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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

RIDDLES of the Ramayana, like those of the Mahabharata are many and varied, and what is more, they are likely to remain so for ever. Attempting their solution or trying to interpret them is an ideal pastime for scholars and reasearch students. Sardar M. V. Kibe places before us in the following pages, his solution of one of the many riddles of the Ramayana : the identification of Lanka.

Popular belief is so strong that it is almost axiomatic to associate the island fortress of Ravana with modern Ceylon. Few scholars have differed from the belief and among themselves, differed very widely. It is not surprising to find that Australia, Sumatra, the Maldivs and a place in Assam have been mentioned as possible sites of the Lanka of the Ramayana.

As against all these, Sardar Kibe's stand is entirely different. He has proved with convincing arguments that the Lanka of Ravana was not beyond the southern tip of the Indian peninsula, but on the contrary, in the heart of Hindustan near the Amarakantaka peak in the Central Provinces of to-day. His arguments are based on data marshalled out from the Sanskrit text of Valmiki Ramayana. Other scholars have expressed the same view independently and produced additional evidence.*

* (i) Ghose J. C.: *Annals BORI.* XIX, 84-6;
Ind. Hist. Q. V. 355-56;
New Ind. Anti. I. 463;
(ii) Hiralal: *Jha. Comm. Vol.* 151-63;
(iii) Ramdas G.: *Ind. Hist.* Q. IV. 339-46;
(iv) Iyer T. P.: *Ramayana and Lanka*, Bangalore 1940.

But the location of Lanka is not the only riddle from the epic history—Ramayana is an *Itihasa* too. Apart from the identification of many place names, there are other points equally knotty and perplexing. Take for instance, the reference to Dasaratha's dead* body kept in oil-bath till the return of Bharata. This is not known to be a custom among the Aryan people.

Studying the epic from a sociological point of view, with a critical eye, some striking questions arise : Why could not Urmila accompany Lakshmana when Sita could follow Rama ? What was Rama's object in subjecting Sita to the fire ordeal ? How could she be exiled later, on an extremely flimsy pretext ? Why was it necessary for the Chief of the State to kill in person an offender (Sambooka) without any trial ?

We know how very lonely Sita felt during her 14 years of exile. Urmila would have made an excellent company and the two couples would have been mutually happy and helpful. Instead, Urmila had to suffer the lot of a deserted wife for 14 long years for no fault of hers. Why ? There is no satisfactory answer to the simple query. Similarly, Sita's ordeal and her exile : Bhavabhuti is at pains to defend his hero's action. In the wide expanse and divergent views of the Hindu Dharma Shastra, there is no support for these actions. Nor is there any precedent for them. And yet, Rama is the ideal hero and husband and *Ramarajya* the ideal state. It would be no easy task to find support for Rama's assertion :

देशे देशे कलत्राणि देशे देशे च बान्धवाः

* तैलद्रोण्यां तदामात्याः संवेश्य जगतीपतिम् II. 66-14.

Even the dead body of the Brahmin's son (Sambooka episode) was similarly kept in oil-bath—VII—75-2.

तं देशं न तु जानामि यत्र भ्राता सहोदरः ॥ VI-101-15

The problem of identifying geographical names is more perplexing and complicated. Although we take it for granted that the Rama story has taken place in India, many Far Eastern countries have the same boast. Surely, it could not have been acted in all these places! Which of them is the correct place of the birth of Ramayana ? Ayodhya, the capital of Rama and his predecessors, is situated in India and there is no other place bearing the same name; its location likewise is not disputed. But when we find *Ayuthia* prominently shown near Bangkok in Siam, and when we further learn the line of kings of that country took Rama as a title, we get more and more confused. Ayuthia was a former capital of Siamese monarchs before Bangkok was finally chosen and we know that in recent times there was a king styled as Rama VI in that country.

Nearer home in India, the confusing identification becomes more confused. Adjoining the ruins of Vijayanagara (Hampi) we are shown Kishkindha, Pampa and Matanga parvata. Sardar Kibe has shown these places to be in the Central Provinces. On the Indo-Afghan border there are places associated with Rama, Sita and many leading characters of the Ramayana. Why, in every part of our Indian continent, there are places having some connection or other with the Rama legend. A map of India and the adjoining countries, showing places associated with Rama saga is bound to be highly instructive.

In Java too, the Ramayana is supposed to be enacted. The place names mentioned in the Ramayana are to be found in Java to-day. The surprising aspect is not the wide-spread currency of the story, but its continuation in

spite of Budhhistic and later Islamic influence there. The climax however seems to be in the introduction of Moslem mythological characters into one of the Javanese versions of the Ramayana. $

The deep, wide and extensive penetration of the Rama saga into the very life of the people here in India as well as elsewhere in the East Indies, must indeed be the greatest marvel of cultural achievement. Admittedly, the epic as we have it, is modern in the sense that it is post-Budhha. In other words, the story gained its present popularity within 20 centuries. For oral propagation, this must constitute a world-record.

Various origins of the Ramayana have been suggested to show that the Rama story does not belong to India. According to A. Weber,* it was an adaptation of Homer's *Iliad.* Egyptian origin of the story is proposed by Malladi Vankat Ratnam @ in his two bulky volumes and taking a cue from him, Mr. B. V. Jadhav, wrote a series of articles in Marathi questioning the Aryan character of Rama. Semitic origin (meaning *Persian* !) is suggested by Dr. S. V. Ketkar £ of the Marathi *Dnyanakosha* fame. Its symbolic significance is also hinted at some critics%. Telang, Jacobi, Winternitz‡ and others have shown that the Homeric poems have had no influence on Valmiki's composition.

$ *Hikaiat Seri Rama* (*Indian influences on the Literature of Java and Bali*).

* *Uber das Ramayana* (1870) its English translation- *The Ramayana* (by D C. Boyd) London 1873.

@ *Rama, the Greatest Pharaoh of Egypt*, 2 vols. Rajahmundry 1934.

£ *Prachina Maharashtra* (Marathi) Poona 1935; Chaps. 24-25. (Resume in English)

% Y. Subbarao : *Sri Ramayananada Anatarartha* or *Mokshamarga Pradipike* (Kanarese) 1932.

‡ Telang: *Ind. Ant.* II, 143-7; III, 123; H. Jacobi: *Das Ramayana;* Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, I. pp. 514-5.

