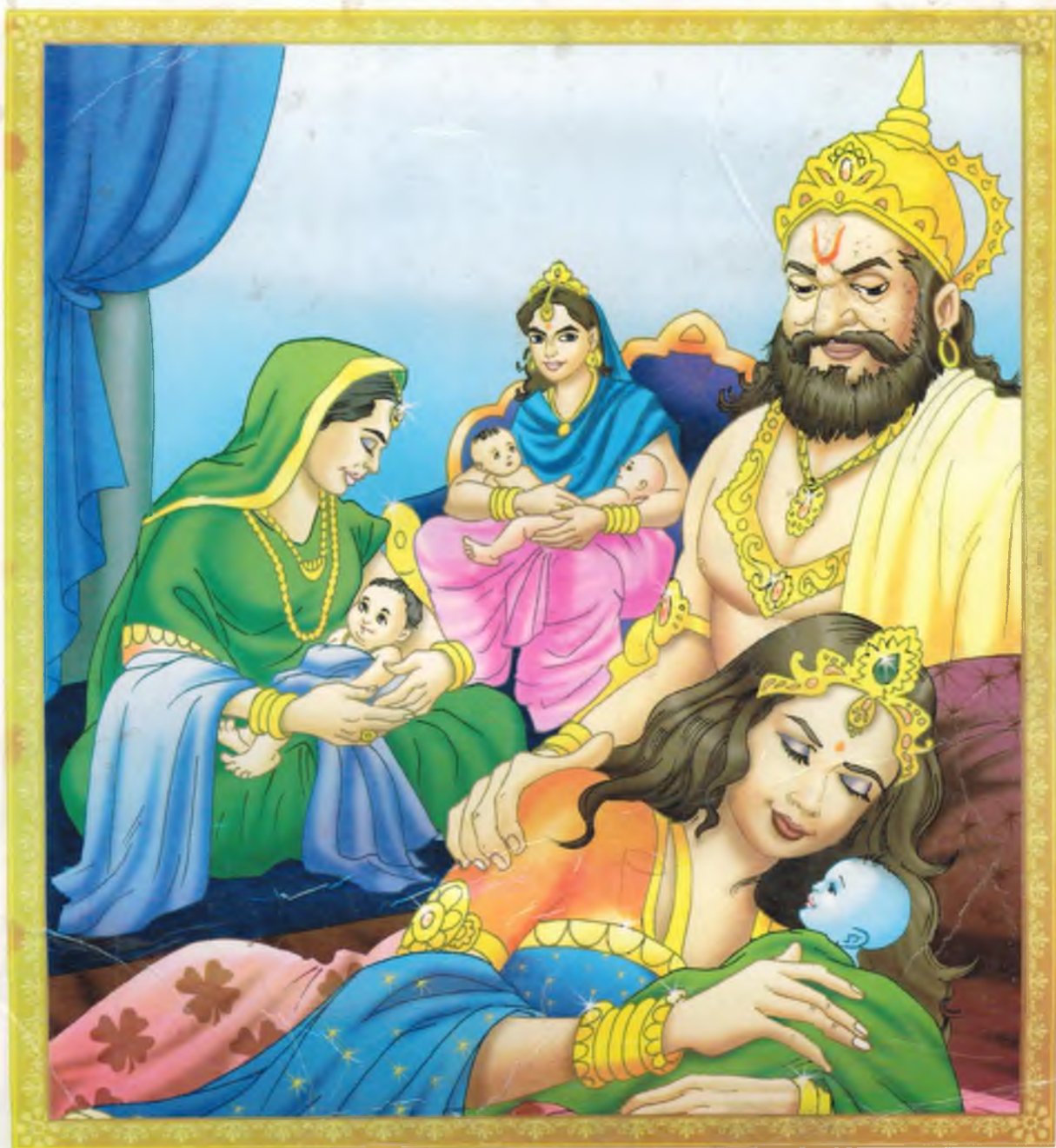


RAMAYANA

PART I

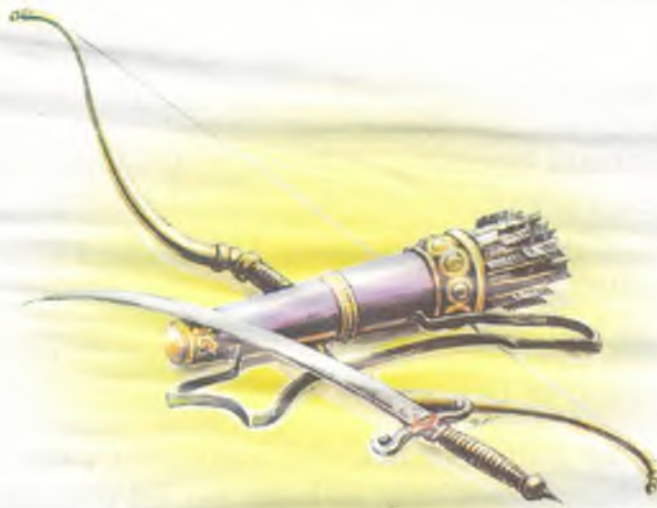


DREAMLAND

RAMAYANA

PART I CHILDHOOD EPISODE-I

Retold & Edited By:
T.R. Bhanot



DREAMLAND PUBLICATIONS

J-128, KIRTI NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110 015 (INDIA)
Phone : 011-2545 5657, 2510 6050 Fax : 011-2543 8283

e-mail : dreamland@vsnl.com
www.dreamlandpublications.com

INTRODUCTION

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two most important epics of Ancient India. The Ramayana is the older of the two and was authored by Maharishi Valmiki at the instance of Sage Narada.

