aṅgada. You should also assure that Sugrīva does not
insult poor Tārā who appears almost besmeared by my own wickedness. Blessed by you, Sugrīva can rule the kingdom in obedience to your wish. He could even win heaven and rule the earth with your help. Welcoming death at your hands, even though dissuaded by Tārā, I had come to fight Sugrīva.' Having so spoken with reverence Vālī became silent. Rāma now comforted Vālī whose vision was now quite clear. Sweetly spoke Rāma, the sense of his utterance couched in dharma, 'You should not agitate yourself on this account. You should think neither of me or yourself; in your case, I had decided according to dharma; when punishment is meted out and the culprit is punished, neither the punisher nor the punished come to grief. Hence, having received punishment, you are free from your guilt and are restored to your original purity on the path of virtue. Abandon all grief, illusion and fear that may lurk in your heart. Just as Aṅgada is dear to you, he shall be undoubtedly so to both Sugrīva and myself:

तत्त्वात नर्थेन्द्र तवें नान शस्य
परिवर्तस्व पुज्ये हि नापिष्टस्तु शक्तुसुतकुलः
यदुक्तर्थ मथा पूवर्थ ब्रम्हादातुकमिष्यस्
तन्ति ज्ञतु में दोष नव्येन नाहीलिस राजत्व
तव हि दृष्टार्थहि व्रजाया च हिते सतः
कार्यमाणिसुमवे प्रवन्ता वुदारक्षया
मामयमात्तमाविश्व व्यतिभावतंपुस्हत्तमः
धर्मेन्निसित्वा वाचा वर्मेन परिसत्ता
न त्वातमामस्तो थोः भे न तारा न च बायवान्
यथा पुरयुपायेन पञ्चकोषं कमकांस्त्रमः
य बालवाणिः प्राणिः वाह्यावित्यत चालित
तदाक इव पीतामुखस्तो योगायति
बालाभावतुण्डित्व एकपुरुशं ने प्रियां
तारेयो राम भक्तं रात्र्यो सहायत
सुपौछे चाव्यं चैव विकस्तत् धर्मिकात्माम्
व्यः हि चास्ता च गोप्ता च चार्यकामायधर्मिः स्वितः
या दे नरपत्ते व्रतिभृंगं तवस्त्रेण च या
सुपौछे चाव्यं च भागुस्तात च देवायपुरुषोत्तरिः
भद्रश्वतीश्वराम वा यथा तारात तान्त्रिक्षः
सुपौछे नायवमन्येत सत्वाभिभावमहः
त्वा श्रीप्रशस्तिमेव राज्य श्रवणात्मसतित
लहरे वर्तमानेन तत्व चिन्तानुविलयगतः
Vibhīṣaṇa in his most natural fraternal love forgets aught else of Rāvana, and seeing his corpse lying on the battlefield, is so overcome with grief that he laments recalling all his great and noble distinctions and feels ever so much that being hostile to good counsel he could not but end up with coming to this inevitable state of deep slumber never more to rise:

But some time later when Rāma asks him to take back home all the lamenting wives of Rāvana and perform his obsequies, Vibhīṣaṇa, on second thought, considering the several wicked acts of Rāvana and particularly his carrying away the spouse of another, which was all opposed to dharma, expresses that it was improper on his part to do the obsequies of so wicked a person, who in the garb of a brother was yet an enemy revelling in wickedness. To this Rāma
gives the most befitting reply and exhorts him to do the funeral of Rāma. I should indeed do what is good for you, my success here lay in your help. I must indeed tell you what is befitting and just. No doubt Rāvana was steeped in adharma, untruth and had all demonic qualities. Yet, he was so great, so valiant, a terror to the world. All enmity ends with death. My purpose is achieved, as I have punished and killed him. What he is to me, he is equally to you. Please do his obsequies. You know dharma. Rāvana certainly deserves all the funeral rites according to scriptural code at your hands, by the performance of which you would only heighten your fame.

Ramayana 6, 114, 94 96, 98 103

Kshemendra in this context makes Rāma’s statement even more lucid, and the elaboration acts as a commentary, since here, Rāma, irrespective of whether Rāvana was a great hero or not, even if he were only the worst and fallen, would still insist on a kinsmen performing what was his moral and spiritual obligation towards the corpse. Anyone, particularly a noble hearted one, should honour and protect even the most wicked in the peril of discomfort, even an enemy in grief, high or low, friend or foe, dead are alive. How can arise love or hatred towards anybody’s corpse? Whether endowed with qualities or lacking in them, or fallen from any state, relatives have to be obliged and honoured. This is the eternal code of action.
of the good:

Rāmāyaṇamañjarī 7, 29-31

Again, Rāma’s desire to follow the highest code of conduct is seen in his chiding of Vibhīṣaṇa for allowing his men to ward off the monkeys that all rushed in a body to have a glimpse of Sītā being brought in a palanquin to meet Rāma—Sītā whose separation Rāma so lamented and to win back whom such a great battle had ensued in which they had all so enthusiastically participated. Rāma addresses Vibhīṣaṇa, ‘Why is it that disregarding me, you have allowed these our companions to be thwarted? Stop this. These are all our own. Neither the walls of the house, nor the clothes that drape, nor the steep parapets act as veils. These are not indeed a royal prerogative. For a woman character is the protecting veil. The sight of a woman is not sinful in a situation of grief, calamity, battle, selection of the bridegroom, sacrifice or marriage. This Sītā is now on the battlefield and in great peril. There could be no wrong in seeing her and specially so in my company:

Rāmāyaṇa 6, 117, 23-28
In this context Kshemendra adds almost a commentary to the text of Valmiki by elaborating Rama’s remarks ‘How is it that all these who were my own people in the battle have now become total strangers? It is they who had created this bridge on the ocean like wonder personified. It was all for this Sita, and naturally they are curious to know how she looks and who she is. All the subjects are like children to the king. Let them all have a look at Janaka. In grief, in festivity, in a battle, the sight of a princess is not forbidden. Women are not protected and worshipped by enclosing them within the walls of the harem or by the wrapping of clothes as veils, or even by warding off people in the vicinity. The height of their glory lies in their character. Like supreme knowledge by discriminative thought, like utterance by its truth, like knowledge by adherence to the path of virtue, a woman is worshipped by the nobility of her character.

Generally in the enthusiasm to do a good turn to another who had done him good, one would watch for a possible occasion when he could come to the other’s help, which is as good as welcoming or even hoping for a calamity for the other enabling his chance to render help. Rama is so noble that he would prefer to remain obliged all his life without a chance to do a good turn. He tells Hanumān ‘Let the great good turn that you have rendered completely get assimilated in me, and let there be no occasion for me to do you a good turn. It is only one in peril that becomes the recipient of the return of a good turn’.

Madrē jīraṁta yādu vaitakopakṛt bane.
Rāma is so conscious of his duty that one small forced respite for three days sets him almost contemplating how great was direc-
tion of duty. Never a day had passed without Rāma regularly attend-
ing to his kingly duties. He expresses this to Lakshmana. ‘Four
days have elapsed since I attended to my work with the citizens of
Ayodhyā and the rest from all over the country. This hiatus in con-
duct vitally pinches my heart. Call all our subjects, our priests and
ministers, all those that demand justice, men or women. The king
who does not perform his daily duty towards his subjects undoubtedly
falls into the most ghastly inescapable hell:

It is only because of this that Rāma allows Śatrughna, come
after ever so long to have a sight of Rāma, only a week to stay, and
exhorts him to return to attend to his duty as a king in which he is
particular he should not fail. Rāma says, ‘A king should not be very
long away from his seat of duty. The people have to be protected
according to the code of royal conduct’:

His advice to Vibhīṣaṇa as he leaves for Laṅkā is another note-
worthy episode revealing his mind ever revelling in dharma. He
wants him to be in the closest harmony with Kubera unlike Rāvaṇa
who fought with him and robbed him of his aerial car. ‘Rule Laṅkā
according to the rules of dharma, I know you are yourself well versed
in dharma. Consider Laṅkā as the city not only of rākshasas but also
of your brother Kubera and act in harmony with him. Never allow your mind to stray into the opposite of dharma.

Rāmāyana 7, 40, 9-10

It is exactly this eye of Rāma towards the nuances of dharma that gives us a series of questions that Rāma put and which form a wonderful moral code for kings. When Bharata meets Rāma, Rāma makes enquiries of the welfare in his kingdom. This whole canto is called Kachchiutsarga.