Analysing the influence of the Ramayana, it is noticed that Hindustan (north of the Vindhyas) is under a firmer and deeper grip of the story than the Deccan. Ram Lila as observed by the Northerners – extending to 10 days ending with Dasara – is not known as such any where South of the Narmada. In the North too, to the West in the Punjab and beyond, the influence is stronger than what it is to the East in Bengal and Assam. Knowing as we do the immense popularity of the *Tulsi Ramayana* and its household use in the Hindi speaking regions, we don't take the Central area into consideration for this comparative study. The curious fact about the Punjab is the more striking because there was Nanak's militant Sikhism to wean away a section of the populace from Valmiki's epic. Situated on the door-step of India the Punjab had to bear the first onslaughts of many an invasion from the North-West. Is the intense circulation of the Rama legend in the land of the five rivers due to its peculiar strategic position? Or to the heroic element in the story ? Perhaps to both !

A striking feature of the form of popularity of the Rama saga in the Punjab is to be seen in the proper names ending in Rama. It is customary to take Rama to represent the figure 3 in Sanskrit literature, there being only three such heroes : Bhargava (Parasu), Raghava (Dasharathi) and Yadava (Bala). The varieties of compound names formed with Rama in the Punjab is simply astounding. There are the twelve months of the Hindu lunar calendar to serve as prefixes of Rama thus : Chet, Baisakh, Jeth... ...and so on. Queer combinations like Masti-Rama, Chuha-(mouse ?) Rama, Chhela-(the last ?) Rama, are also found all over the Punjab. In the South too, amongst the Dravidians, many varieties of Rama, describing a particular attribute of the hero or giving one of his many epithets in a long Sanskrit compound are to be found.

Yet in the whole range of a thousand names of Vishnu there is only one Rama, although more than 108 epithets of Rama for purposes of *japa*, have been composed. The outstanding instance of great devotion to Rama and his story from amongst the Marathi speaking people is the composition of 108 Ramayanas by Moropant. His are the acrobatic feats of literary composition: he even composes a Ramayana wherein no labials are used at all !

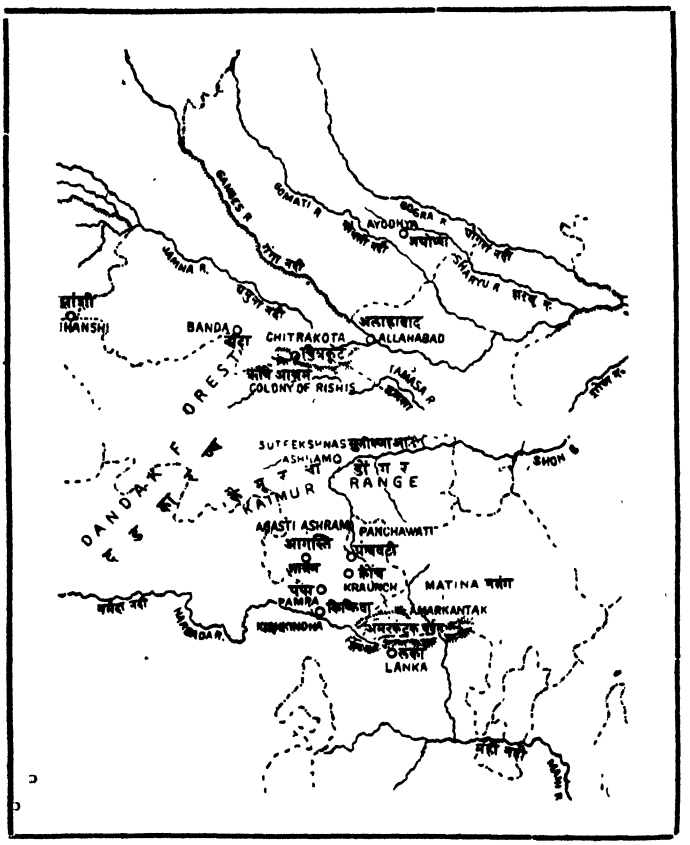
In the scholarly world, the hold of the Rama story can be judged by having a cursory glance at the *Bibliography of the Ramayana* ably compiled by Mr. N. A. Gore. Here's a complete and almost exhaustive list of texts, translations, books and articles involving research about the epic. Mr. Gore's attention is restricted more or less to English and two other European languages, and there are a few entries of works in some Indian languages, Extending the scope of his work further to *all* languages Asiatic, European and others, the compilation would swell to many times its present size. For the very reason, it is worth trying and instead of bringing out another edition of the *Bibliography*, Mr. Gore would do well to concentrate on this enlarged version. That indeed would prove convincingly, that the epic history of Rama, whatever its origin, has had an overwhelmingly wide circulation. Very likely it would prove that Ramayana is the best-seller of the world's literature, the best-seller for all ages. The truth of the prediction by the Creator-in-carnate, given in the beginning of Valmiki's text—

यावत्स्थास्यन्ति गिरयः सरितश्च महीतले

तावद्रामायणकथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति ॥ I-2-36

would then be realised fully, to the letter and the spirit.

30th Dec. 1947. *S. R. T.*



An Outline Map showing Lanka in the Central Provinces.

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LANKA DISCOVERED

THE toughest riddle in the Ramayana is the location of Ravana's capital. Materials in Valmiki's work have wrongly been thought not sufficient to identify it. Tradition for over two thousand years places it in the sea beyond the southern-most limits of India. Modern scholars, however, have declined to accept it. Mr. Vaidya, who has creditably explained many riddles of the Ramayana,* has only supported the present location identical with Ceylon, by means of imperfect analogies. Recent opinion about Rama's journey to the south and his conquest of Lanka is that it is a nature myth.§ Dr. Jacobi locates it in Assam.

Although the geographical data in the Ramayana are but incidentally given and scanty, there is ample evidence in it to locate sites of Kishkindha and Lanka, the capitals of Sugriva and Ravana, respectively. The earlier part of the Ramayana is admitted to be historical and there is little difficulty in identifying Rama's Ayodhya and Chitrakuta with the modern places bearing those names.

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* C. V. Vaidya ; *The Riddle of the Ramayana*, Bombay

§ *Imp. Gaz.* Vol. I. p. 419

In the Kishkindha Kanda, Sugriva's capital of that name is made the centre for enumerating the countries in the four directions. The countries within the borders of India are more or less correctly named and described, but those beyond are imaginary. In this narration of the countries in each direction sufficient indication is given of the frontiers of India.

Sugriva assembled his vast army on the plain adjoining his capital, Kishkindha (IV–40). He then divided it into batches under the distinguished warriors for going to countries in the four directions for finding whereabouts of Sita. For their information and guidance he enumerated the countries to be found in each direction. He does not seem to have followed any method in naming them; he simply noted countries and remarkable places in each direction, regarding the place where he stood as the centre.