The word—**Ramayana**—means life-story of Rama. The original work was in Sanskrit, though later on, Saint Tulsi Das wrote it in Hindi poetry under the title Ramcharitmanas. Our series is, however, based on the original Sanskrit text.

This epic is divided into seven units—each unit forming an episode by itself. These episodes are as under:

1. The Childhood Episode
2. The Ayodhya Episode
3. The Forest Episode
4. The Kishkindha Episode
5. The Fascinating Episode
6. The Lanka Episode
7. The Concluding Episode.

In South India, Kamban wrote the Ramayana in Tamil while Kirtivasa wrote it in Bengali.

As remarked by Saint Narada, the Ramayana came to be a sacred book. People, not only in India but all over the world, study it with deep devotion & rare reverence.

By virtue of its lofty ideals and moral values, the Ramayana has been serving as a light-house for the people of India. Its ideals of true family-relationships, dutifulness, purity in thinking, tolerance and virtue are working a wonder even today in the face of polluting western influences which are more concerned with materialism than with noble values.

—Author



From the Publishers—

The Ramayana is an epic which needs no introduction as its story is well known to every Indian. Different versions and editions of the Ramayana are available in all the Indian languages as well as many of the foreign ones. But the format, in which we are presenting the Ramayana, is unique.

We are bringing out the Ramayana in twelve parts. The last two parts are based on “Lava-Kush” episode which is not found in most of the editions of the Ramayana. The exclusive feature of the present “Ramayana” is the importance given to pictures. The reason behind it is not only that young readers love pictures, but also that they find it easy to understand and learn the matter given in any illustrated book.

No other edition of the ‘Ramayana’ can claim more abundance of multi-coloured & attractive pictures than the one in your hands. We are confident that the labour and devotion, with which our artists and authors have worked on this project, will be appreciated. We also hope that the readers will oblige us by sending their valuable suggestions.

—The Publishers



CHILDHOOD EPISODE—1

Long, long ago, there was a king named Dashrath in India. He had his Capital at Ayodhya. He was a brave but God-fearing ruler who loved his subjects as his children. He had three queens, named Kaushalya, Kaikeyee and Sumitra. The queens were very beautiful, pious and virtuous.

Dashrath belonged to the dynasty which started from the Sun-god himself. So, he worshipped the Sun daily, as guided by the royal priest who was named Vasishtha. In spite of the comforts of their majestic life, the king and his three queens were not happy. The reason was that none of the queens had given birth to any child so far. So, the kingdom was without a Crown-Prince.

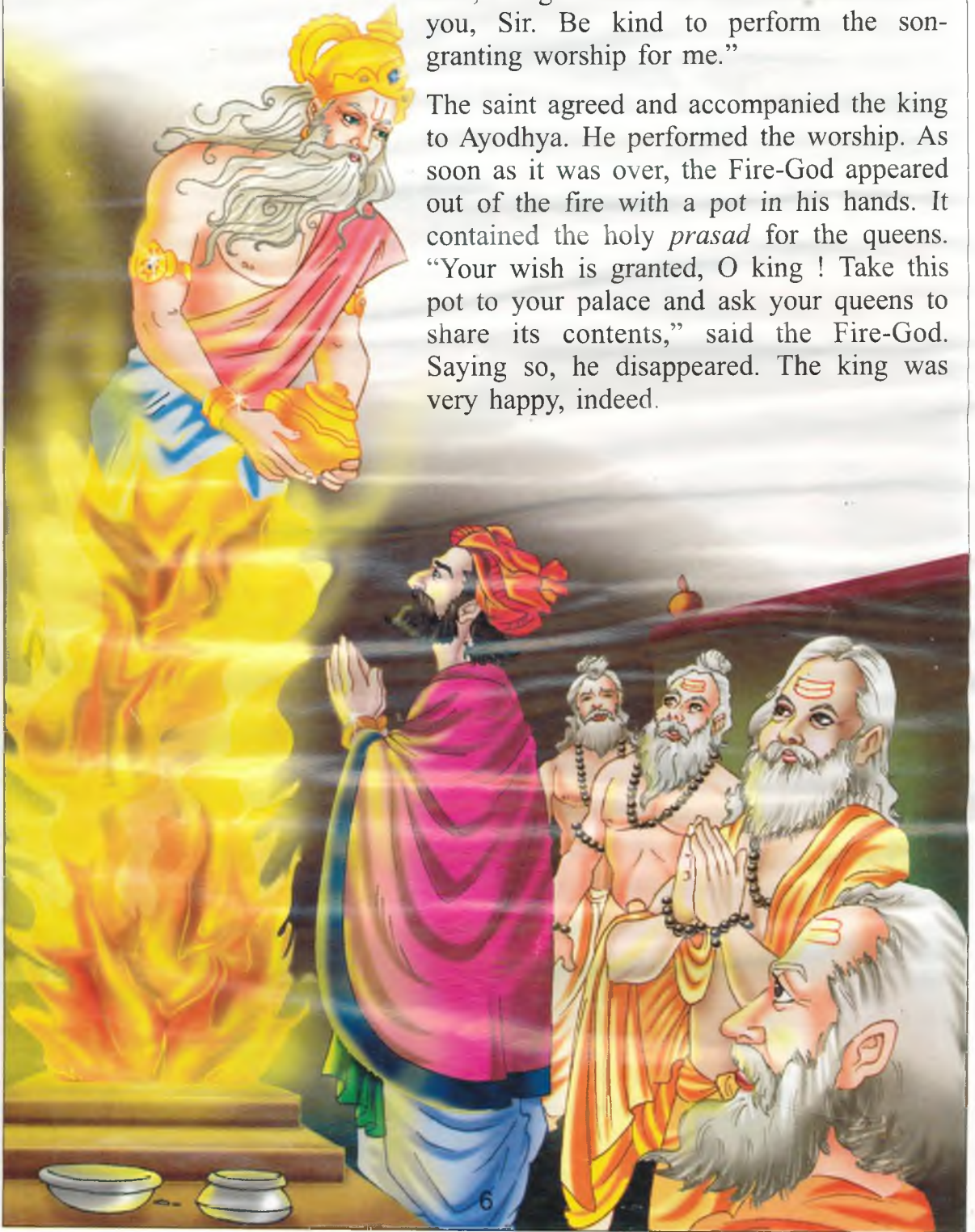
The king and the queens were well past middle age. So, the king had lost all hopes to be blessed with a son. "Who will succeed to my throne after me?" he often asked himself. One day, after the usual worship, King Dashrath prayed to Sage Vasishtha, "Please do something, so that I may not die without leaving a heir to my throne."