'Is the spiritual preceptor, so humble though born of the noblest family, immensely well read and free from jealousy, a seer as it were, properly honoured by you? Does he, versed in the code of the ritual, direct you to tend the fires calling your attention at the appropriate time and enlighten you at the precise moment of the sacrifice in performance and yet to be done? Do you revere properly the celestials, the menes, the servants, elders on par with our parents, elderly folk, physicians that look after the body and the Brāhmaṇas who look to the spiritual needs? Do you specially regard the preceptor Sudhanvā who is well versed both in archery and political science. Have you appointed as ministers heroes equal to you and worthy, knowledgeable, complete in continence, of high birth, who could act by a mere cue. The Counsel of ministers, well versed in political science, who know how to keep a secret and offer their advice in secrecy, is the root of all victory for kings. I hope you have not given room to somnolence, awake and alert as occasion requires. Do you in the later half of the night ponder over the proper collection and use of wealth? I hope you do not hold council with too few or too many. I hope the result of your counsel does not go against the kingdom. I hope, having determined what is easily begun but yields abundant fruit, it is started expeditiously and not delayed. I hope all your accomplishments are totally meritorious. Kings know that all the acts that can be done should not be done. I hope your counsel is understood by you and your ministers by putting them to the test of logic and practical purpose and found not wanting. I hope you single out a
single wise man from a thousand fools. This wise one could achieve the best and the most propitious even in difficult situations. If the king relies on a thousand fools or even a ten thousand, he cannot in the least be benefited. Even a single learned minister, heroic, expert and well-versed, could lead the king or prince to the highest prosperity. Do you engage your most important servants on important tasks, the middling on the second best, and the lowermost in the less important functions. Do you engage ministers with a comprehensive knowledge of dharma, artha and kāma, incorruptible, that come by succession through their forefathers, on the most important tasks? I hope you and your ministers are not blamed for tormenting the subjects by cruel punishments. I hope your sacrificial priests do not consider you sinful and fallen, unfit for the ritual like women the passionate one forcing himself on them. If the physician that is tricky and misleading, the servant that maligns, or a hero that craves for wealth, is not killed, the king himself would get killed. Have you made him the commander-in-chief of the army who is bold, valiant, manly, strong, pure, of high birth, learned and able? Are all the chiefs of your army strong and experienced in battle, noted for their valour, after properly proving their worth? I hope you appropriately render unto each of your army, provisions and pay in proper time without delay. Those in service are provoked and act inimically towards their masters when payments are not made in time. This is a great calamity indeed. Are all those around you of noble birth and loving towards you? Would all of them give even their lives if need be to achieve your purpose? Have you made your choice of your representatives from the country by selecting the knowledgeable, polite, ready wit and truthful? Do you understand through your spies sent in triads unknown to one another, the position and attitude of eighteen in your opposite camp, namely, the minister, priest, crownprince, commander of the army, gateguard, chamberlain, jailor, treasurer, conveyor of royal warrants, judge, attorney, courtier, bursar, accountant, city mayor, governor, forest ranger, police chief, water works engineer, chief of mines, and fifteen in your own, omitting the first three. I hope you do not disregard the castaways, the enemies, the counter forces and the weak ones. I hope you do not respect atheistic Brāhmaṇas as they are clever in misleading, childish and arrogant in the false notion of their wisdom. These perverse scholars with their mind diverted only to logic, and ignoring the
principal dharmaśāstras indulge in meaningless argument. Do you properly protect Ayodhya, rich and prosperous, inhabited by our heroic ancestors, true to its name unassailable, with impregnable gates, crowded in its troops of elephants, horses, and chariots, with Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and others engaged in their various trades, all of them of continence, enthusiastic, of noble qualities and in thousands, and rich in able physicians and citizens happy and gay, teeming with its mansions of various shapes, decorated by hundreds of temples and sacred trees, with men and womenfolk beaming with joy engaged in congregations and festivities, beautified by fountains and pools, the countryside well ploughed, abundant in crops, rich in cattle, animals, pleasantly river-fed, free from depredations of wild animals, and devoid of every kind of fear, enriched by mineral wealth, abandoned by sinful folk, and ruled ever so long and wisely by our ancestors. I hope the countryside is prosperous, and you are loving towards the plowmen, cowherds and those looking after cattle. The folk engaged in animal husbandry in the countryside promote the happiness of the kingdom. I hope you help to maintain them well by removal of tolls and tithes. All the subjects in the kingdom have to be protected by the king in consonance with righteousness. I hope you comfort the sorrowing and take good care of them. I hope you are not credulous in trusting all that people say, nor disclose what is to be kept a secret. Are the elephant forests well taken care of and the cattle looked after? I hope you are not content with what you have and try to increase the wealth of special breeds of elephants and horses in the kingdom. I hope you daily present yourself in regal splendour in the palace and on the high road early in the forenoon. I hope all the craftsmen approach you without undue trepidation and do not stay away in abject fear. Are all your fortresses equipped with treasure, corn, weapons and water supply, as well as mechanical aids for battle with mechanics and bowmen? Does your income exceed your expenditure? I hope no portion of your treasure goes to the undeserving. Is your expenditure properly assigned for the worship of deities, the manes, Brāhmaṇas, guests, warriors, and friendly folk? I believe that the pure and innocent, accused of theft, are not punished by the shortsightedness of judges ill-versed and blind in law. I hope the thief caught in action, questioned timely and with evidence of guilt, is not released by any judge hankering for wealth. I hope only those ministers of yours who are well read and
free from desires look into the cases of rich men in trouble. If a king rules with favouritism, the tears shed by the innocent, wrongfully accused and punished, kill generations of the ruler's progeny and cattle. Do you honour in thought, speech and action knowledgeable elders, youngsters of extraordinary knowledge and physicians well versed in their lore, bow to the preceptors, the bountiful, the sages, guests, deities, sacred trees and all of celestial glory. I hope by your love of kāma, you do not overlook artha, and dharma. I take it that the Brāhmaṇas around you well versed in śāstras and hailing from cities and countryside, bless and wish you prosperity. I presume that with an awareness of appropriate time you allocate it for artha, dharma and kāma, which undoubtedly would secure you the highest success. I hope you are rid of the fourteen royal blemishes, atheism, falsehood, anger, oversight, delay, refusal to see the wisdom of the wise men, laziness, slavery to the five senses, counsel of none other than oneself on important matters, dependence on the counsel of the perverse, hesitation in action after a decision, inability to hold a secret, inaction in deeds of merit, and indiscriminate simultaneous quick action against opponents, frittering away strength without concentration on one success after another at a time. Do you well understand and avoid or limit appropriately the ten vargas, i.e. hunting, play of dice, snooze in daytime, calumny, women, drink, musical and dance entertainments, aimless wandering, unbridled behaviour, take care of the five vargas, i.e. fortification in regard to reservoirs of water, mountains, forests, barren soil and desert, appropriately follow the four expedients, i.e. appeasement, liberal gift, sowing dissensions, and striking, keep in close unison the seven components, i.e. the king, minister, kingdom, fortification, treasury, army, and true friend, avoid the eightfold varga i.e. slander, bravado, malice, jealousy, envy, unjust appropriation, cruelty in utterance and action, undue anger and regulate another group that comprises agriculture, trade, fortification, bridge-building and dams, elephant taming, mines, taxation, and rehabilitation, promote the three-fold śaktis, prabhu, utsāha and mantra and study and interpretation of the three Vedas as well?. Do you control your senses, use the shādgunya, six expedients, i.e. peace, war, march, halt, dissension, and surrender; take account of calamities both divine wrath (daiva-vyasana) i.e. fire, flood, pestilence, famine and epidemic, and human excesses (mānusha-vyasana), i.e. government officers, robbers, enemies, royal favourites, covetous ruler; win over
from the opponents four categories (krityas) by royal strategy i.e. the unpaid disgruntled, the insulted smarting the angered innocent, the terrorised timid, and allow no quarter to the twentyfold varga, i.e. too young, too old, of chronic disease, the excommunicated, the timid, the fearful, the miser, the detracher, the passionate, unsteady in mind and plans, the reviler of gods and sants, the accursed by fate, the fortune teller, the famished by drought, the defeated in battle, the one from a wrong place, the mimical to many, the ill-fated, the too true. Do you take account of five components (prakritivarga) i.e. minister, territory, fortification, treasury and army, watch the twelve fold circle of near and distant neighbour kings (mandala) in the front, rear, intermediary and indifferent or neutral, march on expedition in fivetold manner (jatha) i.e. seize by combat (vighraha), alliance for peace (sandhya), partnership in friendship (sambhava), combating another before reaching the main target of attack (prasanga), ignoring the target by confidence in our strength and attacking the foe’s friend (upeksha), practice the battle array vyaha in dandadhana, follow the method of dandhubhava or duplicity by sandhivraga? Do you take the counsel of ministers, four or three, the entire council or a chosen few, according to the need of each occasion? Are the Vedas fulfilling your aims and do all your actions bear fruit? Is your married life and erudition fruitful? Does your mind proceed on the lines that I have recounted? Proper utilisation of dharma, kama and artha bring you long life and fame. Do you follow the same true path that our fathers and our forefathers trod? Probably you never taste anything sweet without offering it to friends that may desire it. The erudite king who rules according to dharma, ever noble in thought, holding out the rod to his subjects only when necessary, would acquire sovereignty of the entire earth here and hereafter win heaven as well.