He began with the East. In this direction were to be met with the Ganges; the Jumna; a big mountain on or near its banks, probably Chitrakuta itself; the Sarayu; the Kausiki; the Saraswati; the Sindhu; the Sona; the Mahi and the Kalamahi– a river, the valley of which abounded in rich natural scenery; and the following countries: Brahmamala; Videha; Malava; Kasi; Kosala; Mahagrama; Pundra and Anga. Beyond these are the lands where silk-worms exist (probably Assam) and where there are silver mines (probably Burma) (IV–40– 19 to 24).

अधिगच्छ दिशां पूर्वां सशैलवनकाननाम् ।
तत्र सीतां च वैदेहीं निलयं रावणस्य च ॥ १९ ॥
मार्गध्वं गिरिदुर्गेषु वनेषु च नदीषु च ।
नदीं भागीरथीं रम्यां सरयूं कौशिकीं तथा ॥ २० ॥

कालिंदीं यमुनां रम्यां यामुनं च महागिरिम् ।
सरस्वतीं च सिन्धुं च शोणं मणिनिभोदकम् ॥ २१ ॥
महीं कालमहीं चापि शैलकाननशोभिताम् ।
ब्रह्ममालां विदेहांश्च मालवान्काशिकोसलान् ॥ २२ ॥
मागधांश्च महाग्रामान्पुंड्रांस्त्वंगांस्तथैव च ।
भूमिं च कोशकाराणां भूमिं च रजताकराम् ॥ २३ ॥
सर्वं च तद्विचेतव्यं मृगयाद्दिस्ततस्ततः ।
रामस्य दयितां भार्यां सीतां दशरथस्नुषाम् ॥ २४ ॥

Another leader was sent to the South. He was to search the Vindhya mountain; the Narmada; the Godavari; the Krishna; the Mekhala; Utkala and the cities in the Dasarna countries; the cities, Abravanti and Avanti; the countries Vidarbha; Rishtika; Mahishaka; Matsya; Kalinga; Kausika; Dandaka forest; the Godavari (another river of the same name as the one already enumerated but not the modern famous river of that name; probably the one on the banks of which Rama stayed at Panchavati); Andhra, Pundra (a country of this name is met with in the east also); Chola; Pandya and Kerala; the Ayomukha mountain; the Tamraparni and then the sea (IV-41-8 to 19):-

सहस्रशिरसं विन्ध्यं नानाद्रुमलतायुतम् ।
नर्मदां च नदीं रम्यां महोरगनिषेविताम्* ॥ ८ ॥
ततो गोदावरीं रम्यां कृष्णवेणीं महानदीम् ।
मेखलानुत्कलांश्चैव दशार्णनगराण्यपि ।
आब्रवन्तीमवन्तीं च सर्वमेवानुपश्यत ॥ ९ ॥

*नमोस्तु नर्मदे तुभ्यं त्राहि मां विषसर्पतः (खिल of ऋग्वेद)

विदर्भानृष्टिकांश्चैव रम्यान्माहीषकानपि।
तथा मत्स्यकलिङ्गांश्च कौशिकांश्च समन्ततः ॥ १० ॥

अन्वीक्ष्य दण्डकारण्यं सपर्वतनदीगुहम्।
नदीं गोदावरीं चैव सर्वमेवानुपश्यत ॥ ११ ॥

तथैवांध्रांश्च पुंड्रांश्च चोलान्पांड्यांश्च केरलान्।
अयोमुखश्च गन्तव्यः पर्वतो धातुमंडितः ॥ १२ ॥

ततस्तां आपगां दिव्यां प्रसन्नसलिलाशयाम्।
तत्र द्रक्ष्यथ कावेरीं विहृतामप्सरोगणैः ॥ १४ ॥

तस्यासीनं नगस्याग्रे मलयस्य महौजसः।
द्रक्ष्यथादित्यसंकाशमगस्त्यमृषिसत्तमम् ॥ १५ ॥

ततस्तेनाभ्यनुज्ञातः प्रसन्नेन महात्मना।
ताम्रपर्णीं ग्राहजुष्टां तरिष्यथ महानदीम् ॥ १६ ॥

* सा चन्दनवनैश्चित्रैः प्रच्छन्नद्वीपवारिणी।
कान्तेव युवती कान्तं समुद्रमवगाहते ॥ १७ ॥

ततो हेममयं दिव्यं मुक्तामणिविभूषितम्।
युक्तं कवाटं पांड्यानां गता द्रक्ष्यथ वानराः ॥ १८ ॥

ततः समुद्रमासाद्य संप्रधार्यार्थनिश्चयम्।
अगस्त्येनान्तरे तत्र सागरे विनिवेशितः ॥ १९ ॥

चित्रसानुमयः श्रीमान्महेन्द्रः पर्वतोत्तमः।

The third batch was sent to the West. The places and countries in this direction are thus enumerated:— Saurashtra; Balhika; Chandra Chitra and a little towards

* This praise of a small river at the end of the peninsula appears to be an interpolation by one of the editors who gave a South Indian topographical coloring to the epic.

the west, the sea. This last remark suggests that the countries mentioned here must have been in the north-west of the place of the narrator. (IV-42-6 to 10)

सुषेणप्रमुखा यूयं वैदेहीं परिमार्गथ ।
सौराष्ट्रान्सहबाह्लीकांश्चन्द्रचित्रांस्तथैव च ॥ ६ ॥
स्फीतान् जनपदान् रम्यान् विपुलानि पुराणि च
पुन्नागगहनं कृक्षिं बकुलोद्दालकाकुलम् ॥ ७ ॥
तथा केतकखंडांश्च मार्गध्वं हरिपुङ्गवाः ।
प्रत्यक्स्त्रोतोवहांश्चैव नद्यः शीतजलाः शिवाः ॥ ८ ॥
तापसानामरण्यानि कान्तारगिरयश्च ये ।
तत्रस्थलीर्मरुप्राया अत्युच्चशिशिराः शिलाः ॥ ९ ॥
गिरिजालवृतां दुर्गां मार्गित्वा पश्चिमां दिशम् ।
ततः पश्चिममागम्य समुद्रं द्रष्टुमर्हथ ॥ १० ॥

In this direction the junction of the Indus with the sea is also mentioned (*ibid* 15):—

सिन्धुसागरयोश्चैव सङ्गमे तत्र पर्वतः ।
महान्सोमगिरिर्नाम शतशृङ्गो महाद्रुमः ॥ १५ ॥

The last division of scouts was sent to the North. The most prominent feature of this direction is the existence of the Himalayas (IV-43-4).