Sage Vasishtha consoled the king saying, "Don't worry at all, O king; you shall be blessed with sons. But you will have to perform the *putreshti yajna* (son-granting worship)." The king replied reverently, "I am ready to do anything." He, then, requested the royal priest to make arrangements for the son-granting 'yajna'. "This worship is to be performed by Saint Shringi. Go to his hermitage bare-foot and request him for it," remarked Vasishtha.



Next day, king Dashrath approached Saint Shringi. Touching his feet respectfully, he said, "Sage Vasishtha has directed me to you, Sir. Be kind to perform the son-granting worship for me."

The saint agreed and accompanied the king to Ayodhya. He performed the worship. As soon as it was over, the Fire-God appeared out of the fire with a pot in his hands. It contained the holy *prasad* for the queens. "Your wish is granted, O king ! Take this pot to your palace and ask your queens to share its contents," said the Fire-God. Saying so, he disappeared. The king was very happy, indeed.





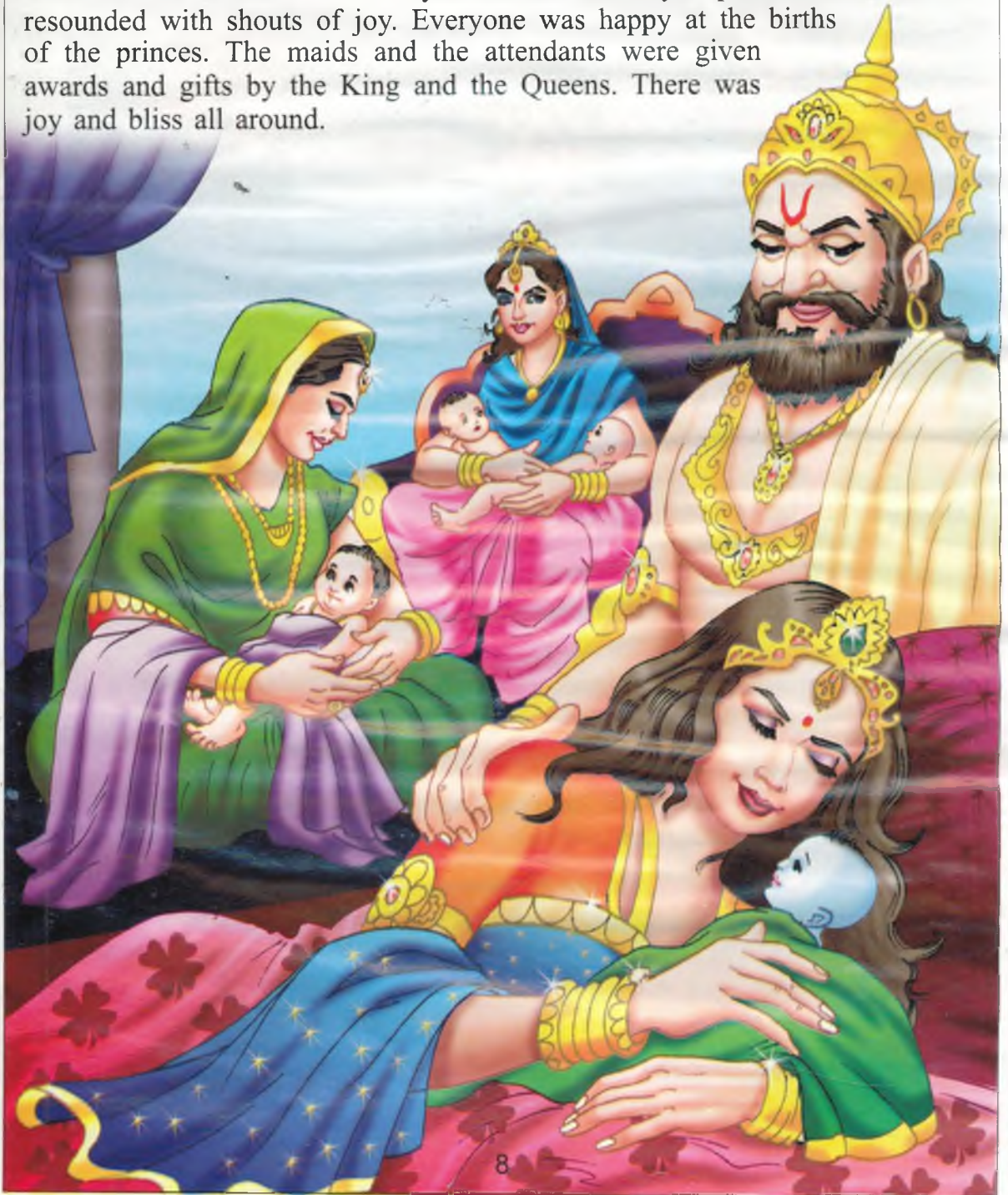
After the 'yajna', Saint Shringi left for his hermitage. Seeking Sage Vasishthas permission, king Dashrath went into the palace. Seeing a pot in his hand, all the three Queens came running to him. They were very excited, indeed.