स कान्ति दुरामणो विडा भमनिष्यो महावृति ।
इष्टाक्षरायशायाय यथावत काल पूजते ॥
शा तात कान्तिकारस्या सुमिथा च प्रजाधिकी ।
सुवीती तर्किर्यां च देशी नैदंति कैवां ॥
वर्धितिंगमप्यनु भुसुनु वहुभुवत ।
अन्तर्पुरसुद्दर्श तत्रवस्र शुराविहित ॥
कान्तिदिनपुर्ये ते मलो विधिते मतिनाम्य चढ़ित ।
हुह च हृद्याग्नि च बले कदयते सदा ॥
क्षिप्रेत्वायुः पितृ-नुभुतायामुः पितृसमापनः।
वृद्धांश्च तात वैधांश्च तात्राग्निश्चाबिभिन्नः।
इष्टवरसेस्वपनमः सर्वसाहसन्विशारदः।
सुधान्वान्मुपाध्यायः काचिचत्रः तात मन्यते॥
क्षिप्रदातसमः: शूराः श्रुतवन्तो जितेश्वरः।
कुलीनास्वेतज्जितान्यः झताते तात मन्त्रणः॥
मन्यो विजयमुः कि राज्यां महत्तर राजः।
शुष्कस्यंतो मन्त्रधैर्यस्यः: शास्त्रकोषिकः॥
क्षिप्रनिधिर्वाणः नैषः: काचिचकाले प्रवृद्धिः॥
क्षिप्रचायपरात्तेपु: विश्वास्यबर्त्तेपुण्यम्॥
क्षिप्रमान्यसः नैकः: काचिचन्व भविष्यः: सह॥
काचिच्ये मन्त्रिलो मन्यो राज्यः न परिधावति॥
क्षिप्रचद्ये विनिमित्तवच्च लघुमूलं महत्यम्॥
विक्षल्लामभे कर्तुः: न दीर्घकत्वं राजः।॥
काचिचे सुकुमारनेव इति सपाणिः वा पुणः॥
विभुलते सर्वकायपणिः न कर्त्त्वाणि पार्थिव॥
त्वाय वा तव भावायुः: इति शास्त्रः तात मन्त्रणः॥
काचिच्यासहतमूःवाणामेकमिच्छसि पण्डितम्॥
पण्डितो हयार्थः: श्रूचपु: कुर्यान्नः: अथयसं महतु॥
सहस्रायणिः मुखां: यथापास्ते: महीपतिः॥
अवाप्यायुतायेव नारिते: तेपु: सङ्ख्यातः।
एकोप्यामायोऽभावी: शूरो दशो विचक्षणः॥
राजानां राजपुरुः च प्राप्येन्महुः: विमुषः॥
क्षिप्रमुखाया महर्षेव मध्यमेव च मद्धम:॥
जनन्यात: जनन्येश्च शूर्या च महमु योजिता:॥
अमाल्यानुपालीवायुः: पितृपैतामहान: शुचीनुः॥
श्रेयाह्न्रेष्टेपु: काचिच्ये नियोजयति कर्मसु॥
काचिच्योपीद्रेण दश्चेत: शूरमुद्रेणरित्व्रभजम्॥
राज्यः तवानुजान्ति मन्त्रणः: कौक्तीयसुः॥
काचिचवचां नावानन्ति याजकः प्रतितं यथा॥
उपायप्रतिश्रीतां काम्यानन्ति सीत्रेष:॥
उपायकुमारस: वैद्यं: भूयत्वं सन्तुष्पणे रत्नम्॥
शुरमृत्युर्वकामां: च मो न हुष्टति स वृद्धते॥
काचिचक्षुरस्य शूरस्य महामायमयू: सुधितामयू: चुचि:॥
कुलीनान्तितारकस्य दक्ष: सेनापति: हृतः॥
वल्लवान: काचिचे मुख्या शुद्विशारदः॥
बुधपदानां विकान्तायेव सकृत्यां मानित:॥
काचिचक्षुरस्य भवं च: वेत्तां: च व्योचितम्॥

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कृत्रिमतु सर्वं कर्मसंता: अत्यक्षरतेंविशार्दः
सर्वं वा पुनर्वात्म्या मध्यमेवात्र कारणम्
कांक्षितवा राज्यां धनराज्यायुगोदयः
यमेव तपस्वी गत्व गरुद्धवर्धिनी वा
आयातं सुधु: कृत्रिमतु कृत्रिमदपतरी ब्रह्म
अपारं न ते कृत्रिमक्षो रघुण्टित राजाव
देवतायं च पिनथ्यं ब्रह्माणाम्यकतमां च
गोविषेदं मित्रवर्षेणु कृत्रिमदपतरी ते ब्रह्म
कृत्रिमदपतरीं विशुद्धाला ा वारितस्तिचररमण
अदृश्य: वास्तुविस्तरां नोमाइन्ते विन्ध्य
मुद्धोत्नर्वेक्षः पुरुषं काले दुःखः सकारणः
कृत्रिमतु मुद्धोत्नर्वेक्षः न कन्यामानर्वेक्षः
व्यस्ते न कृत्रिमदार्श्य दुःखस्य च राज्यः
अर्थं विरागः पञ्चन्ति तनमात्या बहुचुक्तः
मानं विमहाभिसतां पतञ्चवृहणं राज्यः
ततं पुनः पञ्चन्ति प्रीत्यमानुपासतः
कृत्रिमदुःखार्ष्य बालान्तः वेद्यमुखान्तः राज्यः
दाननं मन्यता बाचा तिथिरितपञ्चोपेक्षः
कृत्रिमदुःखार्ष्य बुद्धार्ष्य तपस्वामः देवतातिश्रीऽः
वैव्यायां बालान्ते सर्वानु विद्यार्थानु ब्रह्माणान्तं सर्वस्या
कृत्रिमदर्पण वा धर्ममयं धर्मं वा पुनः
उभी वा प्रीत्यमानु कामेन च न बाच्यसे
कृत्रिमदवं च धर्मं च कामेन जयतां वर
विभयां काले काले सर्वानु वरद सेवसे
कृत्रिम ब्रह्मां: शर्म सर्वसाक्षार्थाकोविवः
आर्यसेनं महाप्रभु पौरजानंपदः सहे
नासितं विमहाभिसतां कोणं प्रमादं दीर्घस्मृतंतं
अवदानं ज्ञानवतामलसः पविवृत्तितंता
एकाक्षतं परमानामनर्वेक्षः मन्नतान्तम
वनिष्कृतानामानारमणं मन्त्रस्वापरिवर्तणं
मायासाप्रभों म प्रतिद्वृत्तां च सर्वं
कृत्रिमदवं बर्जनस्येतानु राजद्वारंचुः
वतं पुष्टं चुरुणां गुणं देवमानुस्थानं
अष्टं त्रिवर्गं च विधातस्तिश्रवः राज्यः
इन्द्रियाण्व जयं बुः शंकुगुणं देवमानुस्थानं
कृत्रिमदवं त्वरं तथा प्रकृति मनलक्ष
यात्रा दशविधा शोभानी सार्वभविष्यती
कृत्रिमदेतानामानार वषायदुःखस्य
मन्त्रिविशिष्ठं योहिति विष्णुभिमतिभिरेव
Kshemendra, who has taken particular note of this canto revealing Rāma’s wisdom in statecraft and approach to dharma reflected in his queries to Bharata, has again a whole canto in his *Ramayana-māyana* which is styled *kachchhika* ‘Do you properly protect yourself by awareness, have ministers that are your well wishers, multiply your treasure and build up your kingdom, properly maintain your for tifications, strong in your personal bodyguard, and surrounded by good and noble friends? Are the ministers well disposed towards you, especially as you are newly crowned? Have you taken on yourself the position of the captain of the ship of an ancient and mighty empire? Do you counsel with ministers who are not fickle minded like the wind that indiscriminately takes any scent that it contacts? Is your aggressive enemy scattered up? for even when he is broken, he attempts to break all. Given to pleasures that are an obstacle in the proper judging of your subjects’ cases, I hope you are not neglectfully somnolent, an unpraiseworthy attitude, that clouds the light of your discrimination like nocturnal darkness. Have you at least one wise man who could be a jewel to protect your prosperity? This earth is plagued unnecessarily by the weight of thousands of fools. May I take it that you submit yourself to the wise counsel of learned men. May be your royal assembly, like the web of the spider, is not filled with fools jealous without reason, cruel and ever intent on fault finding. I hope rogues, keen in their envious gaze towards royal prosperity like owls with sharp vision at night, are not dear to you. I hope these rogues, who are like cranes in the lake of royal prosperity, and are engaged in a mere show of their acts of pride and con
ciliation do not come together, and impoverish you by skilful stealing. I believe the earth is not rendered fruitless, by unworthy folk, as it were by rats, that burrow and eat up the grain. I take it that you are not rendered hollow by those in your service acting as thieves. I believe your eyes are not directed towards the faces of damsels as to the gently waving lotuses attracting bees and consequently neglect other important affairs. I hope you do not see eye to eye with misers, who avoid all good deeds by their greed and are a target of shame. Their path is easy but they should not be listened to. I have no doubt that as a ruler you treat the people like children and avoid tormenting them with cruel punishments. There can be no protection for the world if the protector himself torments. I hope you skip over such things as form the boundary of adharma and act beyond them in the path of virtue. For the miser wealth is wealth, but for the noble-hearted dharma is wealth. Riches, like courtiers, are never friendly for any length of time with anyone, as they create trouble through foolishness, render ugly, change colour and are ever fickle and fleetingly coquettish. All sorts of prosperity are generally opposed to dharma and all dharma causes fortune to perish. Kāma or passion destroys both dharma and artha, and these are avoided by the noblest. Giving away is to protect the subjects. Sacrifices are for enhancing the glory of dharma. These are the abundant fruits of the wish-fulfilling tree, namely, royal prosperity. The highest reverence for Brāhmaṇas who know the supreme spirit is the greatest ornament of one of the three royal powers, prabhuśakti. It is the great protecting medicine for princes through proper utilisation of dharma, artha and kāma:
In spite of his great wisdom in dharma, and confidence in his knowledge and practice of dharma, Rama had always an open mind and would accept a correction if he felt convinced. An instance is where Rama desires to do Rājasūya to wipe out the sin of having killed a Brāhmaṇa in Rāvana. Rama tells Bharata that Rājasūya is an unending and inexhaustable ethical bridge as it were for winning the highest merit and destroying every kind of sin. But Bharata reminds him of his position as an emperor, the love, affection and regard that the other kings on earth bear towards him, in vanquishing and humiliating so many sovereigns on earth as a necessary corollary of the Rājasūya sacrifice which would be purposeless. Oh saintly brother, dharma is at its highest in you. The whole world is yours with all its treasures because of your might, and naturally your fame is as great as your valour is beyond measure. Just as we regard you, all the
kings on earth honour you like the celestials honouring Prajāpati. All your subjects look towards you as a father. You are the refuge of all living beings on earth. How could such a one like you perform this sacrifice, which entails the annihilation of innumerable royal families:

त्वभि धर्मं: परं साधो त्वति सवं वन्यभरं।
प्रतिविठितं महाबाहो यज्ञस्वामितविक्रमम॥
महापालात्मक सवं त्वं प्रजापतिस्मिवामर।
निरीक्षणे महात्माय लोकनाथ्य यथा वयम्॥
प्रजाश्रव चिन्तुव्रजाजु पश्यन्ति तवं महाबल।
पुष्पिन्या गतिमूलोत्सित प्राणिनास्पि राष्ट्र॥
स त्वेर्वविक्षं यज्ञमाह्यत्तिस कथं नूप।
पुष्पिन्याः राजवंशानाः विनाशो यत्र दृष्टं॥

Rāmāyāṇa 7, 83, 10-13

Rāma immediately appreciates Bharata’s arguments and gives up the idea of Rājasīya, and instead, launches on an Aśvamedha sacrifice which is also purificatory. ‘O learned in dharma, your words couched in dharma and potent in their meaning are really true. Surely the world is to be properly ruled and protected. I take your word and give up the performance of this noblest of sacrifices, Rājasīya, as it involves the tormenting of the world, the wise ones should not indulge in such an act. A good and auspicious utterance even from a child should be joyously accepted and implemented:

इदं चचनमकीवं त्वथ धर्मसमाहितम्।
व्याहं पुष्पव्याख्या पुष्पिन्या: परिपलनम्॥
एष्वदमदभिप्रायाराजसूपात्तालकूलम्।
निवर्तेयारथ स्वस्तं तव सुव्याह्ततेन च॥
लोकपीडाकरं कर्मं न कर्तव्यं विचारणी।
बालानां तु गुरुं बाह्यं ग्राहं लक्षणपूर्वज॥

Rāmāyāṇa 7, 83, 18-20

Another instance is Rāma’s acquiescence in the wisdom of the explanation of the Ocean personified who addresses him and convinces him how unjustified was his anger. Rāma had listened to the wise counsel of Vibhīshana which was convincing. Being the descendent of Sāgara whose sons had dug up and magnified the ocean, if Rāma, a
king, who would not normally ask for anything from anyone, still prayed to the Ocean requesting his help, he would certainly oblige felt Vibhishana.

Rāma assents, bows to the ocean and spreading a holy bed of kuśa grass lies in front of it with hands in reverence.

Even with his mind intent on dharma and fully aware of his duty to follow dharma he knew so well, he so prayed for three days and nights.

Rāma then gets furious when the ocean took no notice of his reverence and exclaims that patience, straightforwardness and goodness wasted on those who cannot appreciate it results in insult experienced. Everywhere it is the rod raised that is feared and respected and sweet and soothing words do not earn reputation or fame. I shall dry up the ocean by my arrows. The monkeys shall walk over to Lankā. So he takes up the bow and shoots arrows like the thunderbolts of Indra.
It becomes too terrible a picture for description, the tumultuous ocean and the terrible tempest raised with intense suffering for all aquatic life, when the Ocean in person attended by his riverine consorts approaches Rāma, hands clasped in adoration (Fig 50), and explains his inability to transgress natural laws divinely ordained. Earth, air, sky, water and light are bound by natural laws. I am unfathomable and unfordable. Neither for pleasure nor for gain or out of fear can I still my waters that shelter innumerable aquatic beings. I suggest a way out for helping your monkeys to cross over. Rāma is convinced in a moment and there is no more argument. He acquiesces in the statement of the ocean and immediately asks him where to aim his unfailing arrow already drawn and to be released.

This sudden spurt of anger of Rāma is only short of the blaze
of Hanumān’s anger when he burnt the entire city (Fig 51) with a
devastating all-enveloping flame fanned by tempestuous gale like
doing the deluge as he thundered like the cloud ending the aeon.

Rāmāyāna 5, 54, 20-21

But while Hanumān still nursed his anger and suggested to
Sītā he would punish the wicked rākṣasīs that had tormented her,
Rāma, convinced that his anger was not justified, immediately calms
down. His nobility is voiced in the one remark that he never would
recall any ill done to him but remember gratefully even a single good
turn done to him even so long after the event.

Rāmāyāna 2, 1, 11

It is this Rāma that is assessed variously by so many, high and
low, friends and enemies, humans and celestials, saints and even the
wicked. But everywhere the uniform verdict commends Rāma as a
dharmajīva and dharmātmā, though described in different ways in the
most interesting manner. We may take instances. Mārīchā, mor-
tally wounded by Rāma but still allowed to live (Fig 52), living in an
eternal dread and terror of Rāma, tells Rāvaṇa that Rāma is the
very embodiment of dharma, saintly and of true valour, and ruler of
the entire world like Indra the lord of the celestials:

Rāmāyāna 3, 37,13

He is so great and his divine qualities are so apparent to even
rishis that Viśvāmitra tells Daśaratha (Fig 53) ‘I know Rāma as the
most noble minded, true in valour, highly lustrous; also Vaśishṭha
and the sages engaged in the highest penance know the true aspect
It is the superb human qualities of Rāma, in addition to his knowledge of dharma that accounts for his purifying potency as seen in his restoring Ahalyā to the vision and gaze of the world, completely shut up from which she was for ever so long on the curse of Gautama:

रामायण 1, 1, 19, 14-15.

Kālidāsa very significantly describes this regaining of her original form from that of a stone as due to the power of the dust on Rāma’s feet which destroys sin (Fig 54):

राग्हुवरण 11, 34.

Bhavabhūti introduces the incident in a different way in his Mahāvīracharita, and makes her approach an assemblage of sages including Viśvāmitra, Rāma and Lakshmana, with Kuśadhvaja, Sītā and Ürmilā also present. Freed from her curse she arrives and hails Rāma.

‘Hail lord of the world! Rāmachandra! hail victory!

Rājā: Revered one: who is this goddess?