दिशं ह्युदीचीं विक्रान्तहिमशैलवतंसिकाम् ।

The other countries and places are:—Mlechchha; Pulinda; Surasena; Prasthala; Bharata; Kuru; Madra; Kamboj; Yavana; the cities of Sakas; Varada and the Himalayas (IV-43-12,and 89).

तत्र म्लेच्छान्पुलिन्दांश्च शूरसेनांस्तथैव च ।
प्रस्थलान्भरतांश्चैव कुरूंश्च सह मद्रकैः ॥ ११ ॥

काम्बोजयवनांश्चैव शकानां पत्तनानि च ।
अन्वीक्ष्य वरदांश्चैव हिमवन्तं विचिन्वथ ॥ १२ ॥

Three objections have been put forward against the authenticity of these geographical passages. The first is that they give names of countries which look like modern ones. The second objection, as expressed by Mr. Vaidya, is that Dandakaranya and the Godavari are twice mentioned, once in the east and again in the south. (This is not to be found in all editions. In the edition from which I have quoted, Pundra is mentioned in two directions). The third objection, again put forth by Mr. Vaidya, is that Sugriva makes contradictory assertions as regards his knowledge of Ravana and his home. When Rama meets him for the first time, he says that he does not know anything about Ravana (IV-7-3).

न जाने निलयं तस्य सर्वथा पापरक्षसः ।
सामर्थ्यं विक्रमं वापि दौष्कुलेयस्य वा कुलम् ॥

But when he is giving directions to his followers, to those going towards the South, he indicates the abode of Ravana (IV-41):-

*यत्र देवैरवध्यस्य रावणस्य दुरात्मनः ।
राक्षसाधिपतेर्वासः श्रूयते वानरर्षभाः ॥

Against the first objection, it should be remembered that excepting perhaps the kernels of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata no reliable material of the history of India, as a whole, prior to the times of Buddha, is available. Therefore it cannot be positively said what the ancient names of countries were. In some cases old names may have been continued in later times. Their

*This stanza is not given in my edition.

having changed places, does not prove that they did not exist in ancient times. As regards the second objection, it should be borne in mind that it is not uncommon in continents colonised by foreign people to have the same names repeated.

As regards the last, the second stanza which is quoted by Mr. Vaidya himself, shows that therein Sugriva described what he had heard (श्रूयते) only. When he first saw Rama he might not have really known anything about Ravana. When he promised to help Rama, he must have made inquiries. His general, Hanuman, communicates to Lakshmana what knowledge of Ravana he had obtained from Vali (IV-35-16 to 18):—

अहत्वा तांश्च दुर्धर्षान्राक्षसान्कामरूपिणः ।
अशक्यं रावणं हन्तुं येन सा मैथिली हृता ॥ १६ ॥
ते न शक्या रणे हन्तुमसाहायेन लक्ष्मण ।
रावणः क्रूरकर्मा च सुग्रीवेण विशेषतः ॥ १७ ॥
एकमाख्यातवान्वाली स ह्यभिज्ञो हरीश्वरः ।
आगमस्तु न मे व्यक्तः श्रवात्तस्य ब्रवीम्यहम् ॥ १८ ॥

Moreover the Vanara race was scattered over a large part of India (IV-37) and Hanuman had travelled over a number of their colonies (IV-44-4):—

सासुराः सहगन्धर्वाः सनागनरदेवताः ।
विदिताः सर्वलोकास्ते ससागरधराधराः ॥ ४ ॥

The inference then is clear that Sugriva must have obtained his information from some such sources.

A glance at the map of India will show that the situation of Kishkindha, as indicated by the naming of the countries around it must be found in the north of the

Vindhya mountain, the west of the Jumna and the Ganges and south-west of the Chitrakuta, because Rama is said to have left it for going to the south and even if it was in the north-east of Kishkindha, it could be said to be in the east, as in the text above.

Moreover, this is exactly the place where the description of Rama's journey to that place from Chitrakuta* would lead one to locate it. On leaving that place Rama entered the Dandaka forest. There he came across a colony of Rishis which was situated in an inaccessible place (III-1). Then he entered the valley of a river (III-2). Here he saw a hermitage (III -4). He requested its owner to show him a suitable place for settling (III-4-33).

आवासं त्विहमिच्छामि प्रदिष्टमिह कानने ॥

The Rishi was about to die and so he directed Rama to go to another Rishi in the neighbourhood (3-5). Here there were a number of colonists who complained to Rama of the harassment to which they were subjected by the fierce Rakshasas (3-6). They described to him the extent to which their colonies, which were subjected to the harassment, had spread. (VIII-9-17).-

पंपानदीनिवासानामनुमन्दाकिनीमपि ।
चित्रकूटालयानां च क्रियते कदनं महत् ॥ १७ ॥

That is to say, that they were established on the area between the Pampa and the Mandakini rivers and

* It is noteworthy that in the उत्पत्ति प्रकरण of योगवासिष्ठ (Nirnaya Sagar, Bombay edition 1911, Vol. 1. p. 212, Adhyaya 36, Stanza 39) it is stated that the three peaks of this mountain चित्रकूट were inhabited by the Rakshasa guards at the Lanka. This apparently refers to the fact that it was within the sphere of the Lanka.

the Chitrakuta mountain. The three names describe the boundaries on the south, the east and the north (or the north-east) respectively. The boundary on the west was not fixed. It was lost in the forest. It will be remembered that in this direction no country is mentioned which is nearer to Kishkindha than Saurashtra. Forest is said to have existed in this direction (see IV-42-7 to 9). The Pampa, in the south, is the same river to which Rama came at the end of his journey. Beyond this was a colony of the Vanara race, as will be presently seen.

Being accompanied by the members of the colony, he went to the hermitage of Sutikshna (III-7). He stayed here for a night (III-8-1).

रामस्तु सहसौमित्रिः सुतीक्ष्णेनाभिपूजितः ।
परिणाम्य निशां तत्र प्रभाते प्रत्यबुध्यत ॥ १ ॥

He then wandered over different places in the fores and returned to the same place after ten years (III-11-27 & 28).