“What is there in this pot ?” asked the queens. The king told them all about the yajna and handed the pot over to Kaushalya, the eldest queen. Then, all the three queens shared the *prasad* as directed by Saint Shringi.

Before long, the king got the news that all the three queens were in the family way. He was besides himself with joy. In his heart of hearts, he thanked Almighty and both the Saints as well. His wish was going to be fulfilled.

Days weeks and months rolled by. Then, approached the day of the births of four princes of Ayodhya. That auspicious day was the ninth day of the waxing moon in the month of Chaitra.

The three queens gave birth to four lovely sons in the evening. King Dashrath became the father of four sons. Kaushalya, the eldest queen, gave birth to one son and Kaikeyee too gave birth to one son. But Sumitra bore two male twins. The town of Ayodhya put on a new look and celebrations went on for a number of days. As for the royal palace, it resounded with shouts of joy. Everyone was happy at the births of the princes. The maids and the attendants were given awards and gifts by the King and the Queens. There was joy and bliss all around.





Festivities continued for days together on end. Markets and streets were profusely decorated with buntings and colourful gates. Rows of lit lamps were kept on the balconies at night. Ladies of the town were happy. They marched to the palace in groups, singing joyful songs to congratulate the Queens.

King-Dashrath despatched a special messenger to convey the happy news to Sage Vasishtha. The Sage came to the palace to bless the newborn princes. A large number of Saints and Brahmans were with him too.

The King paid his respects to all the saints and gave them gold, clothes and cows in alms. Saint Shringi was specially honoured in a befitting manner. He blessed the entire royal family and the four princes, in particular.

Merriment and celebrations went on for over a month. When the princes were forty days old, their Christening Ceremony was held. The king requested Sage Vasishtha to suggest befitting names for the four Princes.

The royal priest (Vasishtha) performed the naming ceremony and named Kaushalya's son **Rama**, *the source of bliss*. He named Kaikeyee's son as **Bharata**—caretaker of *one and all*.

“Queen Sumitra's elder son is born to destroy enemies ; so he should be named **Shatrughna**. Her younger son is to *possess the best of the human qualities*. So, he is to be named **Laxmana**,” said Sage Vasishtha.

The queens liked the names very much. They were indeed extremely delighted. Rama, the eldest Prince, had a pale brown complexion. But he was extremely handsome.





The gold chain around his waist and the amulets on his arms added to his personal charms all the more. He was the apple of the king's eye. All the three Queens too loved him very deeply.

Rama's movements and pranks were very fascinating indeed. He was the talk of the entire palace. Whoever saw him, he/she wanted to take him into his/her arms and fondle him lovingly.

All the other three princes were fair-complexioned. The king and the Queens were almost always lost in the sweet company of their dear sons. They fed them with their own hands and could ill-afford to let them be away from their eyes even for a moment.

In due course, the princes grew young. The king requested the royal priest to perform their Thread Ceremony. This done, their formal education started. First of all, they were imparted training in shooting arrows.

Rama was the most handsome and lovable of all the princes. He was cool & calm by nature. Lakshmana was more attached to Rama from the very beginning, but he lost his temper very soon. As for Bharata and Shatrughna, they were very intimate.

As the princes grew up further, the king decided to send them to the hermitage of Sage Vasishtha for all-round education.





There they were to live as continents (*brahmacharis*) till the age of 25 years and attain knowledge at the feet of the great guru.

The princes were soon informed that they were to go to the hermitage of the royal priest. So, they prepared themselves for that. Soon, they got their hair shorn and dressed up as continents in coarse clothes of saffron colour.

Then the princes, led by Rama, went to their mothers to seek their permission to leave the palace. The mothers felt shocked at the very idea of separation from their sons. But the family tradition was to be followed.

So, they had to send them off but with heavy hearts and tears in their eyes.