Viśvāmitra: This is the wife of the sage Gautama Autathya, named Ahalyā, of whom Āngirasa Satānanda was born. Indra loved her. Hence, by his misconduct towards the wife of Gautama, he is styled the lover of Ahalyā. Then the revered Gautama got angry. He imposed total darkness on her sin. Now she is released from that sin
by the lustre of Rāmachandra

Rājā  How now, this little child of the solar family has immeasurable supernatural power in such natural abundance

Sītā  (aside, with affection and love) His greatness is equal to his physical charm

The description of Rāma as each one understood him is almost like ullekhā alankara, each speaking from his or her point of view, but all opinions converging only towards a common appreciation of Rāma in the noblest terms as one almost beyond description. Daśaratha himself says that Rama was born in the noble family of the Ikshvakus like another dharma embodied.

Viśvāmitra himself close on this describes Rāma as the embodiment of dharma, the greatest of heroes, surpassing the world in his intellect and the very refuge of penance.

The citizens of Ayodhya explain in detail to Daśaratha the noble qualities of Rāma that endear him to them. 'Rāma is the one saint in this world, his valour saturated with truth and dharma. Even the
women of Ayodhya, young or old, with great fervour pray to the deities morning and evening for the good and welfare of Rāma. That is the love that they have for him because of his great qualities:

रामः सत्यपुषो लोके सत्यधर्मपरायणः ।
स्त्रियो वृद्धास्तवन्यत्र सावधानं प्रातः समाहितः ।
सविन्द्रदशनसत्यन्ति रामस्वधर्म मनस्विनः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 2, 52.

When Daśaratha consults his people from Ayodhya and the large janapada domain beyond how they liked the idea of his crowning Rāma as heir apparent, with one accord everyone expresses supreme delight and desires to see their beloved prince Raghuvīra, supremely powerful, always before their eyes seated in majesty on the huge state elephant, coursing along, with the umbrella held by the parasol-bearer over his moon-face, to shade it from the solar rays (Fig. 55):

इच्छामो हि महावाहुं रघुवीरं महावलम् ।
गजेन महतायाति रामं चछात्रुताननम् ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 2, 22.

Effective indeed is the rendering of this by Sundaresvara who describes the joyous expression of one and all whose mind craves for Rāma of countless great qualities, moving on his stately elephant, his face shaded by moon-white parasol:

अनेककल्याणगुणिः शेषं तत्रात्मं कर्मकर्मो नः ।
गजेन याति महता शशाङ्ग्रभागवत्वं समादृतस्तायम् ॥

Sundararāmāyaṇa 3, 12.

It is this that has inspired several later kings to crave for the affection of their subjects and in similar glory to represent themselves, as in the elephant-rider type of Kumāragupta who presents himself as a beloved prince on elephant-back, parasol-covered like Rāma himself (Fig 56).

The people of Ayodhya go into an ecstasy of joy even in the thought of Rāma, and estimate him in superlative terms. They almost feel overwhelmed by the kindness of Daśaratha and do not know how
to be sufficiently grateful to him for making Rāma available to them as their crown prince. What a great man this king, scion of the Ikṣvāku family, knowing himself to have become aged, desires to crown Rāma as king. We are all indeed most fortunate to know that Rāma is to be our king. May Rāma, who knows the high and low in this world, be entirely our protector for long and ever so long. Rāma is ever free from pride and hauteur, learned, steeped in dharma, beloved of his mother, and affectionate towards all of us as he is towards his brothers. May our worthy king Daśaratha, by whose graciousness we are shortly to witness the coronation of Rāma, live long:

Bhūte mañjāmaī pañjapakṣidhāruñuntanena ।
Jñātaṃ yo brūrmatamāma raṃ rājāmṛdeśeśvate ॥
Svāṃ hānumūrdhāta śvaṃ vamā śaṃ māhānta ॥
Vibhāṣya bhūta gītaṃ voudīrāvvar ॥
Bhūrmatanam viśākhaḥ pāramīma hārāvāntuḥ ॥
Vana nā bhaṅgūru śānāmāntānāsrayaṃś tvāpya ॥
Vibhāṣya citrītā pāramīma raṇa daśarāyojyaṃ ॥
Vātasaṃdheṣaṃbhūṣṇaṃ raṃ ṛjyaṃ hṛjyaṃ hmayaṃ ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 6, 21-24.

Even an humble nurse in the palace household that had known and loved Rāma from his childhood almost bursts with joy when she answers the query of Mantharā explaining the sudden joyous celebrations in the city. Vālmiki actually uses the word Vidīryamāṇa harsheṣṇa which means bursting with joy. Bursting with joy, the nurse happy beyond bounds, inform the hunch-backed one of the highest prosperity for Rāma in his coronation as crown prince:

vidīryamāṇa hṛṣṭā saṃśayaṃ puraṇaṃ sṛṇaḥ ।
āvadhukṛtya krodayeṇ śūntaṃ raṇapramāṇam ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 7, 10.

Even when Mantharā tries to stir up Kaikeyī, Kaikeyī’s love for Rāma, his noble qualities, his affectionate and humble behaviour towards everyone of the mothers including herself, is so great that she is not in the least ruffled by this (Fig. 57). On the contrary, she is amazed to find that Mantharā, who should rejoice on such an occasion, should feel so aggrieved. She is so happy on this happy event, that she gives the hunch-back an auspicious jewel from her neck, and
Fig. 55. The beloved prince of the realm on elephant, Vākāṭaka, 5th century A.D., Ajantā.
Kaikeyī of rare beauty asks Mantharā, 'O Mantharā! you have come and given me such happy news. I am delighted. What more can I do for you. I do not see any difference between Rāma and Bharata and I am so happy that our king is crowning Rāma as crown prince:

अतीव शा सा तु सहस्र्यन्त जैकेरी विस्मयाविनिता ।
एकामार्णत तस्ये कुजायै प्रदवी शुभा ॥
दत्ता त्वापश्रयत तस्ये कव्जाई प्रमदीत्तमा ।
कैकेरी सद्वरी वृद्धवां पुनरवाकशीर्वदं ॥
इदुं तु मन्त्ररे महामार्यांसि परम प्रियम ।
एतस्मे निमाश्वानि भुवः किं वा करोबी लेः ॥
रामे वा भरते वाहु विशेषं नोपवाते ।
तत्सामान्यमिस्म नद्राजा रामं राज्येश्विप्रेक्ष्यति ॥

*Rāmāyaṇa 2, 7, 32-35.*

Even after a second harangue of reiteration by Mantharā, Kaikeyī still speaks of Rāma only in the highest terms with great affection and appreciation of his nobility. She speaks again to Mantharā enthusiastically praising over and over again the great and noble qualities of Rāma. Rāma is indeed learned in dharma endowed with great qualities, of great continence, ever grateful, truthful, pure, is the eldest of the kings’ sons, and rightly is to be crowned king. He should live long to protect like a father not only his brothers but all the royal retinue. O hunch-backed one, how is it that having heard of the crowning of the prince, such a joyous event, you are strangely enough so distressed!

तां दृष्ट्वा परस्मारवता बुजुर्गी मन्त्ररा तत: ।
रामस्येव गुणान्वेदी कैकेरी प्रशक्तसं प्र ॥
धर्मस्यो गुणवान्द वान्तः क्वतः सत्यचारः सुभि: ।
रामी राजः चुतो ज्येष्ठो योवराज्यमतौहिति ॥
भ्राह्मद्वृ भूतवान्द्व दीपार्जुष: पितृवन्तपालविवचति ।
सत्यस्येकयु चूरे श्रुतवा रामाभिषेणजनम ॥

*Rāmāyaṇa 2, 8, 13-15.*

She even adds that Rāma, the son of Kausalyā, is even more attached to her and all the more respectful. Just as I love Bharata, I love Rāma all the more. Rāma attends on me and honours me even more than his own mother Kausalyā. If the kingdom is for Rāma, it
As good as if it were for Bharata, so far as I am concerned Rāma considers all his brothers with that great affection as if they were all a part of himself.

When Kaikeyī insists on her boons and wants Rāma to go to the forest, it comes not only as a surprise to Dāsaratha but is even an impossibility for him to believe that Kaikeyī who loved Rāma so much for his great qualities should turn so hostile. Fully aware of how well Kaikeyī knew the qualities of Rāma, Dāsaratha just to move her heart, cries out detailing the great and noble qualities of Rāma. "Rāma has won the highest celestial worlds by his truthfulness. He has won over all the hapless by his liberality. He has won the hearts of all his elders by his humble behaviour towards them. A hero, with the bow in his hand, he has won on the battle field all his enemies. Eternally present in Rāma are truth, liberality, penance, sacrifice, friendship, purity, straightforwardness, knowledge, respect towards elders. In such a Rāma, comparable only to the gods in his majesty, and to the sages in his lustre and abundance of straightforwardness, how have you the heart Oh! my queen! to think of evil?"