तत्र संवसतस्तस्य मुनीनामाश्रमेषु वै ।
रमतश्चानुकूल्येन ययुः संवत्सरा दश ॥ २७ ॥
परिसृत्य च धर्मज्ञो राघवः सह सीतया ।
सुतीक्ष्णस्याश्रमपदं पुनरेवाजगाम ह ॥ २८ ॥

Here he inquires after the place of Agasti (III-11-33):-

प्रसादार्थं भगवतः सानुजः सह सीतया ।
अगस्त्यमधिगच्छेयमभिवादयितुं मुनिम् ॥ ३६ ॥

He is told that the hermitage of Agasti's brother was 32 miles to the south from there and Agasti's hermitage eight miles further in its south. He is advised that he should halt at the former place for the night

and then proceed to the other place the next morning (III-11-39, 41 and 42):-

योजनान्याश्रमात्तात याहि चत्वारि वै ततः ।
दक्षिणेन महांश्छ्रीमानगस्त्यभ्रातुराश्रमः ॥ ३९ ॥
तत्रैकां रजनी व्युष्य प्रभाते राम गम्यताम् ॥ ४१ ॥
दक्षिणां दिशमास्थाय वनषंडस्य पार्श्वतः ॥
तत्रागस्त्याश्रमपदं गत्वा योजनमन्तरम् ॥ ४२ ॥

He goes to Agasti and asks him to show him a good place to live in (III-13-11):-

किंतु व्यादिश मे देशं सोदकं बहुकाननम् ।
यत्राश्रमपदं कृत्वा वसेयं निरतः सुखम् ॥ ११ ॥

He is pointed out a place 16 miles away on the banks of the Godavari – a place which was said to be not far away (III-13-13 20-21):-

इतो द्वियोजने तात बहुमूलफलोदकः ।
देशो बहुमृगः श्रीमान्पञ्चवट्याभिविश्रुतः ॥ १३
स देशः श्लाघनीयश्च नातिदूरे च राघव । २०
गोदावर्याः समीपे च मैथिली तत्र रंस्यते ॥ २१

Here Rama lived for nearly two years and from here his wife Sita was taken away by Ravana.

This Godavari was, probably, a stream, issuing from the Chitrakuta. In a cave in it, is shown a stream, which goes by the name of Godavari, which, however disappears within the cave. It is said to re-issue at some distance. This circumstance helps the proposition that Rama's abode on the Godavari, from which Sita was abducted, was not so far away as is made out by the current beliefs.

Rama had gone a-hunting at the time of her abduction. He had kept an old man to guard the hermitage. His name was Jatayu. He was found to have been almost killed by Ravana. On his return Rama learnt from the wounded guard the name of the abductor of his wife and the direction in which he had gone (III. 68–9, 10 and 16):–

सा हृता राक्षसेन्द्रेण रावणेन दुरात्मना ।
मायामास्थाय विपुलां वातदुर्दिनसंकुलाम् ॥ ९ ॥
परिक्लान्तस्य मे तात पक्षौ छित्त्वा निशाचरः ।
सीतामादाय वैदेहीं प्रयातो दक्षिणामुखः ॥ १० ॥
पुत्रो विश्रवसः साक्षाद् भ्राता वैश्रवणस्य च ॥ १६ ॥

Rama went in that direction — the south — in search of his wife (III–69–1 and 2):–

.....प्रस्थितौ राघवौ तदा ।
अवेक्षन्तौ वने सीतां जग्मतुः पश्चिमां दिशम् ॥ १ ॥
तां दिशं दक्षिणां गत्वा शरचापासिधारिणौ ।
अविप्रहतमैक्ष्वाकौ पन्थानं प्रतिपेदतुः ॥ २ ॥

Having gone six miles, he entered a forest by name Krauncha (III–69–5):–

ततः परं जनस्थानात् त्रिक्रोशं गम्य राघवौ ।
क्रौञ्चारण्यं विविशतुर्गहनं तौ महौजसौ ॥ ५ ॥

and on going six miles further, he entered a valley (III–69–8 and 10):—

ततः पूर्वेण तौ गत्वा त्रिक्रोशं भ्रातरौ तदा ।
क्रौञ्चारण्यमतिक्रम्य मतंगाश्रममन्तरे ॥ ८ ॥
ददृशाते गिरौ तत्र दरीं दशरथात्मजौ ।
पातालसमगंभीरां तमसा नित्यसंवृताम् ॥ १० ॥

It was midway between the forest and the farm of a Rishi called Matanga (III—69-8 *supra*). Here he killed a man who before dying told him to go to Sugriva, who lived on a hillock on the banks of a reservoir, named Pampa, which was on the farm of Matanga (III-73-10, 29, 31, 40 and 41):—

ततः पुष्करणीं वीरौ पंपा नाम गमिष्यथ ॥ १० ॥

ऋषेस्तस्य मतङ्गस्य निधानात्तच्च काननम् ।
मतंगवनमित्येव विश्रुतं रघुनन्दन ॥ २९ ॥

ऋष्यमूकस्तु पंपायाः पुरस्तात्पुष्पितद्रुमः ।
सुदुःखारोहणश्चैव शिशुनागाभिरक्षितः ॥ ३१ ॥

तस्या गुहायाः प्राग्द्वारे महांच्छीतोदको ह्रदः॥ ४० ॥

तस्यां वसति धर्मात्मा सुग्रीवः सह वानरैः ।
कदाचिच्छिखरे तस्य पर्वतस्यापि तिष्ठति ॥ ४१ ॥

Having camped for a day on the way he reached the western bank of Pampa (III-74-3):—

कृत्वा च शैलपृष्ठे तु तौ वासं रामलक्ष्मणौ ।
पंपायाः पश्चिमं तीरं राघवावुपतस्थतुः ॥ ३ ॥

Then he went to the hill on which Sugriva lived (IV—1-129):—

तावृष्यमूकस्य समीपचारी ।
चरन्ददर्शाद्भुतदर्शनीयौ ॥
शाखामृगाणामधिपस्तरस्वी ।
वितत्रसे नैव विचेष्टचेष्टम् ॥ १२९ ॥

Rama developed friendship with Sugriva, who gave him news of his wife, carried away by Ravana by that way (IV—6-9):—

अनुमानात्तु जानामि मैथिली सा न संशयः ।
ह्रियमाणा मया दृष्टा रक्षसा रौद्रकर्मणा ॥ ९ ॥

Sugriva had been driven away from home by his elder brother, Vali (IV–9 and 10), who lived in Kishkindha, which was at no great distance from the place (IV–12,13 and 14):–

अस्माद्गच्छाम किष्किंधां क्षिप्रं गच्छ त्वमग्रतः ।
गत्वा चाह्वय सुग्रीव वालिनं भ्रातृगन्धिनम् ॥ १३ ॥
सर्वे ते त्वरितं गत्वा किष्किंधां वालिनः पुरीम् ॥ १४ ॥

It was in a valley (IV–33–1):–

अथ प्रतिसमादिष्टो लक्ष्मणः परवीरहा ।
प्रविवेश गुहां रम्यां किष्किन्धां रामशासनात् ॥ १ ॥

The above narrative clearly shows that having travelled 62 miles from Chitrakuta, or Sutiksha's hermitage, Rama reached Matanga's farm, from which Sugriva's place was a day's journey, say 32 miles. Kishkindha was quite close to it. So it was about 94 miles from Chitrakuta. At this distance is also the Vindhya-range.