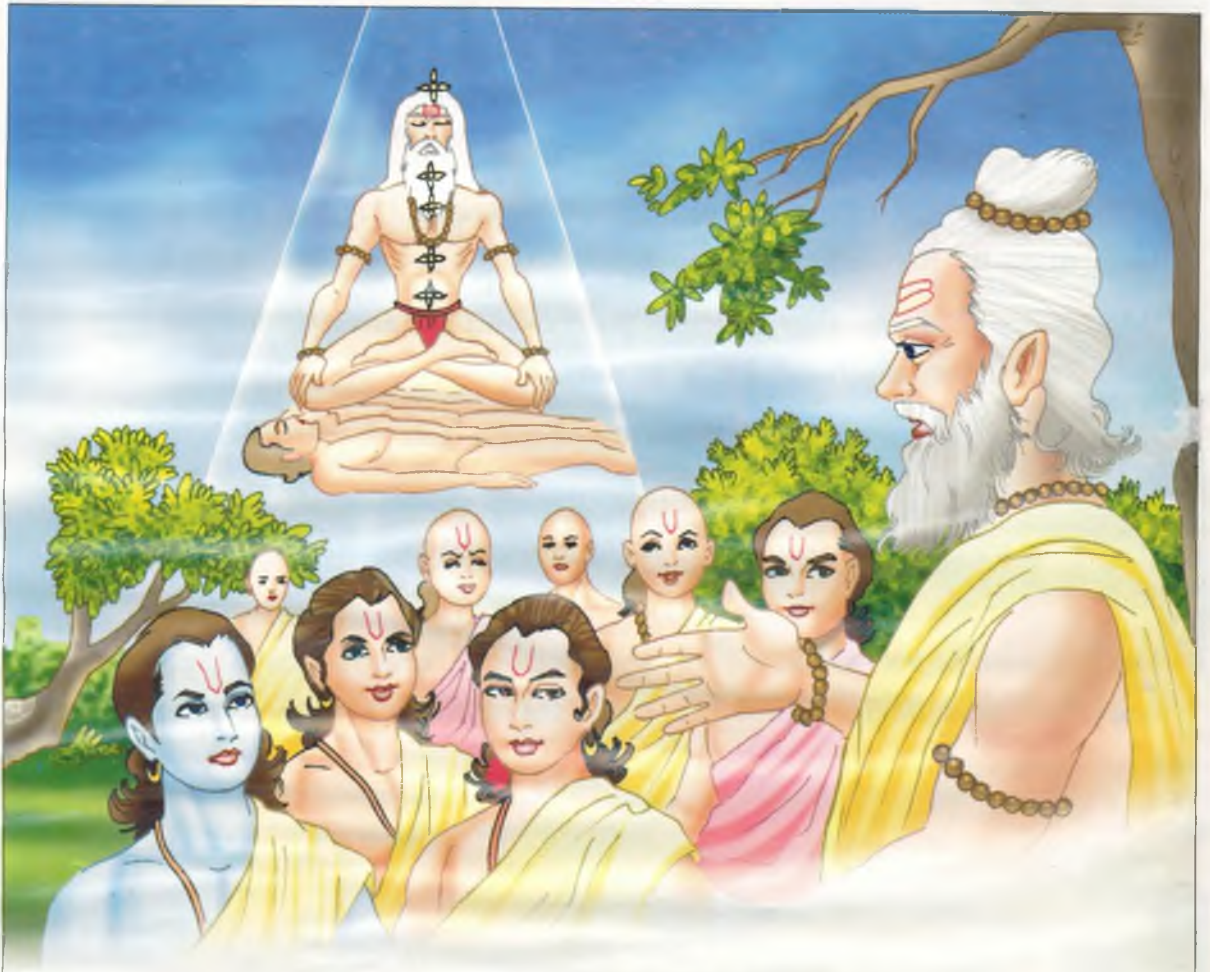
At Sage Vasishtha's hermitage, the princes started learning various disciplines at the feet of the great teacher. The Sage imparted them knowledge befitting the princes of a great kingdom.

The princes devoted themselves to studies and served the sage as humbly as they could. He imparted them the knowledge of the three aspects of God's power—Creation, *Preservation* and *Destruction*.

Also, he told them that the life-span of a man has four parts :

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. From birth to the age of 25 years | Brahmacharya (continence) |
| 2. From the age of 25 years to the age of 50 years | Grihasth (house-holder) |
| 3. From the age of 50 years to the age of 75 years | Vanaprastha (detachment) |
| 4. From the age of 75 years to death | Sanyas (renunciation) |





Sage Vasishtha imparted instruction in the State matters too, to the four princes. Apart from it, he guided them in day-to-day worldly dealing as well. He explained to them, the use of *saam* (allurement), *daam* (greed), *dand* (punishment) and *bhed* (division).

As for the spiritual teaching, the great teacher said, “Three qualities are found in human beings.”

1. The Satva (higher values, *i.e.* virtues)
2. The Rajas (worldly values, *i.e.* luxuries)
3. The Tamas (baser values, *i.e.* vices)

Every person has one type of the above-mentioned qualities in himself/herself prominently. Whereas virtues lead a man to piety and goodness, vices lead him to impiety and evil.”

Sage Vasishtha explained to the princes that human body is made up of five elements—air, water, fire, earth and space. Also, that man is the supreme creature among all living beings.

The Sage said, “One must hold his parents and teachers in high esteem. They must be loved, served and respected.”

