

Ramayana: A Divine Drama

**Actors in the Divine Play as scripted by
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

Volume II

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VOLUME II

Aa Nanda baludee Ananda baludai
tanavarini gurthimpa tarali vacche
Aa Ramachandrude Ee Ramachandrudai
tana bantulanu kanugonagavacche;
Aa eesudee BalaSayeeshudai nedu
tana gumputho aadukonagavacche:
Aaa Mahavishnuve Ee Mahyee Vishnuvai
Tana Aayudhamulu chee konagavacche
Alla paramaatma yanu bommalatagadu
Tanu jeevula rangasthalaana niliche
Aadu Aaanati Eenati aaata juuchi
Suntha varnichi kontha santhasamu ganudu. (Telugu poem)
(Satyam Sivam Sundaram Part I -1976 p.2/3)

Meaning:

That Child of Nanda (Krishna) as ananda Bala ((Blissful Child)

To identify His people (gopas) has come

That Ramachdra as This Ramachandra

To identify His devotees has come

That Isha as child Sai Eesa here

To play with his companions has come

That Great Vishnu as this Lord of Universe

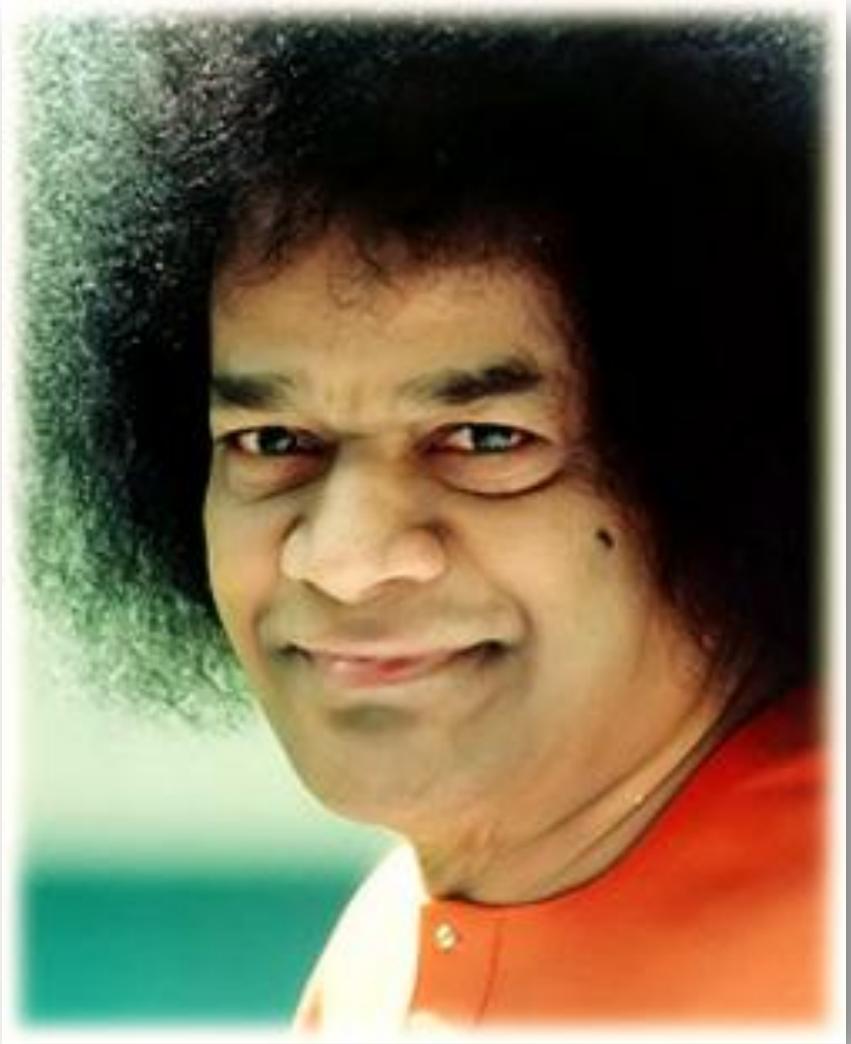
To arm Himself has come

Paramatma, that puppet-show man

Keeping the beings on the stage play His role

Observing the past and present

Praise His play a little and derive delight from it.



Sri Rama is Sai Rama

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6. STORY OF RAMA

The *Ramayana* demonstrates to us how one should live in the world, in the society, and in the family. Rama provides the example of an ideal brother, ideal son, ideal husband and ideal ruler. The ideal of Rama is most relevant to the world, at a time when it is fraught with chaos and confusion. We live today in a world where misunderstanding is driving a wedge between husband and wife, father and son, teacher and student, rulers and citizens. The remedy for all this lies in following the ideal set by Rama.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

RAMA

6.1 THE STORY OF RAMA – AN INTRODUCTION

THE STORY OF RAMA – AN INTRODUCTION

*aapadaam apahartaaram daataaram sarvasampadaam.
lokaabhiRamam shriiRamam bhuuyo bhuuyo namaamyaham. ..*

"I bow again and again to Sri Rama who removes (all) obstacles and grants all wealth and pleases all.

Any amount of narration of the greatness and nobility of the characters in the *Ramayana* will not suffice and do justice to the cause. The story of *Ramayana* cannot be fully described since it is "His Story".

*The stories of Lord Vishnu are amazing,
They purify the lives of the people in all the three
worlds,
They are like the sickles that cut the creepers of
worldly bondage,
They are like good friends who help you in times of
need,*

They are like shelters for the sages and seers doing penance in the forest. (SSS Vol.38 p. 86)

The story of Rama is as sacred as it is surprising. Although *Vedas, Sastras, Ithihasas* and *Puranas* have tried to describe the qualities of Narayana, they have only succeeded in saying that this is not God, that is not God, and so on; but they have never been able to pinpoint and state what God is and describe His attributes and qualities by positive statements.

However great the person concerned may be, it is not possible for him to say that God is like this or like that. God is beyond all description in terms of words we know and use. Many poets and many speakers could talk about God, God's *leelas*, God's powers and God's manifestations in their writings; but it was not possible for most of them to experience the true greatness of God. Till now, no one could find either an individual or a text, which has described truly the great form of God. To some extent, limited by their own beliefs, based upon their own faith, they can say God is like this. They can only point a finger as we point at the moon, which we can see only from a distance. Such a description is of limited validity, within the context of their own faith and their own belief.

The ancient poets and the ancient *rishis* were all-knowing and so they were only talking about *Paramatma* in a very modest way and were describing parts of this glory. These great men had great powers, had great strength and were selfless people, and had divine qualities in them. Because of these qualities and

because they were all-knowing they tried to picture God in the world, to some limited extent. (*SSB 1977 p.13*)

The name “Rama” is the essence of the Vedas; the Story of Rama is an Ocean of Milk, pure and potent. It can be asserted that no poem of equal grandeur and beauty has emerged from other languages or from other countries until this very day; but it has provided inspiration to the poetic imagination of every language and country. It is the greatest treasure inherited by his good fortune by every Indian.

Rama is the guardian deity of the Hindus. The Name is borne by the bodies in which they dwell and the buildings in which those bodies dwell. It can safely be said that there is no Indian who has not imbibed the nectar of *Ramakatha*, the story of Rama.

The *Ramayana*, the epic that deals with the story of the Rama Incarnation, is a sacred text that is reverently recited by people with all varieties of equipment, the scholar as well as the ignoramus, the millionaire as well as the pauper. The Name that the *Ramayana* glorifies cleanses all evil. It transforms the sinner; it reveals the Form that the Name represents, the Form that is as charming as the Name Itself.

As the sea is the source of all the waters on earth, all beings are born from “Rama.” A sea sans water is unreal. A being sans “Rama” is without existence, now or ever. The azure Ocean and the Almighty Lord have much in common.

The Ocean is the abode of the Almighty, as myth and legend proclaim; they describe Him as reclining on the Ocean of Milk. This is the reason behind the title given by Valmiki (son of Prachetas) the great poet who composed the epic, to each canto, *Kanda*. Kanda means water, an expanse of water. It also means “the sugarcane.” However crooked a cane may be whichever section you chew, the sweetness is unaffected and uniform. The stream of Rama’s Story meanders through many a curve and twist. Nevertheless, the sweetness of *Karuna* (tenderness, pity, compassion) persists without diminution throughout the narrative. The stream turns and flows through sadness, wonder, ridicule, awe, terror, love, despair and dialectics, but the main undercurrent is the love of *Dharma* (righteousness, morality) and the *Karuna* (compassion) it fosters.