Even to-day about this place, amidst the surroundings described in the Ramayana, is a village named *Kandho*. A fair in memory of Dasharatha's misadventure whereby came to him the curse about his death, in the case of Shravana is held here. In some editions of the Ramayana two Godavaris are described–one to the east and the other to the south of Kishkindha. It is said that दंडकारण्य is just to the south of चित्रकूट. That the tradition had minute knowledge of this country, may be jugded from the fact that a small tributary of the Sona in

this locality, the Mahi, is mentioned in the text. This is confirmed by the fact that even the distance of the localities in this countryside are given in योजनs.

To recapitulate: three points of evidence have been given to locate किष्किंधा on the northern slope of the विन्ध्य; viz.: (1) Sugriva mentioned it immediately to the south of his capital; (2) the search party which issued from it first began to search the Vindhya; and (3) the mileage given in the Ramayana.

The fact is that Kishkindha was not so far south as to be in the southern portion of the Indian peninsula. The first place given to the Vindhya among the countries to the south of Kishkindha, coupled with the fact that on leaving that place Hanuman, the leader of the expedition, sent in that direction, first began search in that mountain would show that Kishkindha was in a valley of the Vindhya on its northern slope.

Of the four batches sent, three returned without having found Sita (IV-47).

The one that had gone to the south began searching the Vindhya (IV-48) and spent the allotted time of one month there (IV-50). Here, the party entered a valley which was full of trees and through which water was running (IV-50-16-17 and 21):—

अस्माच्चापि बिलाद्धंसाः क्रौंचाश्च सह सारसैः ।
जलार्द्राश्चक्रवाकाश्च निष्पतन्ति स्म सर्वतः ॥ १६ ॥
नूनं सलिलवानत्र कूपो वा यदि वा ह्रदः ।
तथा चेमे बिलद्वारे स्निग्धास्तिष्ठन्ति पादपाः ॥ १७ ॥
ते प्रविष्टास्तु वेगेन तद्बिलं कपिकुंजराः ।
प्रकाशमभिरामं च ददृशुर्देशमुत्तमम् ॥ २१ ॥

They lost their way in it. They were taken out of it by a nun living in it and brought them on to the shores of the sea which was washing the base of the Vindhya (IV-52-31):—

एष विन्ध्यो गिरिः श्रीमान् नानाद्रुमलतायुतः ।
एष प्रस्रवणः शैलः सागरोयं महोदधिः ॥ ३१ ॥

Here when they were desperately nearer death came to them the brother of Jatayu, Sampati (IV-56). He told that he had been a resident of the mountain from a very long time (IV-58-7):—

निर्दग्धपत्रः पतितो विन्ध्ये ऽहं वानरर्षभाः ॥ ७ ॥

He gave them news of Ravana and Sita, who he said, were at a certain distance on an island in the sea, on the shores of which they were sitting (IV-58-20) :—

इतो द्वीपे समुद्रस्य संपूर्णे शतयोजने ।
तस्मिल्लंकापुरी रम्या निर्मिता विश्वकर्मणा ॥ २० ॥

What is an indication of the distance is the fact that he could see them, or rather the place where they lived from the spot where they were (IV-59-29) :—

इहस्थोहं प्रपश्यामि रावणं जानकीं तथा ॥ २९ ॥

It was on this information that Hanuman, the leader of the party, made up his mind to leap the distance. As a matter of fact, there is no *sea* on the southern side of the Vindhya. The statement of Sampati, referred to above, suggests that the sea was in all probability an expanse of a river bed or a big reservoir, the other bank of which could be described or observed with difficulty. As no one had seen it, the idea of a *sea* intervening, grew stronger. Hanuman could cross this distance by taking two leaps (V-1). Mr. Vaidya refers to an incident in the

Spanish conquest of Mexico, where a fighter impelled by dire necessity leapt over such a long distance as staggered his pursuers. Residents of Benares still remember the story of a man, who, having taken the garb of Hanuman, leapt over a local stream, which is at least 52 feet wide between banks.

It is therefore clear that Kishkindha was on the northern slope of the Vindhya and Lanka was on its southern side at some distance beyond an expanse of water. It is also plain that these places were in the eastern portion of the Vindhya mountain as they were not far away from, and, at the most, to the south of Chitrakuta. Further corroboration to the view comes from Varahamihira. "In the enumeration of the peoples of India, given by Varahamihira " says Mr. C. V. Vaidya in his letter (6th October 1919) "we have the following Aryas:–

आग्नेयां दिशि कोशलकलिंगवंगोपवगंजठरांगाः ।
शौलिकविदर्भवत्सान्ध्रचेदिकाश्चोर्ध्वकण्ठाश्च ॥

वृषनालिकेरचर्मद्वीपा विन्ध्यन्तवासिनस्त्रिपुरी ।
श्मश्रूधरहेमकुट्यव्यालग्रीवामहाग्रीवाः ॥

किष्किंधकंटकस्थलानिषादराष्ट्राणि पुरिकदाशार्णाः ।
सह नग्नपर्णशबरैराश्लेषाये त्रिके देशाः ॥ बृहत्स० अ० १४ ॥

Varahamihira divides India into 9 parts, 8 in the 8 directions and 9th in the middle. किष्किंधा is given along with well-known others in the आग्नेयी, south-east portion. त्रिपुरी is near Jubbalpore, now known as तिऊर.