Rāma’s qualities are such, and his behavior towards one and all in the most ideal manner is so touching, that it is not only the father, who usually loves his offspring even ill disciplined, but the entire population of the kingdom, the people as such, that shower their highest regard and affection beyond measure on him. Vālmīki
has given it in the most telling fashion, when he says ‘even if Rāma is seen only for a minute as he moves away and out of sight, he would attract their mind which it was impossible to call back from him, nor the eyes either. One not so fortunate as to see Rāma or to be seen by him, would feel he was surely accursed in this world; even his own inner self would almost upbraid him for it:

न हि तस्मात्मन: कसिचेच्चुदुपी वा नरेशमादु।
नर: शक्तिनिर्वाहक्षुमतिक्रांते च राजवे।
यशच रामं न पवसेरु वं च रामी न पवस्यत।
निन्दत: स भवेलोके स्वात्मापियां विगहुते।

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 17, 13-15.

When Rāma was to go to the forest the wail was not only of Daśaratha, Kausalyā and Sumitrā, but of the entire harem, which bitterly weeps and upbraids Daśaratha for his unworthy action as they consider in allowing Rāma to go to the forest; all this is because of his great qualities. They recount again all those great qualities. ‘Rāma from his very childhood behaves towards us all as towards his own mother Kausalyā. Even if scolded, he is never angry and ever avoids all that would rouse anger, and more than that conciliates those in anger. How sad that this Rāma is sent to the forest by our king who has lost his wit, Rāma, who is the only refuge of the entire world.’ So lament all the queens of Daśaratha like cows separated from their calves and rail at Daśaratha:

कौल्यार्यो वत्सायुक्तो जनन्यां वर्तते सदा।
तैव वर्ततेस्तस्मातु जन्मप्रभृति राधवः।
न कुदय्तपःश्वाप्तोपदी कीर्णीयानि वर्जयन्।
कुद्रानु प्रसावयानि सर्वंच स इलोच्च प्रवस्यत।
अबुद्धवं नो राजा जीवलोकं चर्म्याम।
यो भृत सर्भलोकानां परित्यजति राजयम्।
इति सर्वो महिष्यस्ता चित्तविभाग्रे च धेनव।
परिमाणानुसुद्दर्चव सस्त्रं चापि चुक्रुणा।

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 20, 3-6.

The news of Rāma leaving for the forest to render his father truthful take the people of Ayodhyā almost by storm and dismay. Their deep grief is only matched by their wonder that there could be
one, a prince, who had known the highest pinnacle of prosperity, suddenly and willingly accepting to go almost as a rustic into the forest, completely giving up even creature comforts. All this was due to the fact that by his great qualities, Rāma churned the hearts of the people of Ayodhya as it were:

When the citizens of Ayodhya witness Rāma going on foot to meet Dvārakā, their hearts sink and they shed tears Rāma, who had tasted the highest prosperity (artha), who had himself provided the noblest love, freely giving all his affection to all (kāma), does not, naturally, out of his regard for dharma, want his father to act untruthfully. How can there be a banishment of a son even if he completely lacked in good qualities, and how much more this tragedy that Rāma, who by his character and behaviour won over the entire world, is to be allowed to go, Rāma, devoid of cruelty, abundant in compassion, lofty in learning, worthy in character, wondrous in continence, embodiment of patience, bejewelled as it were by these six noble qualities and naturally, the loveliest of mortals

It is the inordinate regard, love and affection for Rāma that make the people of Ayodhya decide on following him wherever he went, leaving their hearths and homes. ‘The entire world is struck as it were by this blow to the prince like the flower-and fruit-laden tree withering by its roots cut. Our Rāma is the sustaining root of all men, the essence of dharma, the brilliance of lustre, all the other people are only the flowers, fruit, leaves and branches of this noble tree that is Rāma. Therefore, we should all, like Lakshmana, imme-
diately with our families follow him wherever he goes, abandoning the pleasure gardens, smiling fields, inviting homes, as our sorrow and joy is completely bound up with that of Rāma, who is the one example of dharma, and him we shall follow:

पीड्या पीडितं सर्वं जनदशय जगत्येते:।
मूलस्येवोपाधे बुकः पुपपकोपः।।
मूलं होष मनुष्याणाम धर्मसारो महाभूतिः।
पुष्पं फलं च परं च शाखास्त्वायतं ज्ञानः।।
ते लक्षणं इव एवं सन्तत्यं सहवाच्च:।
गच्छतंमनुगच्छामो येन गच्छति राघवं:।
उज्जानानि परित्यज्य क्षेत्राणि च मुह्याणि च।
एकंकसुखा राममनुगच्छाम धार्मिकम्।।

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 33, 15-17

Daśaratha also sadly consoles himself in the thought that even if he had wanted, he could not have stopped Rāma from such a dhārmik attitude as fulfilling a truthful utterance. ‘Oh my child! scion of the Raghu family! you are so completely saturated in dharma, with your mind ever on it that it is not possible to turn your mind away from your purpose:—

न हि सत्यात्मनस्तता धर्मभिमनसस्तवः।
उत्तिष्ठतापि बुद्धिः सक्यते रघुराजवः।।

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 34, 32

Vasishṭha himself addresses Kaikeyī and tells her that Rāma, wedded to dharma, is so great, that nothing could exist without him. ‘That can never be a kingdom where Rāma is not the king and that cannot be a forest any more but would immediately become a kingdom where Rāma stays. Oh Kaikeyī! you would personally see for yourself how even animals, wild beasts, birds, even trees and creepers, would go along with Rāma wherever he goes:

न हि तद्भविता राष्ट्रः यत्र रामो न भूपति:।
तत्तनं भविता राष्ट्रः यत्र रामो निवसत्यात्।।
द्रश्यस्यदैव क्रृष्णीयम पुष्पव्यमलग्निजानुः।
गच्छत: सह सर्वेण पादपास्य तद्वपवारं।।

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 37, 29, 33
The citizens of Ayodhya are so drawn by the great qualities of Rāma that made him their beloved that they plead with Sumantra and implore him to go slow to give them a chance to see Rāma. 'Hold the reins O charioteer! and move slowly and very slowly. Let us have a last look at Rāma's face which would soon become impossible as we can gaze on it no more.'

Rāmāyana 2, 40, 22

The more Rāma strove for dharma and on that account wanted to leave, all the more his subjects wanted him and him alone to be their lord.

Ramayana, 2, 45, 11

All the more pitiable is the attitude of the most aged and most learned Brāhmanas of Ayodhya, who had reached the perfection of knowledge, performed great sacrifices, realised the Almighty as the immanent spirit of the universe, with their minds on that eternal Power of the universe, free from all desires, and the very embodiment of dharma, who nevertheless were drawn towards Rāma more than the most passionate householders hugging to the bonds of family life. By his great qualities, it almost looked as if Rāma drew them all unto himself. Their eyes filled with tears, their attitude one of despair, advanced in years, those Brāhmanas, diverse in their attainments, old in age and ripe in knowledge and dazzling in their lustre born of tapasya, with their heads shaking because of their age, unable to keep pace with Rāma's chariot, even from a little distance, called on even the horses to show a proof of their high breed by turning back, stopping their course and cooperating in the best manner possible to help them to retain Rāma. Rāma feels so touched by their attitude that he at once jumps from the chariot, falls at their feet and continues his march on foot accompanied by Sitā and Lakshmana. Rāma, being the highest in character and the noblest in compassion, would not continue his journey by chariot, but walks along as the sacred Brāh-
These learned Brähmanaṣ address Rāma and tell him that the entire population of Brähmanaṣ of Ayodhyā was following him so dear to saintly ones. ‘On our shoulders are the fires, tretā, āhavaniya and dakṣiṇa that we are carrying and they are also following you. Look here! these are our umbrellas, white like the autumnal cloud, obtained on our completion of the vājapeya sacrifice. We cannot refrain from holding these to protect you from the fierce rays of the sun as you are without an umbrella to shelter you. Oh our child! our mind that ever follows the mantras of the Vedas is now set to follow you to the forest itself. The Vedas that are our only wealth are ever in our mind. We cannot bear your separation.
of Bhavabhūti, that he presents a prominent picture of it in his Mahā
vracharita Yudhājīt, the maternal uncle of Bharata, requested by
Rāma not to follow him, replies, ‘I am not the only one that follows
you. All the people, young and old, high and low, are all after you
(Fig 58). Do you not see this? These great and learned Brāhmaṇas
of Ayodhya, with their sacrificial ovens on their shoulders, and with
their umbrellas obtained by the performance of the vajapeya yajna,
are trying to reach you to shade you from the sun, followed by troops
of their wives, also holding sacrificial ovens, with their cows that
provide the ayya for havana, marching ahead of them, and it is indeed
wonderful that even these Brāhmaṇas so old and feeble are running
as it were to keep pace