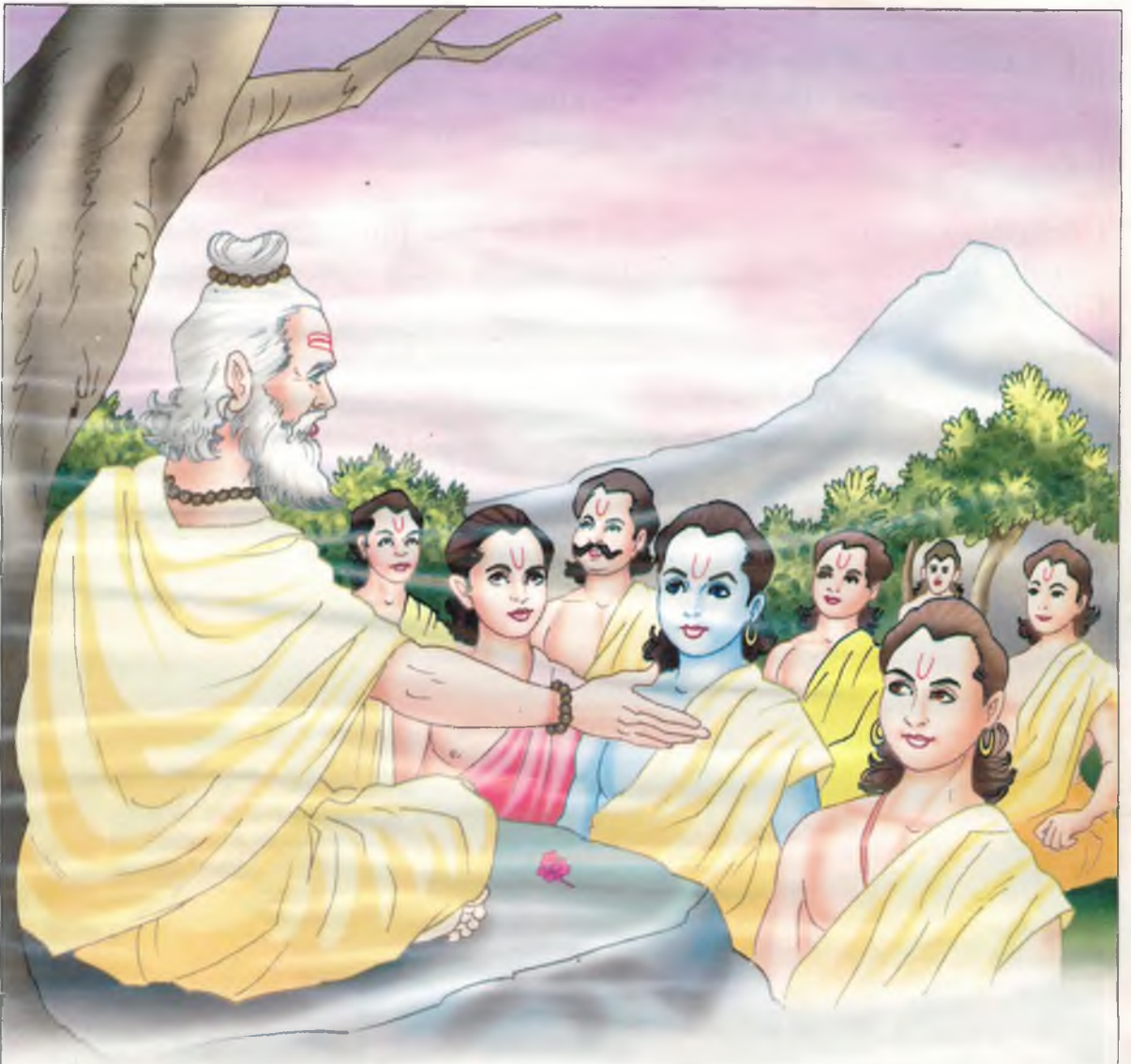
“Moreover, truth is the greatest power and it always conquers in the end. Untruth or falsehood leads to sins.”

“Love of creatures is love of God ; whereas hatred earns His wrath.”

The princes took an oath to follow the instructions of the great teacher to the letter. They were now well informed to step into the life of house-holders.

The princes were just nearing the end of ‘brahmacharya’ period. So, Sage Vasishtha decided to teach them the duties of a good ruler and the art of statecraft.





The Sage said, "A ruler must know that the crown he wears is not a sign of greatness. It is a basket of duties towards his subjects. If a ruler performs his duties well, he is certainly great. But if he ignores them, he is sure to have a fall. Protection of the people is the first and foremost duty of a ruler."

"Secondly, he must be just and impartial in every matter. Thirdly, he must try to make his people happy and prosperous."

"In short, if a king is greater than his people, his duties are far heavier and harder too," said the great Sage.

The education of the princes having been complete, Sage Vasishtha sent a message to king Dashrath. The king, at once, followed that the sage wanted the princes to return to Ayodhya. So, he sent Sumanta, his Prime Minister, to bring them home.

Sumanta collected royal robes for all the four princes and got ready to go to the hermitage of the Sage. The queens were very impatient to see the princes.

The queens asked Sumanta to return along with their sons without delay. The king and the queens sent presents for Sage Vasishtha and other students of the hermitage as well.

Sumanta left Ayodhya in a chariot promising the queens to return with their sons before long.





Sumanta reached the hermitage of Sage Vasishtha and touched the feet of the great teacher. He paid respects to him on behalf of the king and the queens also. Then, with his palms joined in reverence, he stated the purpose of his visit.

The Sage duly entertained the Prime Minister of Ayodhya and enquired about the welfare of the royal family. Then, he called the princes to his presence. Telling them about the purpose of Sumanta's visit, he advised them as below :

“I have taught you all I could. You must translate all my teachings into your day-to-day life. You shall be able to prove yourself to be good men. Not only this, you shall be successful parts of the State-machinery also.”

The princes lay straight at their teacher's feet to pay their respects to him. Then, they stood up and said with palms joined.

"We, the sons of King Dashrath, assure you Sir, that we shall never forget your teachings. We beg you to bless us to prove worthy of your trust. We have learnt wisdom from you that nobody else could have given us."

Sage Vasishtha was indeed very pleased to hear what the princes had said.

He remarked, My sons ! go back to Ayodhya and serve your parents as well as you can to earn their blessings. My good wishes shall always be with you."





The princes put on the stately robes that Sumanta, the Prime Minister, had brought for them. Then they left for Ayodhya in his chariot. Soon, they reached their Capital that had been nicely decorated in their honour.