The nectar in the story of Rama is as the “Sarayu river” that moves silently by the city of Ayodhya, where Rama was born and where he ruled. The Sarayu has its source in the Himalayan Manasa-Sarovar, as this Story is born in the *Manasa-Sarovar* (the Lake of the Mind)! The Rama stream bears the sweetness of *Karuna*; the stream of Lakshmana (his brother and devoted companion) has the sweetness of Devotion, (*Bhakthi*); as the Sarayu river joins the Ganga (Ganges) and the waters commingle, so too, the streams of tender compassion and devotion (the stories of Rama and Lakshmana) commingle in the *Ramayana*. *Karuna* and *Prema* (love) make up, between them, the composite picture of the glory of Rama. That picture fulfils the heart’s dearest yearning for every Indian. To attain it is the aim of every spiritual striving.

The effort of the individual is but half the pursuit. The other half consists in the Grace of God. Man fulfils himself by self-effort as well as Divine Blessings. The fulfilment takes him across the dark ocean of dualities, onto the Immanent and Transcendent One.

The *Ramayana* has to be read, not as a record of a human career, but as the narrative of the Advent and Activities of an *Avatar* (Incarnation of God). Man must endeavour with determination to realise through his own experience the ideals revealed in that narrative. God is all-knowing, all-pervasive, all-powerful. The words that He utters while embodied in the human form, and acts that He deigns to indulge in during his earthly sojourn, these are inscrutable and extraordinarily significant. The precious springs of His Message ease the Path of Deliverance for mankind. Do not look upon Rama as a scion of the Solar Dynasty, or as the sovereign of the kingdom of Ayodhya, or as the son of Emperor Dasaratha. Those correlates are but accessory and accidental. This error has become habitual to modern readers. They pay attention only to the personal relationship and affiliations between the characters of the story they read about. They do not delve into the values they represent and demonstrate.

People do not realise that the study of history must enrich life and make it meaningful and worthwhile, rather than cater to the appetite for paltry facts and petty ideas. Their validity and value lie deep within the facts and fertilise them like subterranean water. Wear the glasses of *Bhakthi* (Reverent Adoration) and *Sraddha* (Steady Dedication); then, the eye will endow you with the pure Wisdom that liberates you and grants eternal Bliss.

As men squeeze juice out of the fibrous cane and drink only the sweetness, as the bee sucks the honey in the flower, regardless of its symmetry and colour, as the moth flies towards the brightness of the flame, ignoring the heat and the inevitable catastrophe, the Sadhaka, (spiritual seeker) should yearn to imbibe the *Karunarasa* (the expression of the emotion of tenderness, pity and compassion) that the *Ramayana* is saturated with, paying no heed to other subjects. When a fruit is eaten, we throw away the skin, the seeds and the fibre. It is in the very nature of Nature that fruits have these components! Nevertheless, no one will eat these on the plea that he has paid for them! No one can swallow the seeds and digest them. No one will chew the outer rind. So, too, in this Rama-fruit called *Ramayana*, the tales of Rakshasas (demons, ogres and the like) form the rind; the wicked deeds of these evil men are the hard indigestible seeds. Sensory and worldly descriptions and events are the not-too-tasty fibrous stuff. They are the sheaths for the juicy nourishment.

Those who seek the *Karunarasa* in the Rama fruit should concentrate more on the central narrative than on supplementary details that embellish or encumber it. Listen to the *Ramayana* in that mood. That is the best form of *Sravana* (process of spiritual listening). (*RKR V Part I p.1-5*)

The story of Rama is not the story of an individual. It is the story of the Universe! Rama is the Personification of the basic Universal in all beings. He is in all, for all time, in all space. The story deals not with a period that is past, but with the present and future without end, with beginningless eternal Time! (*RKR V Part I p.10*)

Experience Rama in your heart

In Bharat today there is no place where Rama's name is not chanted or *dhanam* (charity) is not practised. Even in the tiniest hamlet there will be a small Rama temple. But these temples are not so very important. The temple in which Rama should be worshipped is your heart. God is the *Hridhayavaasi* (dweller in the heart). You need not seek Rama anywhere else. Without going out anywhere, without incurring any expense, you can experience Rama in your heart and achieve liberation.

Today, on Sri Ramanavami Day, in spite of the good fortune of being born in the *Rama Janmabhumi* (sacred birth place of Rama) you are not recognising the Rama Principle. There is nothing great about celebrating the birthdays of great persons. You must put into practice the teachings of those great figures. What is the use in celebrating birthdays and ignoring the teachings? Practice is the touchstone of devotion.

Knowing the ephemeral nature of the body, people should follow the conscience and lead a godly life. That is true devotion to Rama. You should dedicate your body, mind and everything, to God. God is the embodiment of love. You should promote love in your hearts. Turn your mind to God before the end comes. It may come at any time. (*SSS Vol.30 p.100*)

Tread the path of truth laid down by Rama

To meet a person living on the tenth floor, you have to go up nine floors. To experience the joy of being with *Madhava* (God), you have to rise to that purity, that love, that truth, that peace. Become full of compassion; love all; serve all; do your duty

sincerely and with joy; be good, do good, and thus deserve God. Rama will be pleased when you tread the path of truth, for, that is the path laid down by Him. A cursory reading of the Ramayana will give you only the husk; the kernel can reveal itself only when you reflect over each word and incident. Indian culture has always encouraged this reflection on the meanings of symbols, parables, and names. It is stated, "Dasaratha had four sons: Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna." Well. Who is the Dasaratha? Which kingdom was he ruling over? If in some City called Ayodhya, there was once a ruler named Dasaratha and he had a son called Rama, how are we related to that episode? Why should we celebrate that event, at this distance of time and space? (*SSS Vol.7 p.458*)

THE INNER MEANING

Rama is the Indweller in every Body. He is the Atma-Rama, the Rama (Source of Bliss) in every individual. His blessings upsurging from that inner spring can confer Peace and Bliss. He is the very embodiment of *Dharma* of all the Codes of Morality that hold mankind together in Love and Unity. The *Ramayana*, the Rama story, teaches two lessons: the value of detachment, and the need to become aware of the Divine in every being. Faith in God and detachment from objective pursuits are the keys for human liberation. Give up sense objects; you gain Rama. Sita gave up the luxuries of Ayodhya and so, she could be with Rama, in the period of "exile." When she cast longing eyes on the golden deer and craved for it, she lost the Presence of Rama. Renunciation leads to joy, attachment brings about grief. Be in the world, but not of it. The brothers, comrades, companions and

collaborators of Rama are each of them examples of persons saturated with Dharma. Dasaratha is the representative of the merely physical, with the ten senses. The three *Gunas* (qualities)—*Satwa* (calm serenity), *Rajas* (passion, activity) and *Tamas* (sloth, dullness)—are the three Queens. The Four Goals of Life—the *Purusharthas*—are the four Sons. Lakshmana is the Intellect; Sugriva is *Viveka* or Discrimination. Vali is Despair. Hanuman is the embodiment of Courage. The Bridge is built over the Ocean of Delusion. The three *Rakshasa* (demon) chiefs are personifications of the Rajasic (Ravana), Tamasic (Kumbhakarna) and the Satwic (Vibhishana) qualities. Sita is *Brahma Jnana* or the Awareness of the Universal Absolute, which the Individual must acquire and regain undergoing travails in the crucible of Life. Make your heart pure and strong, contemplating the grandeur of the *Ramayana*. Be established in the faith that Rama is the Reality of your existence. (**RKR**, *The Inner Meaning*)

Story of Rama is cream of the Vedas

What India needs most today is neither a new creed nor a new ism, neither a new society, nor a new ideal but men and women who adore and follow pure feelings and motives, persons who renounce anger, lust and greed.

The story of Rama embodies this vital message. It is the cream of the *Vedas*, a veritable Ocean of Milk. Valmiki has named each section of the epic, *Kanda*, a name which means a length of sugarcane. However crooked the cane may be, every slice is as sweet as every other. Similarly whatever the situation depicted or motion delineated, whether coronation or exile, victory or defeat,

heroism or dispiritedness, love or hate, joy or grief, the epic is equally sweet and charming.

There are two predominant rasas or streams of feeling or mood in the Rama story, the stream of compassion (*Karuna*) as Rama and the stream of Love (*prema*) as Lakshmana. It is the mergence of the two that evokes *ananda* (bliss). *Ananda* is the very nature (*Swabhava*) of Rama. He is *Bhagawan* Himself, though Valmiki has not explicitly declared it anywhere. He refers to Rama as equal in valour to Vishnu, but not as Vishnu Himself. It is only through the mouths of Rama's own sons that the mystery is revealed. *Bhagawan* means: *Bha* (effulgence) *ga* (manifestation) *wan* (he who is capable)---He who has the power to manifest *Jyothi* (Effulgence)---the Divine *Jyothi*, the *Atma Jyothi*. He is also *Sambhartha*---He from whom this Created Universe has emerged and He who is intent on fostering it. All who adore Rama as manifesting and protecting the Universe and projecting the Cosmic Effulgence and Intelligence are entitled to be known as *Bhakthas*. (*SSS Vol.15 p.30-31*)

Ramayana – a mellifluous song

The Ramayana propagated the great ideals of Rama in song and story. Rama was ever auspicious, ever the heroic wielder of the bow (*Kodanda-Rama*), ever the anointed ruler (*Pattaabhi-Rama*), and the Divine indweller in the heart. People have to enthrone Him in their hearts and adore Him. Thyagaraja grew ecstatic when he sang about Rama and His various attributes and glories.