Mahavracharita 4

Vasishtha’s remark to Kaikeyī is that even animals and birds,
trees and creepers, would hasten to go ahead of him wherever he
went, so highly valued was this beloved prince of sterling character,

Ramayana 2, 37, 33

Jatāyu, the aged lord of eagles, has such a regard for the excel-
 lent qualities of Rāma that, hearing the wail of Sītā as she is carried
away by Rāvana, he stops the demon and, undaunted by his fierce
appearance, challenges him to fight Rāma, he says, is the ruler of
the entire world, equal in might to Indra and Varuna, worthy son of
Dāsaratha, ever intent on promoting the welfare of the world, and
Sītā is the reputed worthy spouse of one so great And her, you are
intent on carrying away How can a king like you who should uphold
righteousness be outrageous towards another’s spouse? You dare
not carry her away by force in my presence, and it shall not be so
easy for you either, when I give you a battle I am aged and unarmed,
though you are youthful, panoplied, armed with bow and arrows and
mounted on chariot. Yet it will not be an easy task for you to carry away the Vaideha princess:

राजा सर्वस्य लोकस्य महेन्द्रवस्तुः।
लोकानं च हिंदु कुछो रामो बतर्सामघः॥
तस्येऽया लोकनायकस्य धर्मपत्नी वस्तिर्वनी।
सीता नाम बरारोहा यानं तवं हरूमिहेन्न्यसि ॥
कर्ण राजा स्वतः वम रुदराष्टानु रामाध्वेत।

This threat of Jaṭāyu, aware of the reality of his age and infirmity but yet undaunted, as given by Vālmiki, is almost ignored and the noble bird is made a real hero in his spirited fight (Fig 59) given at length by Kumāradāsa. Like the garuḍānila or the fierce blast of the fluttering wings of Garuḍa, the powerful blasts of the wings of the lord of eagles, strong and swift, averted and scattered the weapons on Rāvana, so as to be badly hurt by his own racing missiles:

अथ खरंगवर्षसमीरो ग्रजवल्लबनियतितपतिते।
अथ निर्जीरलिपितिकितिर्योदेशूः क्रमह्ययत संयति रावणः॥

Rāma on his part admires the sacrificing spirit of a mere bird that gave up his life to save Sītā. ‘Lakshmana! says Rāma, this lord of birds gave up even the overlordship of the birds and sacrificed his life for my sake. So even among the lower order of beings, like animals and birds, there are the saintly ones, ethical in action, heroic, protective. I grieve not even for the loss of Sītā so much as the sad pass of this eagle in his effort to help me (Fig. 60) I have to honour him as my own father of great renown. I would cremate this lord of eagles placing him on the funeral pyre,
And now Rāma, in his highest and noblest emotional grandeur, rose to celestial heights, and by an asseveration raised the dead eagle to the highest heavenly abodes. Rāma exclaims 'Go Oh! lord of eagles! go to those the noblest of heavens, I vouchsafe for you, the heaven for the performers of the highest sacrifices with sacred fires lit, of the heroes that have braved the battle never to turn back, of those who gave away vast tracts as gifts, go to these Oh! great in might! your funeral rites are duly done by me!' And these Rāma did with offerings and utterance of sacred texts leading the forefathers to heaven, and repairing to the river Godāvarī, offered sacred ablutions of water for the lord of the eagles, in accordance with the enjoined mode of rites (Fig 61).

That Rāma and Lakshmana lovingly performed the cremation and obsequies of so devoted a bird as Jatāyu that offered his own life to prevent Rāvana carrying away Sītā is not so great a wonder as Rāma's
magnanimity in doing the caemation (dharma samskāra) for the very demon that was attempting to gobble them up both, whom after cutting both his arms and rendering helpless, at his request, to enable him to cast of the demoniac form born of sage Sthūlaśinas’ curse and to help resume his original divine form, he gathered faggots and helped by Lakshmana lit the funeral fire (Fig. 62):

एवमुक्तः तु ती बीरी कवित्रेव नरेश्वरी।
शिरिदेवरामायण पार्वके विषार्जयः।
लक्ष्मणश्च महोदकामिर्जलिताभि: समंततः।
स्वतामायाययायासा प्रज्वाल सर्वम्॥
तत्तत्तिचताया वेगेन भास्वरे विगमामवः।
उत्पातस्य संहिष्टः: सर्वप्रत्ययःभूमण:॥
विमाने भास्वरे तिष्ठनु हंसयुक्ते यज्ञार्थके।
परमा च महातेजः दिशो दश विराजयम्॥
सोश्चतिर्विपततो रामं कबन्धो वाच्यमप्रवीचः।

Rāmāyāṇa 3, 72, 1-2, 5-6

Rāma truly is the beloved one of even his enemies as Garuḍa put it:

सबे राघव धर्मं रज्जुणामपि वत्सल।

Rāmāyāṇa 6, 5, 56

and no wonder he cremates even a demon his foe.

Guha’s estimate of Rāma is that he is the immediate cause for the realisation of the highest purushārthas. By the grace of Rāma, I expect in this world the highest good in the form of fame and would obtain a vast treasure of dharma and unbounded artha and kāma. prosperity and love. Sumantra despairs that such continence as in Rāma could not bear fruit and is depressed by the calamity that had overtaken him. Yet, he feels that this very life in exile would as it were win Rāma the highest heaven as the fruit of dharma. This is very much like what Lakshmana feels and expresses in another context that though Rāma had served so assiduously dharma all his life had only a reward of suffering:

न मन्ये प्रायाणमेवंसित स्ववीते वा फलोदयः।
मादेवार्जयोवपि त्वां वेद्यसनमागलम्

Rāmāyāṇa 2, 52, 17
When Śatrughna notices Mantharā in the palace moving about adorned in the golden ornaments provided her as reward for her churning Kaikeyi’s mind against Rāma, he is so enraged at her very sight, that, in a moment of fury and mad with sorrow for all that had happened, of which she was the root cause, catches her by her braid and is about the severe her head, when Bharata stops him and tells him how inappropriate it would be to manhandle her ‘I would even kill this sinful Kaikeyī, who has acted so wickedly, if only it were not that Rāma would despise me as the murderer of a mother. If only he comes to know that this hunch-back has been killed by you, Rāma, who is the very embodiment of dharma, would certainly neither speak to you nor to me nor allow us even his presence

ह्यामहृदिः पापा कृपेये हृदंशारिजीम्
यदि मा धारिनी रामी नातुरेव यातिषुपवतवरः
इत्यादिः हुला कुणजा यदि जणाति राजन
tः च मा च हि धर्मात्मा नासिनादिव्यते भूतगुरु

Rāmāyana 2, 78, 22-23

Bharata describes Rāma to Vaśishtha and compares him to Dilīpa and Nahusha and categorically tells him that he alone could run the kingdom

चतुः प्रेषितव धर्मात्मा विद्वीपनुजोपायम्
तत्पुष्पवेत्रं कुस्मो राज्य दसरसो यथा

Rāmāyana, 2, 32, 13

And in wonder Guha describes Rāma’s attitude of dharma to Bharata ‘Whatever we brought for Rāma, he would not even touch, as he felt keenly that as a Kshatриya he could only give and never take Thus having partaken of mere water brought by Lakshmana, Rāma with Sitā spent a night of starvation

रामस्यामवहारायं वु चौपथ्यत मया
तत्सर्वं प्रतिमुनासीम तत्प्राप्तम
न वु तत्सर्वप्राप्तं शान्तत्पवस्यर्गम
न हुस्मानि भ्रात्रायं सवे देय तु संवेदां
हति लेख बय राजानुनासम्या महात्मना
वहमणो गमिता पीतवा बारिमहात्मना
वीपवात्स तदवागाछेदव सदूष्टव सय

Rāmāyana 2, 87, 14-17

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That is why Guha observes that it is by great penance and the performance of difficult sacrifices that Daśaratha could obtain a son like Rāma like unto him in great qualities and so worthy:

महत तपस्स लव्हो विविभेष्ठ परिप्रेमः १
पको द्वाररथस्य पुत्रः सपूष्यलक्षणः २

Rāmāyaṇa 2, 86, 12.

One of the noblest traits of Rāma is his anxiety to forget and forgive any hardship he may have experienced through any. When Daśaratha along with celestials appears before him after his victory in Lāṅkā, when Sītā enters the fire, amazed at the spirit of his son born to him by celestial blessings and of whom he was so proud (Fig. 63 and 64) Rāma requests him in all humility, not for any personal favour, but remembering an obscure incident in Ayodhyā how Daśaratha had disowned both Kaikeyī and Bharata, reminds him of it, and requests him to very kindly withdraw that terrible oath, by which he cut off both Kaikeyī and Bharata from himself, making it impossible for her to escape the greatest sin she had committed and rendering the offerings of Bharata to the father and forefathers ineffective, ushering on him a great sin in spite of the noble character that he bore:

इति बृहार्ण राजान रामो प्राजलिंग्रवर्तत १
कु श प्रसादं धर्मं कैकिये भरतस्य च ॥
सपूष्यं स्वामिति श्रद्धा कैकिये त्वया ॥
स शापः कैकिये चोरः सपूष्यो न स्पृश्वेन्द्रः ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 6, 122, 24-25.