" This is also the location assigned to Kishkindha by the मत्स्यपुराण which also enumerates the peoples of India:–

इत्येते अपरान्तास्तु शृणु ये विन्ध्यवासिनः ॥
मालवाश्च करूषाश्च मेलकाश्चोत्कलैः सह ॥
औड्रा माषा दशार्णाश्च भोजाः किष्किंधकैः सह ॥

This is plain and states the people who live in (or on the slope of Vindhya) and along with Malavas, Karūshas and Dasharnas and enumerates किष्किंधक. There is therefore, no doubt, now that the किष्किंधका: are in the north on the Vindhya slope. It is thus clear that the tradition about the situation of किष्किंधा appears to have been maintained all through the period of वराहमिहिर, मत्स्यपुराण, &c. of which a copperplate of 1080 A.D. to be presently referred to marks the last point. This circumstance suggests the suspicion that the identification of Ceylon with Lanka, is of a much later growth and had, in fact, no foundation in the classical period. This is also the view held by that eminent scholar H. Jacobi.

Although Lanka is called an island, nowhere in the Ramayana is a description of its coast-line attempted. It is certain that it was a citadel on the peak of a mountain. Describing the visit of Hanuman to the place Mr. Vaidya says," Reaching the top of the range, he (Hanuman) saw Lanka perched on the top of a hill and surrounded by gardens and natural groves."

When the nun (शबरी) pointed out (IV-52-31) "This is Vindhya, this is प्रस्रवण and this is the sea," she was showing places within her sight. The प्रस्रवण may be the modern अमरकंटक, from which issue three streams, which develop into three big rivers, viz. the Sona, the Narmada and the Mahi, thus justifying the name प्रस्रवण.

There also appears to be a striking phonetic similarity between the names सालकंटक, the family name of Ravana,

and अमरकंटक. The inhabitants of these parts call themselves Ravanavanshis,* and a song on Hanuman's exploits is sung with great zest by them. In that part of the Vindhya range in which अमरकंटक is situated, now called the Kaimur range, there are traces of old habitation of man. In its caves are drawings of great antiquity.§ This region, therefore, seems to have been connected with aborigines and the tradition of Lanka may be traced to them.

As regards the *sea* on the southern side of Vindhya, an interesting find may throw some light. A Sanskrit copperplate, found in the Rewa State, dated 823 *Kalachuri* era (1080 A. D.) confers the village, दोल पंचोल together with सह लवणाकरः. Now लवणाकर means the sea. But it may be taken to mean a salt mine or even saltish land. The marsh round the peak may be saltish.

Luckily for discoverers there is such a place at the spot indicated in the Ramayana. (*Vide* the *Pioneer*, Allahabad, 27 July, 1908) There is mystery about it. At a distance of some 10 miles from the Pendra Road station of the Bilaspur-Katni line of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, there is a hill top on which is said to be a fort, called after Rani Bakavali, a fabulous queen. It is in the Bandhavagarh Tehsil of the Rewa State. It is visible from the spot known as भृगु आश्रम about 2 miles from the source of the नर्मदा. It is said that in the 'sixties of the last century Sir Richard Temple, the then Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, had attempted to reach it by crossing over the marsh, with which it is surrounded, by riding an elephant, but as the animal got stuck up in the mud the attempt had to be abandoned. From this side of

* *Imp. Gaz.* Vol. XII, p. 323.

§ *Ibid*, Vol. XIV, p. 275.

the marsh the fort looks as if submerged in a mist, which makes it appear to be at a greater distance than it really is. It is in fact a peak, just as Lanka in the Ramayana. The land which is marshy at present may have had water over it once. Local tradition says that there is treasure inside the fort. Is it the Lanka of Ravana ?

LANKA IN CENTRAL INDIA

THE earliest known history of the Indian people in an epic form is what is contained in the Ramayana of Valmiki. The language and metre of the work, which are nearer to the Vedic language than anything to be found in classical Sanskrit, point out the work to have been written in ancient times. Indeed the writer claims it to be a contemporary work, and if the interpolations made in it, which are many and intermixed throughout the book, are deleted, what remains appears to be an authentic narrative, subject to exaggeration here and there on account of its very nature as epic poetry. To the same reason is due the fact that it contains many riddles. Many of them have been successfully solved by that distinguished scholar Mr. C. V. Vaidya, in the "*Riddle of the Ramayana.*" But he too failed to solve the toughest riddle in it, namely, the identity of 'Lanka,' the capital of Ravana, with any modern site. There was a time when it was believed that like Dvaraka of a later epoch, it too disappeared in the sea. But the point is so important that on its right solution depends the authenticity of the greater part of the history narrated in the epic.

The story of Rama and Sita is well-known. After Rama became "major," he was about to be installed as the heir-apparent when he had to go and live in the forest for 14 years. His younger brother Lakshmana and wife Sita accompanied him. His life (अयन) in the forest forms the central theme of the epic. As commonly found in such narratives, it is full of adventures, into which the lapse of time has introduced elements of romance, fancy and exaggeration. They have so obscured history that doubts have been thrown on its authenticity and some have gone so far as to assert that it is a myth of nature. Prof. Jacobi in his monumental work on the Ramayana takes the hero to Assam, which he calls *Rakshasa-sthana* (the abode of demons). The Indian astronomer Bhaskara (14th century A. D.) locates Ravana's Lanka, the destination of Rama, on the equator in the ocean. Some identify it with an island near Sumatra, or Java. A few would locate it in the Arabian Sea on the West Coast. Recently, however, some scholars are inclined to place it in the Chhattisgarh District of the Central Provinces. By far the most popular theory current in India for many centuries past is that Lanka is none other than Ceylon. The believers in it differ as to the route by which Rama reached that island, one holding that he went through the middle of the Peninsula, while the other asserting that he followed the East (Coromandel) Coast.

There is, however, ample material in the earliest narrative of it which, with the corroboration now made available by research, points to a place far nearer the country of Rama's birth than the wild stories which later became current. Valmiki's Ramayana contains a plain narrative of facts. It is claimed that the site of Ravana's Lanka must be found in the Amarakantaka

Mountains at the source of the Narmada, on the frontier between the Chhattisgarh Division of the Central Provinces and Rewa State of the Central India Agency.