Swami sang mellifluously Thyagaraja's song beginning with the words: "Rama! Kodanda Rama! Rama! Pattaabhi Rama!"----
"Rama! You stand by the word you have given. For me, you are the only wealth. Your song is the only song. Your path is the only path.

Rama! You are *Sitapati* (the consort of Sita). You are the *Gathi* (the goal). I bow to you. I surrender to you, Oh Rama. Rama! Your name is supreme. Rama! Thoughts of you are enough. Rama! I am yours. Please speak to me.") .

The great devotees of Rama revelled in singing the glories of Rama in this manner. Such a moving and inspiring story as the epic of Rama cannot be found in any other country or language. Even after thousands of years, the story of Rama continues to be related in innumerable villages and cities. (*SSS Vol.30 p.99-100*)

Sage Valmiki propagated the Ramayana in three different ways: As the story of Rama, as the story of Sita, and as the story of the slaying of Ravana. *Ramasya ayanam iti Ramayanam*. The Ramayana unfolds the story of Rama. It is also the story of Divinity. Further, Ramayana is the epic which unfolds the story of Sita; and the story of Sita is also the story of the individual self. The third aspect of the Ramayana is the annihilation of Ravana. The destruction of Ravana signifies the destruction of ignorance, ignorance is extinguished when we realise perfectly the relationship between the individual self and the Absolute Self. (*SSB 1996 p.19*)

If the Bhaktha has dedicated his all, body, mind and existence, to the Lord, He will Himself look after everything, for He will always be with him. Under such conditions there is no need for prayer. But have you so dedicated yourself and surrendered everything to the Lord? No. When losses occur, or calamities come, or plans go astray, the Bhaktha blames the Lord. Some, on the other hand, pray to Him to save them. Avoiding both these, as well as the reliance on others, if complete faith is placed on the Lord at all times, why should He deny you His Grace? Why should He desist from helping you? Men do not rely fully and unswervingly on the Lord. Therefore, though you have to be the agent and the instrument doing everything, keep on praying with devotion and faith.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6.2 INITIAL YEARS

*One may be able to repeat Vedas and Sastras by rote.
One may be able to sing ornate poetry melodiously.
If one lacks purity of heart, one is bound to be ruined.
The word of Sai is verily the truth. (Telugu Poem)*

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6.2.1 HIS BIRTH, NAME AND THE EFFICACY OF RAMASMARANA

RAMA¹: Avatar of the Tretha era (Yuga). Hero of the Ramayana; killed the wicked Ravana to rescue his virtuous wife Sita, who had been kidnapped. “Rama” means “he who pleases”. (*Dharma Vahini p.133*)

Rama: Destroyer of Fear from the hearts of those devoted to Him, the Crown Jewel of the Ikshvaku Dynasty, the precious Gem of the Raghu Dynasty, Rama! (*RKRV Part II p.149*)

BIRTH OF RAMA

The Story of Rama’s Birth:

In *Treta Yuga*, King Dasaratha of Ayodhya had three wives Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Kausalya first gave birth to a female child who was named Santha². Dasaratha gave her to one of his friends, who adopted her as his daughter. She was married to Sage Rishyasringa (*SSS Vol.42 p.83*)

Dasaratha longed for sons to continue the Ikshvaku dynasty. He performed a *yajna* called ‘*Puthrakameshti Yaga*³’ praying that he

¹ **Ramachandra:** Another name for Rama. (*Dharma Vahini p.133*)

² See Chapter, *Kausalya - She has a daughter*

³ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - Puthrakameshti Yagna*

be blessed with a son. The *Puthrakameshti Yaga*⁴ was conducted under the guidance of that couple. (*SSS Vol.41 p.109*) When oblations were offered in the sacrificial fire with the chanting of related mantras for the *Yajna*⁵, Agni Deva, the fire god emerged from the sacred *homakunda* with a vessel containing *Payasam* (sacred pudding). He gave it to Dasaratha to be distributed equally among his three wives⁶.

All the three queens became pregnant. In due course, Kausalya the eldest queen delivered a beautiful baby-boy who was named Rama. The Universal *Atma* embodied itself in the womb of Kausalya. Kaikeyi too gave birth to a son, Sumitra, however gave birth to two sons. (*SSS Vol.41 p.109-111*)

TIME AND PLACE OF BIRTH

Time of birth:

The child of Kausalya was born at a most propitious moment—Uttarayana (the Divine Half-year), Chaitra month, the bright fortnight, the ninth day, the *Punarvasu* star, Monday, *Simhalingna*, (the zodiacal sign of the Lion) and the *Abhijith* period (the period of Victory), when the world was resting happily, when the weather was equable (neither hot, warm nor cold). (*RKRV Part I p.42*)

⁴ See *Endnotes – No.1 – Puthrakameshti Yagna*

⁵ *SSS Vol.42 p.83*

⁶ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - DISTRIBUTION OF THE SACRED 'PAYASAM'*

Sri Ramachandra was born on a day when the planet *Shukra* (Venus) enters Meena (Pisces). The month of His advent marks the beginning of *Vasanta Ritu* (spring). It is the time when the sun enters *Mesha Rasi* (Aeries) (*SSS Vol.22 p.65*)

In the entire creation, Divinity assumes the role of being the vital substance. Rama belonged to the solar dynasty. The Sun God was their guardian deity. Without the sun's nourishing rays, life cannot thrive on earth. When creation first began, it took a few crores of years for light to dawn. It was all darkness till then. Similarly, after the birth of Rama, the sun could not shine for fifteen days! Consequently, the moon too remained invisible. Both the sun and the moon⁷ lamented that they could not catch a glimpse of the Divine incarnation of Lord Rama. The Moon God performed a penance, praying to catch a glimpse of Lord Rama. At that time, Lord Rama appeared before the Moon God and said; "I know that you could not see me for the first fifteen days after my birth. I hereby grant you a boon. In my next incarnation, you shall have my first darshan – even before anybody else can see me." And it proved to be so. When the next incarnation of Krishna took place, at the midnight hours, as Vasudeva carried

⁷ At the time of Rama's birth, for 15 days there was no sunshine. It was darkness all around. Consequently, the moon was agitated. It lamented, "Alas! I am unable to have a glimpse of Lord Rama!" After the passing of 15 days the sun itself was curious to see Rama. He gradually started rising. Consequently, the moon too started its lunar phases. The sun and the moon started executing their assigned tasks. This caused day and night to appear on earth. If you investigate the mystery of nature you will find that man plays no role anywhere in it. (*SSB 2002 p.159*)

the baby to the safety of Nanda's house, it was the moon that had the first darshan of the Divine child. (*SSB 2002 p.71-72*)

Place of Birth:

Where was Rama born? Many people have doubts about the place of His birth? He was born in Ayodhya. Was the city of Ayodhya⁸ built by some ordinary mortal? No. No. It was built by Viswakarma (divine architect) He built it in such a way that no enemy could enter it. (*SSS Vol.42 p.84*)

“The true birthplace of Rama is the womb of Kausalya.” Mother's womb is the birthplace of one and all, be it commoner or the Avatar Himself. Therefore, adore the mother as God. Uphold her name and respect her. (*DD 19-11-99 p.4*)

RAMA'S BIRTH (THE DIVINE DESCENT):

Avatar is encased in 'Kshirodakasayi' (The pure white milk of holiness)

It was declared that Rama was born of the payasam which was brought by the Deity from the sacrificial fire. No Avatar is born flesh and blood, including this Avatar. The body of the Avatar is

⁸ Life is a kind of struggle. You have to face conflict of opinions. But Ayodhya is a place from strife and controversy. No enemy could enter it. The human heart is the symbol of Ayodhya. All conflicts and divisions arise in the mind. It is the path of Pravritti (the outward path) that generates conflict and brings about alternatively union and separation. Because of this fact, man today is a prey to unrest and is bereft of peace. (*SSS Vol.31 p.68-69*)

chit substance; it is not *jada* like other materials. The embryo of ordinary mortals is '*jalodakasai*' enveloped in watery stuff; the embryo of the Avatar is encased in '*kshirodakasayi*', the pure white milk of holiness. That is why in the make – up of the Avatar there is no blemish, there is no trace of Guna. . (SSS Vol.4 p.15)