Rāma’s action was always a pointer to the pathway of dharma for all who would follow. That is why Hanumān appreciates Sītā’s kindly attitude towards the rākṣasīs. ‘You are indeed the worthy wife of Rāma.

गुत्ता रामस्य भवति धर्मपत्नी यशस्विनी ।

Rāmāyaṇa 6, 116, 46

Rāma is so aware of the sweet nature of Sītā and soft, kindly utterance in unison with her compassionate heart, that in his separation from her, he recalls her words dropping like nectar from her lips, pleasing to the ear, surpassing the taste of grapes, softer by far
than butter and pregnant with meaning:

Sundararāmāyana 9, 22

Bharadvāja, while expressing his joy and appreciating Rāma's victorious return from Laṅkā, still cannot but recall the difficult manner in which Rāma spent his life in the forest, with his mind intent on dharma alone and nothing else, wearing coarse bark garments, entering the darkness of the wood with a delicate woman in his group of three, abandoning a great empire, walking on foot, giving up entirely everything, totally discarding every kind of earthly enjoyment and intent only on fulfilling the word of his father, like a lustrous celestial fallen on the earth from heaven, when he could only excite his compassion and admiration.

Rāmāyana 6, 127, 5-6

It does not stop only with this: Rāma was accompanied by a woman, his wife, who formed the third in the company, strīṇāyam chyutam rājyāt dharmakāmam, as Bharadvaja puts it, unmindful of the empire he had renounced, which was rightfully his, only for the sake of the values rooted in dharma that he loved so well. It is even so that Sītā, whose feet could purify Bharata's locks as they her feet, both so holy, fully conscious of the innocence and goodness of Sītā, was abandoned by Rāma, but only after suggestively proclaiming to the world his complete confidence in her immaculate character, by making Lakshmana, a witness of the wonder of agnpraveṣa of Sītā, adbhutar upayak as Bhavabhūti describes it, leave her in the forest near Valmiki's penance grove, and even more, by having an image of Sītā placed beside him, as the presence of the consort was essential to perform the Aṣvamedha he undertook to expiate the sin of slaying Rāvana, a Brahmarākshasa well read in the Vedas. Kālidāsa puts it most effectively when he says that Sītā could endure the unbearab
grief of separation from Rāma only because she could have the mind of Rāma so devoted to her revealed in the news she could gather that having abandoned her, and could perform sacrifices only with a wife beside him, would never take a wife again, Sītā being his one and only beloved in whom he had full confidence, and could only have her image placed beside him for satisfying the need of sacrificial ritual:

सीता हिल्वा दशामुखरिपुरनोपवेष्ये वदन्यां
तस्या एव प्रतिकृतिसङ्को वत्तवनाज्ञाहार।
वृत्तातन्त्र श्रवणविशयप्राप्तिना तेन भर्तुः
सा दुर्वा रेक्षणपरित्यागदुःख सिखेते॥

Raghuvela 14, 87.

That is why the remark of Kālidāsa that Rāma burst into tears like the moon of the Pausha month shedding dew. After all it was only to avoid calumny and any evil in the realm with an ill-understood incident as an excuse for it in a land that he was to rule justly by setting an example that he sent her out of his abode, but from his heart, where she had an eternal adored place, he never did abandon her:

वशूष रामः सहस्रा समाप्पस्तुपारबुन्तवः सहस्वचन्द्रः।
कौलीनभिरेन श्रुतहानिनिर्वा न तेन बैठेदुसुका मनस्तः॥

Raghuvela 14, 84

For Kālidāsa, to compare Bharata’s head, covered with jatās, come in contact with the lotus feet of Sītā, as he bowed to her on Rāma’s return from Lanka, by remarking that mutually one purified the other, as the feet were distinguished by their spurning the advances of Rāvanaand the matted locks by their close simulation in ascetic glory Rāma’s own were equally distinguished:

लक्ष्म्वरप्रणालितध्वजासंग्रहत्ता तत्पदारविन्द्युगलं जनकायमाया।
वेष्ठाकुरोबज्जिलं च विरोध्य साम्यरवीर्यप्राप्तनमधुरूलं समेतः॥

Raghuvela 13, 78

Rāma indeed was an example in dharma for all and equally also for Bharata. He was not only wearing ascetic locks like Rāma but was also a dharmātma, the very picture of dharma. That is why Vālmīki describes Bharata as a delicately nurtured prince in coarse
bark garments and antelope skin covering, so devoted to dharma that even his citizens would not deign to enjoy anything that Bharata himself had given up, Bharata, who knew dharma so well and looked the very embodiment of dharma

As Rāma set an example for everyone in the attitude to be pursued towards dharma, the people in his kingdom individually followed the example set. They were joyous because they trod the right path. Everyone was happy. Everyone was attuned to dharma. Observing the conduct of Rāma, they could never mutually in the least act to the detriment of any. Everywhere everyone spoke in terms of Rāma and Rāma alone, the name of Rāma pronounced over and over again in every context. When Rāma ruled the earth the entire expanse of his empire was, at it were, ringing with the name of Rāma

The people naturally prayed that Rāma should live long and rule the empire following the code of dharma as he did

It is no wonder that Rāma could even call the attention of his ministers to any error of judgement and appreciate even a dog that could speak out the path of dharma

It is no wonder therefore that Kshemendra puts it in the mouth
of the rishis their appreciation of Rāma’s devotion to dharma and his threefold manifestation in this regard. The rishis on a visit to Rāma in Ayodhyā when he ruled the earth exclaim in joy: ‘Your bow is to protect the three worlds. Your vast treasury is for the proper performance of sacrifice. Your very existence and life is for setting an example to even saintly men by your own example. How wonderfully praiseworthy are these three in you?'

चनुर्वैवेद्यस्वार्थं गुरुपालनस्मितं धनम् ।
जीवितं सारुचिमाधि श्लायं तव व्रतम् ॥

Rāmāyaṇamañjarī 8, 14.

It is indeed interesting that Vālmīki is echoed by Kumāradāsa who pictures Rāma unflinching, like the tremorless earth protecting the entire expanse with that supreme compassion that considered the welfare of others as his own prosperity,

रामोऽरक्तप्रहितस्वीयन्त: दयायं स्वत्वार्थं भवेन्मूलितस्य ततस्मस्तां समस्ताम् ।

Jānakīharaṇa 20, 60.

It is no wonder then that when Lakshmana pronounced the oath that if Rāma was a true dharmātmā, the arrow should hit the unassailable son of Ravaṇa, Indrajit, and instantly kill him, it did so:

यहान्तमा सत्यसत्यमाश्च रामो दाचरन्ययद्यः ।
पीखेवचाप्रतिहतः शारीरं जहि रावणिम् ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 6, 91, 73

It is no wonder again that Viśvāmitra could assure Daśaratha that he himself, Vaśisṭha and the other sages in deep penance that had realised the highest Truth, knew the real nature of Rāma as a mahātmā and satyaparākrama:

अहं वेषि महात्मां रामं सत्यपराक्मम् ।
विश्वामित्रो महातेजः वे भेमे तपसि स्थिता: ॥

Rāmāyaṇa 1, 19, 14-15.

In the Dhyānaśloka, at the commencement of the study of the Rāmāyaṇa everyday, Rāma is pictured as seated under the kalpa tree in virāsana accompanied by Sītā, Lakshmana and other brāthers,
Vibhūshana, Sugrīva, Angada, Jāmbavān and others with his hand in churning, expounding the highest dharma and philosophy, as Hanumān reads out the text in front of him and expounding it to the highest and noblest of sages like Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Agastyā and the others whom he revered but even whom he could enlighten in the nuances of the highest dharma.

There are paintings and sculptures illustrating this aspect of Rama from the Himālaya to Cape Camorin (Fig 65 and 66)

The Rāmayana is the epic given by Vālmiki. The compassionate sage, whose grief at the death of the Krauncha bird at the hands of a cruel hunter who shot one of a loving pair spurt into poetry (Fig 67),

and enabled him to create a poetic panacea for all the ills of the world, to alleviate human misery by indicating the ethical way of life. It is this that has built up the character of every Indian from his childhood by constant rumination on his noble qualities and developing of an emulative spirit to follow his example.

Raghuvaṁśa 14, 70

and it is a mental picture of his noble traits that have in proper focus remained ever before the gaze of one and all in a country that could have produced such a paragon of virtue (Fig 68 and 69)

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