

HANUMAN IN LANKA

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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Seen have I the Holy Mother,
errand mine here well fulfilled;
Blessed news shall I now convey,
having crossed black ocean's sweep.

May I return? nay, I shall not,
for I have to leave behind
A mark of visit paid to Lanka
by this envoy Rama sent.

So deciding Hanuman swelled and
thundered in his massive form
Shatt'ring ears and fright'ning guards
who roamed protecting Ravan's grove.

Roved about as cyclone grown,
as heaving wave of mighty sea,
Death itself with opened jaws
stood before all, as it were.

Trees were broken, buildings crushed,
and walls were pulled down, barracks strong—
All in pieces lay below,
destroyed root and branch around.

World-destruction come on Lanka,
so thought fear-struck men of war,
Rushed to Ravan raising hue and cry
and made their submission:

Deign to save us, King of kings,
we're helpless in this painful awe,
Maddened monkey come from somewhere,
destroys lovely Ashoka grove.

With wrathful eyes did Ravan gaze
and ordered soldiers, 'brave the ape,
Go forthwith and face the beast,
or kill him then and there at once.'

Pompous force of army-men
saw Hanuman marching towards him,
And determined in his mind to rout
the warriors of Ravan.

With clubs and sticks and swords and arrows,
stones and trees did soldiers strike.
Adamantine frame of Hanuman,
as straw would fall on mountain's peak.

'Come, I am here, face me, friends!'
So Hanuman quoth with laughter cruel,
Caught the soldiers one by one
and smashed them all to rocky ground.

Rose Hanuman like a tempest
swelling like a mountain high,
Shining as the rising sun
And fiercely looking all round.

Roared Hanuman, mighty hero,
bursting like a thunderstorm,
Broke the hearts of Lanka-dwellers;
wombs began to drop their babes.

With thud that shook the earth below
did Vayu's son jump here and there,
Smashed gayful Ashoka grove,
crushed the trees and broke ramparts.

Great commotion swept through Lanka,
people wondered and feared,
Rakshasas rushed in panic, sorrow,
lamenting with Lanka's king.

This unforeseen dread anxiety,
threatening cyclone, raging noise.

'O monarch of all the worlds:
look, fair Lanka, shakes with danger,
Fear imminent, unknown monster
wastes the garden like a weed'.

Hanuman, then, announced aloud,
in darting voice, stentorian sound,
Mission sacred for which he came
leaping waters Lanka's girt.

'Rama's servant, son of Vayu,
here I am to end all foes,
With all the strength of soldier heroes
let them face me single here.

Not thousand Ravans all well armed
 can stand before me now in rage,
I shall rend them all en masse,
 with clenched fist and force of hand.

I shall crush and pound to dust
 this Lanka with its king and wealth
And return to Rama great,
 with folded hands in joy serene.’

There, then, Ravan, king affrighted,
 sent at last his fair son great,
Most of loved ones, handsome youth,
 Ravans’ heart, but lion in war.

Aksha, charm and fire in one,
 who marched with arms where Hanuman sat
On pillar’s top with gaze of red eyes,
 ‘waiting fun of further deeds.

Battle fierce, then, broke out there;
 and Aksha shot his arrows straight
At Hanuman’s body which there stood
 as reinforced iron hill.

Laughed Hanuman, looked at Aksha,
 beauteous lad, so tender born;
Heart of Hanuman would not permit
 death of such a charming boy.

But this fighter, Ravan’s hero,
 was not merely lad of teens,
He was also threat and fury
 when on field of war that raged.

Hanuman had no alternative,
 he then hardened his feelings,
Caught the legs of Aksha fighting,
 and down he went as broken bones,
Pounded marrow, squeezed out body,
 mass of flesh there Aksha lay.

Horror, indeed, this news to Ravan,
 who sobbed aloud o'er child he lost
And with grievous laden heart
 spoke to dear Indrajit:

'Son, beloved, Aksha's gone,
 can you go and wreak venge'nce,
On this ape, this death-like beast,
 this nuisance come on Lanka fair?'

Wept Indrajit for death of Aksha,
 wiped his tears, and dashed out bold,
Girt his loins, took up his arms
 and marched towards Ashoka grove.

Fought with fury, hit Hanuman,
 struck him with his weapons sharp,
Cast undaunted Brahma's Astra,
 bound Hanuman with this noose.

Hanuman bound was brought to Ravan,
 who cruelly laughed at captive ape,
'Look! This idiot's longish tail
 you set on flames, then let him go,

Killing monkey heroes like us
loathsome deed should sure pronounce'

So did order king of Lanka,
Rakshas clans then caught the tail,
Draped with oily rags the limbs
of happy Vayu's son divine.

Flames were let in; tail on fire,
then Hanuman jumped from house to house,
Vayu, father, blew with violence,
helping son who flew like wind.

Lo, the whole of Lanka fair
then glowed in raging hungry flames,
Hell descended on earth, it looked,
Lanka's dwellers cried and ran.

'Ravan, Lord of lords, our master,
save us, save us, we are gone,'
So the lament went around,
men, women and children burnt.

Having given a glimpse of what
stuff Rama's anger embodied,
Hanuman dipped his tail in ocean,
and he went to Sita sad.

'Gracious mother, here your servant
stands before you, supplicant,
Power to lift the whole of Lanka
Rama's slave yields here and now,

If you so wish please be seated
on my back to cross the sea,
I shall carry sacred weight and
place it there for Rama's joy,'

Mother Sita smiled and blessed the hero,
'go and tell the prince,
Let him come and take me himself,
this is Dharma, Arya's law.'

Hanuman, hero, mighty, grand,
then bowed before the divine dame,
And flew across the ocean back,
and told the gladdened news to all.