Rama was born from the fire of Sacrifice

Rama was born as a child of Dasaratha. He was not born from the womb of Kausalya, but actually from the fire of sacrifice. In fact, the Vedas are personified by Yajnas (sacrifice) and Rama is the very personification of Yajna. This not related to objects of nature, The Rama principle transcends the mind and the intellect. (SSS Vol.34 p.77)

NAMING CEREMONY

The child of Kausalya stared at Vashishta as if he was familiar acquaintance! He endeavoured to go near him, as if he liked his company and would fain be near him! Everyone wondered at this strange behaviour. Vashishta was overwhelmed with joy at this. He shed tears of joy; he had to wipe his eyes and control himself with much effort; then, holding a few grains of rice in his hand he said, “King! The child born to promote the joy of Kausalya will do the same for all mankind. His virtues will bring solace and contentment, joy and happiness, to all. The Yogis and seekers will find in him a great source of joy. Therefore, from

this moment, his name will be Rama⁹, “he who pleases¹⁰.” And the sages welcomed the Name as very apt and meaningful¹¹. They exclaimed, ‘Excellent, excellent!’ (*RKR Part I p.45*)

⁹ The sacred name Rama has the potency to lead us from darkness to Light. The word Rama is made up of three syllables: *Ra*, *Aa*, and *Ma*. *Ra* signifies the fire principle. *Aa* represents the moon, and *Ma* represents the sun. The fire principle *Ra* destroys all evil and sin. The moon principle *Aa* stills passions and brings peace. The sun principle *Ma* confers effulgence when evil is destroyed and peace reigns. Thus, the name Rama compactly embodies the whole of wisdom. It has the power to destroy evil, to bring peace, and to confer effulgence. This is the inner significance of the name given by Vashishta to the first-born son of Emperor Dasaratha. The fire principle thus has deep meaning. (*SSB 2000 p.30*)

¹⁰ The greatest formula that can liberate, cleanse and elevate the mind is Ramanama. (the name of Rama). Rama is not to be identified with the hero of the Ramayana, the Divine offspring of Emperor Dasaratha. He was named Rama by the Court Preceptor because it was a Name which was already current. Vashishta, the preceptor, said that he had chosen that name since it meant, “He who pleases.” While everyone else pleases the self, nothing pleases the caged individual self, more than the Universal Self. The Self is therefore referred to as *Atma-Rama*, the self that confers unending joy.

Rama is the bee that sucks the honey of devotion from the lotus of the heart. The bee loosens the petals of the flower it sits upon; but Rama adds to its beauty and fragrance. He is like the Sun, which draws the water to itself by its rays and accumulating it as cloud, sends it back as rain to quench the thirst of earth. Rama, the mystic potent sound, is born in the navel and it rises up to the tongue and dances gladly thereon.

The *Vedic* declaration, *Tat-tvam-asi* (That-thou-art) is enshrined in the word Rama, which consists of three sounds: '*Ra*,' '*aa*,' and *ma*. Of these, *Ra* is the symbol of *Tat* (That; *Brahman*, God) *Ma* is the symbol of *Twam* (Thou; *jeevi*, individual) and *aa* that connects the two is the symbol of the identity of the two. (*SSS Vol.6 p.160-161*)

VALMIKI GIVES THE MEANING OF RAMA

Manifestation of *Pranava*

The significance of the advent of the four brothers may also be realised from another point of view. The *Pranava*¹² *mantra* "Aum" has been equated with the Supreme *Brahman*. In this three letter word "A" stands for Lakshmana, "U" stands for Bharatha and "M" stands for Satrugna. The *Om* that emanates from the combination of these three sounds represents Rama. Hence the scriptures have declared that the Rama Principle symbolises the primordial *Om*. (*SSS Vol.23 p.41*) Rama, the eldest, is the full AUM. Rama is the concretisation of the *Brahman* (*Universal Absolute* – (*SSS Vol.13 p.211*) that emanated first as the Primeval Sound, AUM. (*SSS Vol.10 p.113*)

¹¹ Since the Lord pleases all, He is known as Rama. So also He is *Prema swaroopa*, the embodiment of Love. He is *Bhaktavatsala*, full of affection to His devotees. He is *Krupasagara*, Ocean of Mercy. In each such name and form, He has vouchsafed *Sakshatkara* (Direct perception of God) to Bhakthas and blessed them with *Sayujya* (Merger in the Divine). The Formless God assumes all forms in order to bless Bhakthas. (*Sandeha Nivarini p.20*)

¹² In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna declares that He is the *Pranava* (Aum) in the Vedas – "*Pranavasya sarva Vedeshu.*" Patanjali has extolled the *Pranava* as being an apt name for God. "*Tasya vachakah pranavah*". In Hindu religion, there is no mantra or Sastras that does not have 'Aum' as its base. We should, therefore, try to understand the profound significance of the sacred *Pranava*, the primordial word. (*SSB 1979 p.125*)

Moreover, Valmiki brought out the unique significance of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita as a manifestation of *Om* ¹³. Lakshmana, representing "A", stands to the right of Rama; Rama, representing "U" is in the middle; and Sita, representing "M", is to the left of Rama. Valmiki described the combination of the three as the embodiment of divinity. (*SSS Vol.23 p.41*)

Valmiki has given the meaning of Rama by splitting the name into three parts. *Ra*, *Aa* and *Ma*. *Ra* is the basic letter for *Agni* or fire; *Aa* is for Sun and *Ma* for Moon. These three letters respectively signify *Agni*, Sun and Moon. The fire burns away all the sins, the sun sheds light and removes the ignorance and the moon cools the agitation in one's mind. Thus the utterance of the name of Rama removes your sins, your ignorance and your agitations, and eliminates the possibility of your being reborn. In this context, he has also been identifying the sound *AUM* with the name Rama, and both bring the same result. As *AUM* is the very basis of all the Vedas, so also is Rama the basis of all creation. The three important aspects of *Agni*, Moon and Sun contained in the name Rama are synonymous with *Ida*, *Saraswati*

¹³ Just as for this *Om* *kara*, there are three principal sounds which go to make it up, namely *A*, *U*, *M* – Rama who is embodiment of Dharma also has the supporting characters who are Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna. The analogy is that Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna together make up Rama, the embodiment of Dharma. The sound *A* can be compared to Lakshmana, *U* can be compared to Bharatha and *M* can be compared to Satrughna. The combination of all these three is the *Om* *kara* and that is Rama Himself. So we have to recognise the inner meaning that Rama, who is no other than *OMKARA*, and in order to establish Dharma or righteousness on the surface of the earth, has taken birth on earth. (*SSB 1972 p.126*)

and Bharathi and are the basis for the whole world. (*SSB 1974 p.243-244*)

In the word of Rama, there are three letters. They are *Ra*, *aa* and *ma*¹⁴. These three components can be described as *Amrita* and *Agni Beeja*. In these three letters are contained the Surya and Chandra, the sun and the moon. The letter ‘*Ra*’ is the letter, which can be connected with the sun. The letter ‘*aa*’ can be connected with the moon and ‘*ma*’ with fire. The letter, which is connected with the sun, has the potency by which to shed light and remove all ignorance. ‘*Aa*’ which has been connected with the moon, removes your agitation and gives peace. ‘*Ma*’ which is connected with fire, burns out all your sins. This one name Rama will thus remove in one stroke all your sins, the agitations in your mind and your ignorance.

OMKARA is RAMA



"Listen to the primeval Pranava ‘AUM’ resounding in your heart as well as in the heart of the universe.

Valmiki established that there is nothing greater than one single name Rama. He has also given us a way by which ordinary

¹⁴ The next meaning is Ra, the cognate soul, the whole, the Divine, the Universal soul and Ma the individual soul, are one and the same. The river and the ocean, the drop and the ocean, the spark and the fire, all are one and the same. That is Rama. (*Alarm Bells! Divine p.16-17*)

people can understand and get the benefit out of it. The way by which we utter the word Rama is such that first we open the mouth and out of the mouth, we then send out all that is within us, which is sin and then we close the mouth to say Rama. Nothing thereafter enters that way into your body. (*SSS 1977 p.7*)

POWER OF RAMA’S NAME

Rama’s name is thus the life-giving essence of the two great *mantras*. The term “Rama¹⁵” has another esoteric significance. It consists of three syllables: *Ra* + *Aa* + *Ma*. *Ra* signifies *Agni* (the Fire-god). *Aa* represents *Surya* (the Sun-god). *Ma* represents *Chandra* (the Moon-god). The combination of the three letters constitutes the Rama name. *Ra*, representing the Fire-god, burns away all sins, *Aa*, representing the Sun-god, dispels the darkness of ignorance. *Ma*, representing the Moon-god, cools one’s temper and produces tranquillity. The name Rama has the triple power of washing away one's sins removing one's ignorance, and tranquilizing one's mind. How is the profound meaning of this sacred name to be imparted to mankind? This can be done only by the divine coming in human form and demonstrating to mankind the power of the Divine. Rama’s name signifies the harmony in thought, word and deed. Rama demonstrated this harmony by his thoughts, words, and deeds. (*SSS Vol.31 p.71*)