People of Ayodhya thronged to welcome their princes who had returned after a number of years. Everybody was impatient to have a glimpse of the princes.

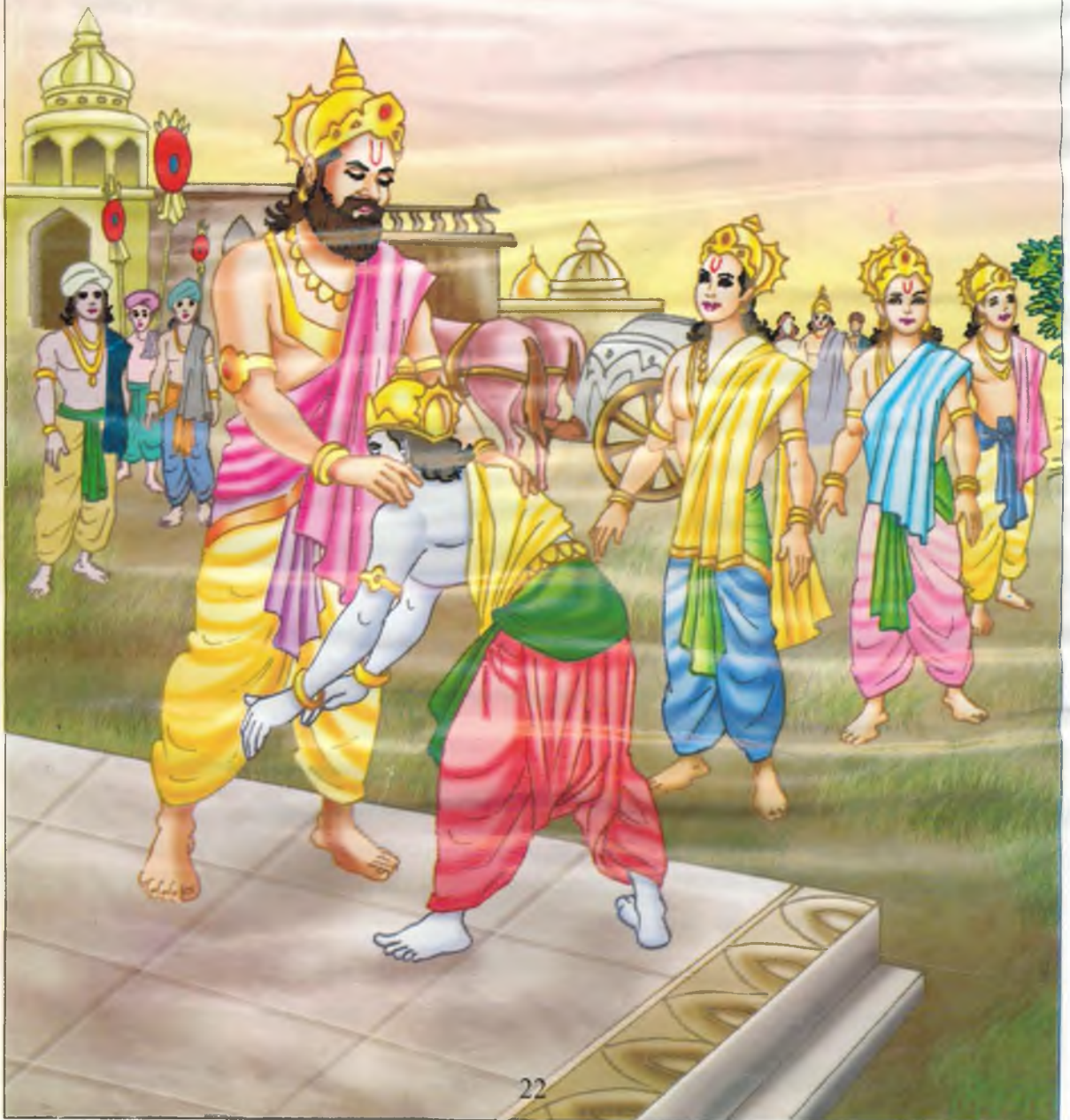
Rama, the Crown-Prince, was the chief attraction for one and all. People hailed him with garlands and raised slogans in his honour.

Soon the news of the return of the princes reached the palace also. The king and the queens became impatient to see their dear sons. They fixed their eyes at the gates of the palace.

Soon, a maid came running and informed the king of the arrival of the princes. King Dasharath was besides himself with joy. He moved towards the gate to receive the princes.

At last, the princes, led by Rama, entered the palace. He went up to the King and touched his feet and spoke in very humble words, "Dear Father ! I, your son Rama, am at your service again. The other three princes too followed suit."

Choked with emotion, the king took the princes into his arms and kissed them one by one. He asked them to go and pay their respects to their mothers. So, the princes made for the chambers of their mothers who were waiting for them impatiently.





As soon as a maid came running to inform the queens of the arrival of the princes, Kaushalya took off her necklace and gave it away to the maid as her reward. Just then, the princes entered the chamber where the queens were waiting for them.

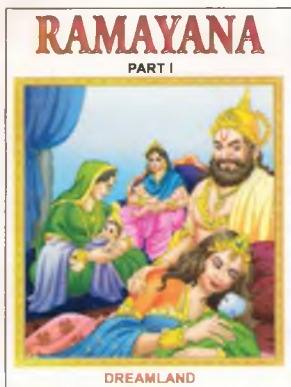
Seeing them, Kaushalya could not contain herself for joy. Rama, first of all, touched the feet of queen Kaikeyee who embraced him out of affection.