Ramayana of Valmiki is not only the first and earliest history of the great hero, Rama, but from the view-point of language and metre it is nearer to the Vedic *Suktas* than anything found in the the later Sanskrit literature, the story became so popular that not only the Mahabharata but almost all the 18 Puranas and later works in modern Indian languages, among which *Paumacariyam* (published and edited by Prof. Jacobi), Tulasidasa's *Ramayana* in Hindi, Krittivasa's Ramayana in Bengali, Moropant's 108 Ramayanas in Marathi and *Kambam* Ramayana in Tamil are the most famous, have delighted to describe the beautiful and almost divine story, not to speak of several inferior versions of the same in Sanskrit, and other works. Valmiki's work has not escaped interpolations to suit the later editions of the story. By additions and exaggerations, they have been rendered beyond recognition. The description in the Valmiki Ramayana connected with Rama's trek through forests and subsequently to Lanka precludes the possibility of its being so far away, as is indicated by the different places alleged to be identified in the history of the exploit. Other countries described in it are equally wrongly identified with countries bearing the old names in modern times. As an example the identification of Videha, the kingdom of Janaka, the father of Sita, with modern Bihar, can be cited. According to the Ramayana (I-69, 8) it was at a distance of four days' journey from Ayodhya. This cannot justify the identification of Videha with modern Bihar. From Oudh it cannot but be at a greater distance than what is

indicated by the above-mentioned fact. No such army as is described in the Ramayana, not even a chariot drawn by horses, could traverse the distance from Ayodhya (Oudh) to Videha (Bihar) in such a short time as is distinctly mentioned.

The data in the Valmiki Ramayana are sufficient to identify Ayodhya, from where Rama started on his journey, and Chitrakuta, where he was met by his brother Bharata, who came to him with the tidings of the death of their father Dasharatha, with the places bearing these names. The difficulty of identification commences with the further progress in the journey.

On leaving Chitrakuta Rama entered the Dandaka forest. There he came across a colony of Rishis which was situated in an inaccessible place (III-1-1). Then he entered the forest and met with an adventure (III-2). Here he saw a hermitage (III-5-4). He requested its owner to show him a suitable place for settling (III-5,33).

The Rishi was about to die and so he directed Rama to go to another Rishi by name Sutikshna, in the neighbourhood (III-5-35). He desired him to follow the course of the Mandakini which having its rise in the Chitrakuta joins the Yamuna. Here there was a number of colonists who complained to Rama of the harassment they were subjected to by the fierce Rakshasas (III-6-5). They described to him the extent to which their colonies, which were subjected to the harassment, had spread (III-6-17).

They were established on the area between the Pampa and the Mandakini, and the Chitrakuta mountain.

Being accompanied by the members of the colony, he went to the hermitage of Sutikshna after crossing the

river (Mandakini) (III-7-1). He stayed here for one night (III-8-1).

He then wandered over different places in the forest and returned to the same place after ten years (III-11-27). Here he was requested by the Rishis to protect them from Rakshasas which Rama promised to do (III-1-34).

On enquiry Rama heard here that Agastya lived in the same forest (III-11-30 *et seq.*).

He is told that the hermitage of Agastya's brother was 3½ miles to the south from there and Agastya's hermitage eight miles further to the south. He is advised that he should halt at the former place for the night and then proceed to the other place which was at the back (or end) of the part of the forest the next morning (III-11-37-42).

He goes to Agastya and asks to be shown a good place to live in (III-13-11).

He is pointed out a place 16 miles away near the Godavari, a place which was said to be not far away (III-13-18-21).

It was so near in the same Madhuka forest that he was told that he should go by the way on the north of the banyan tree and, getting on a hillock close by, see the Panchavati (III-13-25); Janasthana was another name for it (III-5-69). It was Ravana's out-post (III-21-20). So Rama settled there in order to keep his promise to the Rishis (III-10).

At Panchavati Rama lived for nearly two years and from here Sita was taken away by Ravana.

This narrative makes it clear that Sutikshna's hermitage was not far away from Chitrakuta, and from the former place Panchavati was only 48 miles.

Rama had gone after the golden deer at the time of Sita's kidnapping and Jatayu tried to protect Sita from the hands of Ravana. He was found to have been almost killed by Ravana, when Rama returned. From Jatayu, Rama learnt the name of the abductor of his wife and the direction in which she was taken away (III-68, 9, 10, and 16). While going on to Panchavati, Rama had seen a big bird perched on the banyan tree (III-14, 1). This was Jatayu, probably an aborigine.

Rama went along that direction towards the south-west in search of his wife (III, 1-2.).

Having gone six miles from Janasthana (or Panchavati) he entered the Krauncha forest (III-69-5), and on going six miles eastwards he entered a valley (III 69-8-10) between the Krauncha forest and the hermitage of Matanga, who, before dying, told Rama to go to Sugriva, living on a hillock on the banks of a tank called Pampa in the forest known after Matanga. Sugriva was the head of a tribe known as Vanaras, who being antagonistic to Rakshasas was expected to help Rama (III-72).

Having stopped for one day on the way shown by Kabandha to the east of the hill (mentioned by him), he reached the western bank of Pampa (III. 74-1, 3-4). Here was living a woman hermit named Sabari (III. 74-4).

Then Rama saw Sugriva, who was near the Rishyamuka mount (III-1-130).

Rama made friends with Sugriva, who gave him tidings of Sita carried away by Ravana by that way (IV-6-9).

Sugriva had been driven away from home by his elder brother, Vali (IV-6-9-10), who lived at Kishkindha, which was not at a great distance from the place

(IV–12, 13 14). It was in a valley (IV. 33, 1). From there Rama went to Pampa, near which was the mount Rishyamuka (III–75, 7).

It has been seen that Panchavati was only 48 miles from Sutikshna's hermitage, which itself was not at a great distance from Chitrakuta. From Panchavati (or Janasthana) Rama went into the Krauncha forest at a distance of six miles in the south-west. Covering six more miles, he entered the valley where Kabandha told Rama to go to Sugriva who, it appears from the minute description given by Kabandha, such as the road leading by a banyan tree and thence to the hillock from which Pampa and Rishyamuka enclosing Kishkindha, the abode of Sugriva, could be seen, did not live far away, say another six miles. Therefore Kishkindha was more than eighteen miles from Janasthana or about 66 miles from Sutikshna's hermitage, or 96 miles from Chitrakuta.

To the immediate south of Kishkindha were the Vindhyas (IV–46, 17).

Sugriva sent a batch of Vanaras under the leadership of Hanuman to the south (IV–47, 14). It began to search the deep valley of the Vindhyas (IV–48-2). *

They lost their way. They were taken out of it by a nun who was living in it and who brought them on to the shores of the sea which was washing the base of the Vindhyas (IV–53, 3-5).

* On the word Vindhyam Govindaraja's commentary observes :

Vindhyapadapa ityanena Kishkindhaya dakshinato'pi Vindhya-parvatasessotiti gamyate.

Here the party entered a valley which was full of trees and through which water was running and which was full of light (IV-15, and 20, 50).