¹⁵ Ramachandra is, as the name indicates, the Moon, which repels the burning heat and restores coolness and comfort to all. He removes the pain caused by hate, malice, greed and envy. He is dear to all as Ramachandra, Rama the Moon! She is Sita, which means cool, the cool Moonlight! (*RKRV Part I p.217and 315*)

The name “Rama” has a unique spiritual significance. “Ra” represents the Paramatma. “Ma” represents the individual soul and “Aa” brings the two together. The Divine Name thus demonstrates the unifying principle. (*SSS Vol.25 p.68*)

The Rama Principle embodies numerous powers and potencies. The *Ramayana* is not a sacred text to be used only for ritualistic reading (*parayanam*). The Rama Principle is all-pervading like the Cosmic Spirit. In olden times people used to say that their inner secrets are known only to the Indwelling Rama Spirit (*Atma-Rama*). The Self is called "Rama". Rama means "one who pleases". How can you give a specific form to one who pleases or delights? , (*SSS Vol.31 p.71*)

Rama’s Name spread to every nook and corner of the world

Even after the passage of thousands of years, the name of Rama is known everywhere and is held in high esteem by the people. Nowadays even in Russia people are chanting the name of Rama. In fact, the name of Rama has spread to every nook and corner of the world. The name of Rama is the crest jewel of all names. Everybody can easily chant this. Therefore, whatever task you are engaged in, you should constantly chant the name of Rama while performing that task. When you step out from the home or when you are on your way to college, you should keep chanting the name of Rama all the while. The name of Rama should become your life- breath. (*SSS Vol.41 p.63-64*)

The Name of Rama Is Eternal

Thousands of years have passed since the advent of *Treta Yuga*, yet even now everyone, right from children to elderly people,

remember the name of Rama. The glory of Rama's name is such that it has not diminished even a bit with the passage of time. This truth should be recognised by all. Rama is the name given to a form, but the name of Rama is not limited to a form. *Atma* is Rama, and its true name is *Atmarama*¹⁶. Therefore, wherever and whenever you remember the name of Rama, Rama is there with you, in you, around you.

Rama is not limited to any particular form. It is the name that is latent in your heart. Many changes and variations keep occurring in the world, but the name of Rama is immutable, eternal, unsullied and everlasting. (*SSS Vol.40 p.103-104*)

Numerological undertones:

There are potent *mantras* that can transform personality and bring Grace to the aspirant. *Om* (the *Pranava*) is one such. Children are trained to walk, by means of a three wheeled stand, which they push forward with their hands, while standing behind it. The *Om* is such a three-wheeled help, the three syllables A, U and M being the wheels. Learn to walk safe and quick on the path of spiritual progress, with the help of *AUM*. Or, *Rama* is another *mantra*, having the same numerological vibrations: A equalling 0, U equalling 2 and M equalling 5, so that *AUM* is 7, whereas R is 2, A is 0 and M is 5, so that Rama too is 7, a very

¹⁶ In your heart, there is *Atmarama*, the Rama that confers eternal joy. So repeat the name Rama: the sun, which can make the lotus in the heart bloom. Rama is not the son of "Dasaratha" but the ruler of Dasa Indriyas, the ten senses. The recital of the Ramanama must become as automatic as breathing, as frequent and as essential. (*SSS Vol.1 p.83/84*)

seminal number, with the important spiritual tonalities¹⁷ presses on every breast. And the answer is given by every *breath---* *Soham* (He am I), the inhalation whispering 'So' and the exhalation, 'Ham'! (*SSS Vol.7 p.296-297*)

Divine Name Has Infinite Power

When Rama reached the seashore to go to Lanka and bring Sita back after killing Ravana, many people felt that it was an impossible task because they thought Ravana was very wicked, fierce and powerful. Moreover, there was a vast sea to be crossed which was not possible. Rama suggested that a bridge across the sea be built. Hanuman, Jambavan and other monkeys asserted that the bridge could be constructed in no time. Agreeing to their suggestion, Rama commanded them to start constructing the bridge. The monkeys then brought big boulders and parts of mountains from various quarters and started throwing them into the sea, but they all sank in sea water. How could the bridge be made in this way? - It could not be made unless the rocks and boulders settled at one place. So, what could be done for that? Perceiving the difficult situation, Lakshmana said to Rama, "Dear elder brother; everything in this world is perishable and bound to sink. But there is one thing that does not perish or sink. And that is Your Name. Your Name is everlasting, ever true and ever abiding. It is indestructible. The bridge should be constructed on the foundation of Your Name." Rama commended Lakshmana by patting his back and said,

¹⁷ Rama adds up to seven, which is an auspicious number. We have the seven *swaras* of music, the seven heavenly sages, and reciting Rama for seven days continuously is considered specially fruitful. (*SSS Vol.6 p.160-161*)

"Lakshmana, you have suggested the correct method Hearing this, Hanuman said to Rama, "*Swami*, I can do this work."

Now the monkeys started bringing the rocks a Hanuman told them to write the word 'Rama' on each boulder. The boulders with the Name 'Rama' written on them did not sink in water, but started drifting away. Then Hanuman told them that they should write the letter 'Ra' on one boulder and 'ma' on the other. The monkeys did as commanded and threw the two boulders together in to the sea with devotion and steadfast faith. The waves of the ocean brought the two boulders together to make the word 'Rama. In this way, the bridge was constructed. No rock did ever sink and such a long bridge was constructed in a short time. What was the foundation of the rocks and boulders? It was Rama's Name. Since all of them bore the two letters 'Ra' and 'ma' which constituted the Name Rama they floated on water. As soon as the bridge was constructed, Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman and the entire army crossed over and reached Lanka in no time. Vibhishana also said, "Oh Rama! Everything can be achieved by the power of Your Name. Your Name of just two letters has enabled the monkeys to build such a long bridge." The war with Ravana resulted in his death and the release of Sita from his prison. Thus, it is the Name of Rama that is most powerful and eternal. The form will sink at any time, at any place and under any condition. But the Name will not sink and will save you wherever you are. In this way, Rama taught that the Name is ever true and eternal. None can ever damage or destroy it, nor can anyone take it away from you.

The war with Ravana could be won on the strength power of the Name. It is, therefore, enough if you chant Rama's Name. Then you will be victorious in all your endeavours. Like the Name of Rama, the Names of Krishna, Siva, Hari and Hara are also constituted by two letters. Make any Name of God as the basis of your life, and then you can achieve everything. Name is eternal but form is ephemeral; the form has old age and death. Therefore, it is the Name that is most important. That is what Rama has taught mankind. (*SSS Vol.41 p.79-81*)

Name is Ananda

Rama is the name for the Ananda that is inherent in every heart; recite the name, let the Ananda respond and upsurge. Resort to the recitation of the Name when your mind is agitated by anxiety or grief. (*SSS Vol.7 p.303-307*)

The word Rama itself indicates Anandam. Rama is *Anandaswarupa*. In every being, He is the Ananda in the innermost core, the Atmarama. How then are you being affected by grief? Because you ignore the core, you identify yourselves with the shell, the body. Today, the holy day of Ramanavami, you should immerse yourself in the Atma as *Dharmaswarupa*, as the motivator of the moral life. There is no place where Rama is not; no being to whom He denies Grace. He does not arrive or depart; He is imminent, eternal. (*SSS Vol.4 p.291*)

Triple Power of the Name Rama

The three syllables 'R', 'A' and 'Ma' indicate the three causes for human birth, namely *Papamu* (the sins one has committed), *Thapamu* (the troubles one experiences) and *Ajnanamu* (one's

ignorance). "Ra" represents the root letter for *Agni*. "Aa" represents the letter for the moon. "Ma" represents the root letter for the sun. What does *Agni* signify? It destroys everything and reduces it to ashes. The letter "R" has the power to destroy all the sins committed by man. The letter "Aa" (symbolising the moon) has the powers of cooling the fevers man suffers from and conferring peace on him. "Ma" represents the sun who dispels the darkness of ignorance and confers illumination of wisdom. Hence, the word Rama has the right triple power of destroying sins, conferring peace and dispelling ignorance.