The princes paid their respects to the three queens one by one. Tears of joy welled up in the eyes of the three queens as they saw their sons after many years. They kissed and fondled them as if they were small boys.

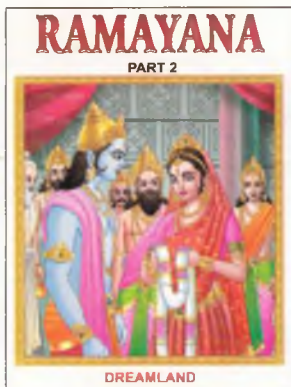
The day of the princes' arrival was celebrated as a festival. Alms were given generously to the poor. Presents were sent to the saints and Brahmins. Blessings from all quarters kept on pouring through out the day. Everyone prayed for the long life of the princes. Kaushalya fed them with her own hands.

Festivals went on for some days. Then, the princes took to their daily duties. They got up in the morning and paid respects to their father and mothers. Then they got ready to attend the court. Rama, being the Crown-Prince, disposed of the state-matters entrusted to him. His brothers helped him in his task. The king was very pleased to see the princes going over their daily routine so carefully. He was delighted to see Rama doing his duties for the good of the people who loved him very dearly.

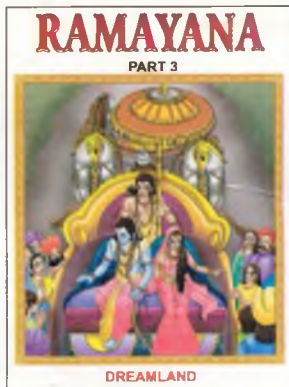




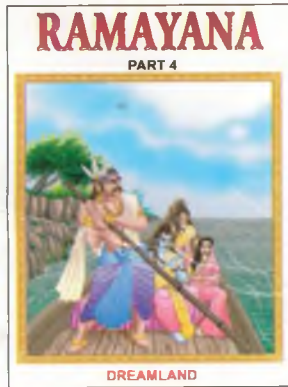
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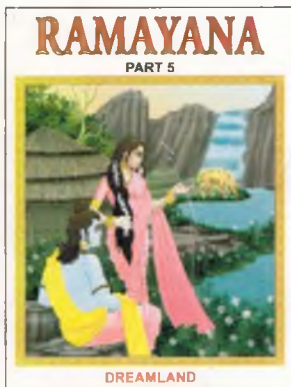
Childhood Episode-II



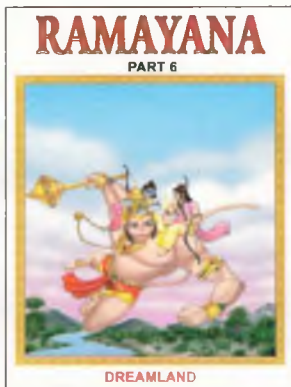
Ayodhya Episode-I



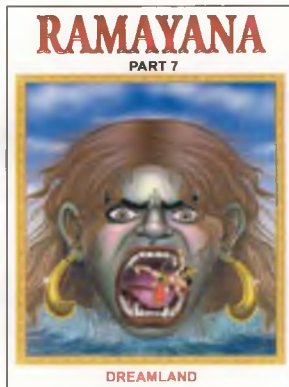
Ayodhya Episode-II



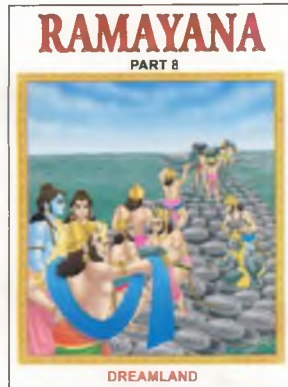
Forest Episode



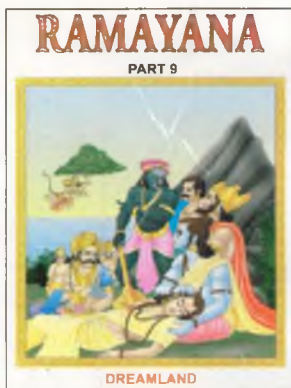
Kishkindha Episode



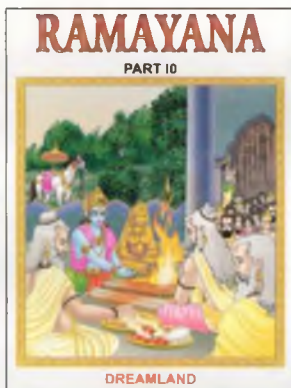
Fascinating Episode



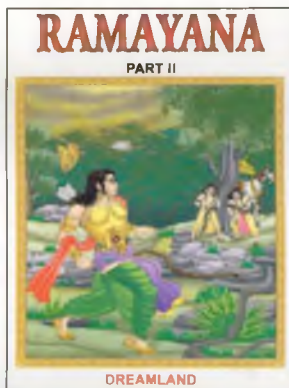
Battle Episode-I



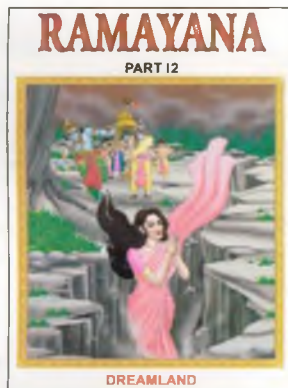
Battle Episode-II



Uttara Episode



Lava-Kusha Episode-I



Lava-Kusha Episode-II



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J-128, KIRTI NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110 015 (INDIA)
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