When you utter the word "Ram", you first open the mouth with the sound "Ra." All your sins go out when your mouth is open. When you utter "M" by closing the mouth, the entry is barred against the sins that have gone out. Everyone should recognise the sweetness, the sacredness and the divinity enshrined in the name "Rama." It was for this reason that Thyagaraja sang: "Oh mind! Contemplate on the name of Rama with full awareness of its power." It is good to utter the name Rama with full understanding of all that it signifies. But even without that understanding the chanting of the name has the power to destroy all sins. (*SSS Vol.22 p. 68-69*)

There is a story in the classics to illustrate the worth of the name of Rama. Sage Prachetas once composed a text with verses numbering hundred crores! The three worlds competed among themselves to take the entire text; the struggle assumed calamitous proportions and so God brought them together and persuaded them to accept a third each, that is to say, each world (Heaven, earth and the underworld) received thirty-three crores,

thirty-three lakhs, thirty-three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three verses each. One verse remained undivided. It has thirty-two syllables in all; so, when it too was allotted among the three co-sharers, at the rate of ten syllables each, two syllables were left over! How could two be divided among three? So, God decided that they be adored and revered by all three worlds equally--the syllables were 'Raa' and 'Ma,' making up the priceless key to salvation--Rama! (*SSS Vol.6 p.161*)

NAMASMARANA

*"Chakkara Kanteteepi;
Dadhisaaramkantenu rutyamaunu;
pempekkina tena kante atirutyam;
notanu palkapalkaga mikkilikammanau;
Amritame anipinchunu;
Kana nityamun, chakkaga dani meeru
Manasaa smarimpudu Ramanamamun".
(Telugu Poem)
(SSS Vol.34 p.75-76)*

Sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd, Sweeter indeed than honey is the Name of Rama. Constant repetition of this sweet Name gives one the taste of divine nectar itself. Therefore, one should contemplate on the Name of Rama incessantly. (*SSS Vol.35 p109*)

Chant Rama's name

Ramadas sang ecstatically,

*Oh devotees! Here is the wonderful sweet
That has been prepared from the
Vedas and the Puranas:
The sweet name of Rama.
Come, all ye, and partake of it!
This Rama lollipop is in many colours
And is the cure for all ills. It costs you nothing.
Come and take it, oh devotees! (SSS Vol.20 p.243)*

Make Rama your Atma Rama

Rama is *Ananda* (Bliss). *Ananda* is Rama. *Rama Nama* (name) will save you, if you have at least the *Pitru Bhakthi* and *Matru Bhakthi* (devotion to father and mother) that Rama had. If not, *Rama Nama* is merely a movement of the lips. Meditate on the *Rama swarupa* (Form of Rama) and the *Rama swabhava* (the true nature of Rama), when you recite or write *Rama Nama*. That will give exercise to the mind and it will be made healthy and strong, in the spiritual sense. Make this *Dharmaswarupa* your *Atma Rama*. (SSS Vol.3 p 4)

Always Chant the Divine Name

There is no *amruta* (ambrosia) greater than Rama's name. Today people have forgotten *nama chinthana* (contemplation on the divine name). They repeat only film songs. That is why the country is facing hardships. The educated, intellectuals and scientists do not think of God at all. They deem it below their dignity to apply *vibhuti* on their foreheads. Some of them have it on their foreheads when they are at home and rub it off the

moment they step outside. This type of conduct is responsible for degeneration in society. Why should one be afraid of chanting God's name? Let people talk as they like. You don't need to be afraid. Spread the glory of Rama's name in every nook and corner of the world. You can chant any name of your choice – Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana, Shiva, Vishnu, etc. As people have forgotten the divine name, every home is in turmoil. There are conflicts even among brothers. Since there is no purity within, un-sacred feelings have crept in. People are running after money and high position. Can money and position give you protection? You find so many in this world who have plenty of money and are occupying positions of authority. Are they able to enjoy peace and happiness? No. Only the divine name can grant peace and happiness. Those who neglect God's name bring about their own ruin.

Chanting of the divine name alone can protect you. Money and high position are like passing clouds. You should not clamour for them. One may join politics and attain some position of authority, but how long can one remain in power? Any moment one may be dislodged from power. One should not get carried away by politics. Instead one should take refuge in the divine name. He alone is truly blessed whose heart is filled with the divine name. People who do not relish the divine name may make fun of you. Somebody may tell you there is no God. What should be your reply? "God may not exist for you but He exists for me. Who are you to deny the existence of my God?" No one has any right to deny God. Never forget the divine name wherever you are and under any circumstances. Imprint the

divine name on your heart firmly and permanently. (*SSS Vol.35 p.127-128*)

Wherever we go, the name of Rama is heard. Though thousands of years have passed, Rama's name is as fresh and new as it was in the past. Rama is ever new. The name of Rama gives joy to everyone. If even an old woman is asked she would say, "I may not be able to say any other word but I constantly chant the name of Rama." Not even one person would be found in a village who does not know the name of Rama. There is no village where you do not find temples of Rama. Even if the people are not able to build a temple, they will erect a small shelter covered with a couple of sheets and install the idol of Rama in it. (*SSS Vol.41 p.63*)

The Lord's name is like a boat for a man crossing the ocean of life. It is supremely important in the *Kali* Age. It has been declared that there is nothing greater than the name of Hari in the *Kali* Age. By no other spiritual or religious practices can peace be attained in this age. The Divine name can turn poison into nectar. It can revive a lifeless thing. It is surcharged with infinite power. (*SSS Vol.22 p.112*)

Three reasons constitute our rebirth

There are three reasons for man to be born. One is sin, the second is an unfulfilled desire or some experience, the third is lack of knowledge, or ignorance. These three constitute the basis of our rebirth. (*SSB 1974 p.243*) Because of sin that we commit we get a rebirth as punishment. Because of lack of peace in an agitated mind, we get rebirth. Because of ignorance and lack of

knowledge, we get rebirth. If at one stroke, we get rid of sin, agitation in our mind and ignorance, the only is to constantly think of the name of Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.6*) Valmiki has stated in his Ramayana that uttering the name of Rama¹⁸ will enable us to free ourselves from the three shackles, which lead one to be reborn. (*SSB 1974 p.243*)

Contemplation of God's name removes all types of worries

Contemplate on Rama; the Ideal lived by God for man¹⁹. The name 'Rama' is not limited to a particular form. It dwells in every individual as 'Atma Rama'. The Atma which dwells in every individual is given the name 'Rama'. Hence, right from a child to a grown up individual, everyone has to undertake the sadhana of constant contemplation of Ramanama. We often see even blind people contemplating on Ramanama, saying 'Rama Rama'. It is only the divine name that can confer peace and happiness. Nothing else, not even wealth and property, can bring happiness and peace. Constant contemplation on the divine name can remove all worries.

"To be born is a worry

To live on this earth is a worry

The world is a source of worry

¹⁸ Mountains of cotton can be burnt down by a single spark. Likewise, wholehearted chanting of the name of Rama even once can destroy mountains of sins. But the chanting should not be done mechanically like playing a gramophone record. It should emanate from the depths of the heart. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, having before you the ideal example of Rama Avatar, you must seek to redeem your lives, by living up to Rama's ideals and proclaiming them to them world. Remember the name of Rama with love. God can be realised only through love and by no other means. (*SSS Vol.22 p.73*)

¹⁹ *SSS Vol.6 Second Edition p.67*

*Death too is a worry,
All actions and difficulties cause worry,
Devotion to Sri Rama is the panacea for all worries”
(Telugu poem) (SSS Vol.41 p.108-109)*

*Entire childhood is a worry and so is the old age; life is a worry,
failure is a worry; all actions and difficulties cause worry; even
happiness too is a mysterious worry. Devotion to Swami alone
will put an end to all your worries. Oh people! Develop such
devotion and love. (Telugu poem) (SSS Vol.40 p.43)*

Hence, undertake Ramachinta (contemplation on the divine name of Rama), whenever you find yourself surrounded by worries. The Ramanama has been in the hearts of people since aeons. (SSS Vol.41 p.108-109) Develop Love for God, so that you may get rid of those worries. That is the only effective medicine for all your worries. By chanting the Divine Name of God, all your worries can be cured. (SSS Vol.40 p.43) Contemplation of God is the right Royal path that would remove all types of worries²⁰.

Chant and be free from raga and roga

The Ramayana contains thousands of shlokas. As it is not possible to remember all the shlokas of the Ramayana, the sages recommended the chanting of the name of Rama. When the disciples of Vashishta asked him what divine name, the sage said, “It is enough if you chant the name of Rama. The name will make you free from *raga* (attachment) and *roga* (disease). The name Rama has two syllables ‘Ra’ comes from the *astakshari*

²⁰ SSS Vol.37 p.177

(eight syllable) mantra “*Om Namō Narayanaya*’. It is the life-breath of the *ashtashari* mantra. Similarly, ‘ma’ is the very soul of the *panchakshari* (five lettered) mantra ‘*Om Namah Sivaya*’. The *astakshari* mantra ‘*Om Namō Narayanaya*’ and the *panchakshari* mantra ‘*Om Namah Sivaya*’ become meaningless when ‘ra’ and ‘ma’ are respectively, removed from the words of these mantras. Without ‘ra’ the *astakshari* mantra becomes ‘*Om Namō Nayanaya*’ which is meaningless. In the same way, the *panchakshari* mantra without ‘ma’ becomes ‘*Om Nah Sivaya*’ which is inauspicious. The name Rama is the life- berth of both Vaishnavites and Saivites. (Worshippers of Vishnu and Siva) (*SSS Vol.37 p.101-102*)

Sweetness of Ramanama Never Diminishes

*Come! Oh, devotees! Come!
Take the sweet of Ramanama.
Do not buy and eat other sweets out of ignorance.
They will spoil your health.
By mixing the wheat flour of the essence of the Vedas
With the milk of Vedic declarations,
Adding the sugar of Subuddhi (virtues)
and the ghee of Nibaddhi (truth),
Removing the dirt of Abaddhamu (falsehood),
Our ancient Rishis have prepared this most delicious sweet
of Ramanama.
(Telugu song)*

Your health will be spoiled by eating all kinds of sweets sold in the marketplace. Those sweets may be tasty, but are harmful to

you. Instead, take the sweet of *Ramanama* that has been prepared by our great *Rishis*. It has a wonderful effect on your mind. It can never become stale or spoiled. The more you eat this sweet of *Ramanama*, the more joy will you derive from it. It is sweeter than sugar and tastier than curd.

The divine name of Rama is full of sweetness²¹ and it remains sweet forever. There have been many incarnations of God on earth. But the divine name of Rama has remained eternal. Since ancient times, *Ramanama* has remained as the *taraka mantra* (mantra that liberates) for one and all. Right from children to elders, everyone can derive the bliss of chanting *Ramanama*. Age is no obstacle in experiencing the sweetness of *Ramanama*. There is immense sweetness in this name. We should never give up such a sweet, nectarous and blissful *Ramanama* even for a second. (*SSS Vol.39 p.83-84*)

***Namasmarana* should emanate from the heart**

Today's youth should take a resolve to spread the love of God among the people without any hesitations or fear. They should make every man realise the sweetness of the Lord's name, the divinity enshrined in it and the purity associated with it. These feelings should emanate from the heart. That is true *namasmarana* (reciting the Lord's name).

²¹ Mira recognised the uniqueness and greatness of the Lord's name. "Enjoy the nectarine sweetness of the Lord's name" says Mira. (*SSS Vol.23 p.60*)

Namasmarana for Man's Liberation

Different means for man's liberation have been prescribed for each of the four *Yugas*. While meditation was prescribed as the primary means of liberation in *Krita Yuga*, performance of *Yajnas* and chanting of *mantras* forms the means of liberation in the *Treta Yuga*. Similarly, *archana* (worship of God) was the chief means of liberation in *Dwapara Yuga*. But it is *namasmarana* that is the main means of man's liberation in *Kali Yuga*. As the people of *Kali Yuga* do not have the strength and capability to carry out rigorous *sadhana*, they have been advised to do *namasmarana*.

*Harernama, Harernama Harernamaiva Kevalam,
Kalau Nasthyeva Nasthyeva Nasthyeva Gathiranyatha.*

(In *Kali Yuga*, there is no other means more effective than the chanting of Divine Name for man's liberation).

In *Treta Yuga* when the sages and seers were engaged in the chanting of the divine name of Rama, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and other demons tried to put hurdles in their way. They thought that if they abducted Sita, who symbolized Brahmajnana, Rama would lose His power. The name would lose its potency without *jnana* just like sugarcane loses its sweetness without *rasa*. Hanuman resolved to bring this *rasa* back to Rama and rejoiced in drinking *ramarasa* (ambrosia of Rama's name). The people of *Treta* and *Dwapara Yugas* considered the name Rama to be the essence of all sweetness and enjoyed its nectarous taste. Instead of tasting the delicious spiritual sweetness of the name of Rama,

people today devour worldly sweets, and expose themselves to the risk of becoming diabetics. Worldly sweets cause diseases whereas the delicious sweet of *Ramanama* rids one of all diseases. In ancient India, even the cowherds and shepherds chanted the divine name while tending their cattle and sheep. There were not many diseases in ancient times. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna propagated the glorious power of *Vedic mantras* to free the world from diseases and suffering. (*SSS Vol. 37 p.100-102*)

Practice remembrance of God:

*Sri Rama Rama Rameti, Rame Raame Manorame
Sahasra Naama Tattulyam, Rama Naama Varaanane.*

The repetition of the name “Rama” once is equal to repeating the entire *Vishnu Sahasra nama* (thousand names of Vishnu).

Whatever thought you entertain last, you will achieve that form in your next birth. The contemplation (*smarana*) done during your lifetime becomes your sole ornament (*abharana*) after death. If you remember the Lord’s name throughout your life, it will be easy to recall it in your last moments. (*SSB 1995 p.81-82*)

The term Manorame used in the shloka has two meanings. One refers to Parvathi. The other signifies that one should “enjoy in the mind” the name of Rama. The Rama Principle is one which delights the heart. (*SSS Vol.23 p.48*)

The name of Rama is the potent liberator

The name of Rama, was once indicated by Rama Himself, as a potent liberator. When Rama was passing through the forests with Sita and Lakshmana, hermits who recognised Him as Divine gathered around Him with a prayer that they be initiated by Him and given some mantra which they could repeat for spiritual upliftment and victory. Rama replied that He was a prince in exile, wandering in the forests, and so, He could not presume any authority to initiate hermits into spiritual path. He moved on along the jungle tracks. Watching Him walking fast, with Sita immediately behind Him and Lakshmana following in the rear, an aged hermit exclaimed, “Friends! See! Rama is initiating us! He is awarding us the mantra! God is leading, Nature (His constant companion, His shadow) is following; the Individual (*jiva*), part of the Lord, the wave of the ocean, is in the rear; he can see the Lord only if the deluding Nature is propitiated or by-passed. This is the indeed a silent lesson in Sadhana. ‘*Ra*’ is God; ‘*ma*’ is the individual who has fallen behind. ‘*Aa*’ is nature, *prakriti*; Rama Rama is the *mantra*. He is vouchsafing so graciously. Take it and save yourselves. For me, there is no other course,” he said. (*SSS Vol.6 p.168*)

Rama – Nama is a Potent Drug:

The wrong notion that the world is real and that you are the body has been so deeply implanted in you through birth after birth, that it can be removed only by means of a very potent drug, administered continuously. The drug, Ram Ram Ram, is to be swallowed and assimilated *ad-infinitum*. Its curative essence will travel into every limb, every sense, every nerve and every drop of blood. Every particle of you will be transmuted into Ram. You

must melt in the crucible and be poured into the Ram mould and become Ram. That is the fruition of *jnana Ramanama* or any other Name if chanted and absorbed in the mind, will help control the vagaries of the senses which drag you away into vanities. (*SSS Vol.6 p. 3*)

WAYS TO CONTEMPLATE ON THE DIVINE NAME

Chant the Name of God Incessantly

In the Kali Age, chanting of the Lord's Name is the only way to liberation.

(Sanskrit Verse)

Any mighty task can be achieved by chanting the Divine Name. For spiritual practices like meditation and penance²², a specific

²² That is why Swami is exhorting you to undertake spiritual *sadhana*. *Nagarsankirtan* is one of the *sadhana* that is prescribed for devotees. No one knows when one's end approaches. Yama has no consideration of what one is doing, good or bad, at the time of casting his noose. One may leave his mortal coil even when one is doing *nagar sankirtan*. Hence, one should always be prepared to face Yama by chanting the divine name. You should undertake spiritual practice and earn the divine grace so as to be free from *karma phala*. One need not feel depressed and resign to one's fate. One can easily overcome fate with sincere prayers. The story of Markandeya proves this point beyond doubt. Everything depends on God's grace. You may undertake any number of spiritual practices, but never forget God's name even for a moment. Only then will you be protected. Never do anything that will take you away from God. You can achieve anything through prayer. You need not pray loudly; it is enough if you pray mentally. Some people have a mistaken notion that God will not come to their rescue if they do not

time and place are required. But for chanting the Divine Name, no such restriction needs to be followed. Wherever you are, whatever you may be doing, you can chant the Divine Name. *(SSS Vol.34 p.377)*

Constant contemplation on Ramayana and singing of the glory of the Divine name of ‘Rama’ confers bliss, peace and prosperity on one and all. There are two ways of contemplating on the divine name and singing its glory – the individual Sadhana and the collective Sadhana. Of the two, the collective Sadhana is better. It was Guru Nanak who had initiated the practice of group singing of the glory of the Divine name. In fact the individual chanting of the divine name is not enough. If thousands of people join together and sing the glory of the divine name in one voice, the prayers of at least one or two individuals will certainly move Divinity. Hence, it is better to follow the collective method. Wherever you are, sing the glory of the Divine Name of Rama in a group. Contemplation on Ramanama confers peace and happiness. It is a Universal Sadhana. *(SSS Vol.41 p.107-108)*

Contemplate on Rama’s Name in full awareness of it

Tell your Mind! “O Mind! Contemplate on the name of Rama in full awareness of it. The same substance can be used for mundane as well sublime purposes. A boulder can be used as a stepping stone, as a building block and also for carving an idol.

pray loudly. God resides in your heart. He listens to your prayers. If you aspire to attain His grace, you have to contemplate on Him incessantly. Worldly difficulties come and go. One should not attach much importance to them. However, through prayer one can overcome any difficulties. Only God’s grace is true and everlasting. *(SSS Vol.38 p.159)*

The stepping stone is used for walking; the stone block for the building a mansion; and the idol for worship. The stone is the same, but is used for different purposes. (*SSB1996 p.83*)

DIFFERENT SAINTS AND POETS ON RAMA’S NAME

Valmiki, the great poet, was essentially projecting Rama as an ideal example of human beings. However, in many cases, he was also showing the sacredness and divinity that is contained in Rama. In the same manner, the poet Tulsidas wrote the story of Ramayana for the sake of propagating the great name of Rama to the world, as an example of ideal human being. In the lives of these poets, there were several incidents in which the strength of the name of Rama is seen. (*SSB 1977 p.5*)

VALMIKI

Will not be born again

One who chants Rama’s name and has the vision of his divine form will not be born again That is why Sage Valmiki has extolled the greatness of Rama’s power and his name. (*SSS Vol.35 p.126*)

TULSIDAS

Tulsidas proclaimed the greatness of Rama’s name

Tulsidas demonstrated the fact that wherever you go, whatever you feel, the name of Rama is contained therein. Tulsidas

reached the end of his life²³ by proclaiming the greatness of the name of Rama. In Ramayana, there are several instances which enable you to derive the strength that is necessary for facing various situations that come up in one's life²⁴. Not only in

²³ Tulasidas gradually moved away from worldly desires and relationships and experienced bliss in divine bondage. The life stories of great souls are indescribable. (*Beacons of Divine Vision Part I p.174*)

²⁴ God is greater than anyone else, Mother, father, sisters, brothers, wife and husband, all have come in the middle only! These relationships are like the passing clouds

Tulasidas was a contemporary of Meera. She wrote a letter earlier to Tulasidas seeking a clarification from him as to how she should conduct herself when there is a clash between her personal life and her devotion to God. 'The Rana is putting me to great trouble due to his self-interest. I am not creating any problems to him wantonly; I am following the divine command. However, I had to flout his orders now and then. Kindly clarify whether it is correct on my part to do so?' Tulasidas replied, "It is necessary to submit to the King 's orders to a certain extent in worldly matters. This is your duty. However, one need not care any individual, however high he may be, in matters relating to devotion to God. You are aware that the demon King Hiranyakasipu put his son Prahlada to great torture. Still, Prahlada did not give up his devotion to God. Rather, he ignored even his father's command. When someone like a husband or even a king comes in your way in matters relating to devotion to God, you need not at all care. Vibhishana, brother of King Ravana moved away from him and sought refuge in Sri Rama, when Ravana came in the devotion to God. He did not even entertain the feeling that Ravana was his brother. Similarly Queen Kaikeyi put her son Bharatha to great trouble when he wished to go the forest to see his brother Rama. She told him, "You need not go to the forest. Be prepared to be coronated as the King of Ayodhya." Bharatha then disassociated himself from his mother. His policy was that one should renounce even one's mother when she comes in the way of reaching God. In yet another instance when Emperor Bali was prepared to offer himself totally to Vamana, his Guru Sukracharya tried to dissuade him from doing so in ever so many ways. Emperor Bali then told him emphatically "Oh!

worldly matters and spiritual matters, but in daily life, every human being can perceive the grace of the name Rama.

Tulsidas said that the man, who did not know the preciousness of the Lord's name, casts it away as worthless. Hence, it is essential to realise the infinite worth of the Lord's name. (*SSS Vol.23 p 60*)

Tulsidas hailed Rama as the protector of the universe and declared that the very name Ra-aa-ma represented the three

Guruji! When God Himself approached me to seek my body in charity, why, should I not oblige Him? To whom else can I offer this body? What greater can there be? Does God come to anyone and seek alms? Now, He has come to me and stretched His hand before me saying, 'Bhavathi Bhikshaam Dehi!' (Please give Me alms). Thus, His hand had come under my hand, I have become the donor and He the receiver of alms. How fortunate I am!" He decided to offer his everything to god, even disregarding the advice of his Guru. These noble souls renounced even the father, mother, brother and Guru in the path of devotion. Hence, you may follow their example when it concerns devotion to god." What is the inner meaning of the advice given by Saint Tulasidas? God is greater than anyone else, Mother, father, sisters, brothers, wife and husband, all have come in the middle only! These relationships are like the passing clouds. Before your birth, after your birth and even after death, God is the only ONE who does not undergo change in all three periods of time – past, present and future. Hence, one has to develop unflinching faith in Him. In order to attain God who is eternal, the fleeting constraints created by individuals should not be taken into consideration.

Meera understood the message contained in the letter of Saint Tulasidas. She thought to herself, "Oh Lord Krishna! My heart is your *Mandir* (Temple). No one can separate us? She then set out on her journey to god singing, "*Chalore Man Ganga Yamuna theer.*" (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part II p.12-13*)

powerful deities, *Agni, Surya and Chandra* (the Fire-God, the Sun-God and the Moon-God). (*SSS Vol.22 p.112*)

KABIR

Kabir Ceaselessly Recited the Name of Rama

Kabir was weaving a pitambara for the Lord, for his Rama He had to work the loom alone, by hand. He recited Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama, and went on weaving ceaselessly. The cloth had become twenty yards long, but, Kabir did not stop; his tapas continued unabated; the pitambara was becoming longer and longer. The ananda of the craft, devotion to the Lord was enough food and drink for the sustenance. When he gave it to the temple priest for clothing the idol of Rama, the pitambara was just the size, just the length and breadth, not a fingerbreadth more! Such men are the mainsprings of the joy that spiritual persons fill themselves with in India. (*SSS Vol.4 p 28-29*)

Kabir declared: “Oh Rama! I am not qualified to perform sacrifices or penances. I can attempt to realise you only through love. Please enable me to attain you through love. (*SSS Vol.23 p.300*)

RAMADAS

Ramadas sang ecstatically:

*Oh devotees! Here is the wonderful sweet
That has been prepared from the
Vedas and the Puranas:
The sweet name of Rama.
Come, all ye, and partake of It!*

*This Rama lollipop is many colours
And is the cure for all ills.
It costs you nothing.
Come and take it. Oh devotees!
(SSS Vol.20 p.243)*

Cultivate Unshakeable Faith in God

Realisation of truth is *sakshatkara* (God-realisation). Therefore, we should develop faith in this truth. No doubt, people do have faith but their faith is wavering. As is the faith, so is the result. If you have total faith²⁵, the results are bound to be good in all respects. When you are confronted with difficulties, you tend to lose your faith. You may lose anything but not faith. You should consider faith as your life. That is the path you should follow. You have a strong belief that your parents are your parents. Even if a thousand people tell you that they are not your parents, you will not agree with it. You must have such total faith in God also. God will go to any extent to help those who have such unshakeable faith in Him. Your faith in God should be total. We may have to undergo any number of difficulties and hardships, yet, our faith should remain firm. Ramadas worked as *Tashildar* (revenue officer). He prayed to Rama, “*Swami*, whatever revenue I have collected I have spent it in your service. He sang thus:

²⁵ If you have faith and if you keep the name of Rama as constant companion, you are in Vaikuntha, Kailash, or Heaven, all the time. These are not distant regions that have to be reached by tortuous travel; they are springs of tranquillity that are in your own heart. You cannot have this chance of the proximity of the greatest of all sources of joy in any other place. Here it is so near, so easy to attain, so full of grace. If you fall back, you will seldom get the chance again. Ask and get what will save you, not what will bind you. (SSS Vol.42 p.154)

Oh Ramachandra! I have spent ten thousand gold coins to adorn Mother Sita with a gold necklace and another ten thousand sovereigns to decorate Your brother Lakshmana with a gold belt. That crest jewel which adorns You cost me another ten thousand gold coins. Unmindful of my travails, You are flaunting the jewellery as if You got it with Your own money!

(Telugu poem)

The compassionate Lord Himself appeared before the king and paid the money due from Ramadas. Later on, Ramadas repented and prayed for forgiveness, saying, “Unable to bear the hardships of your test I have spoken such harsh words. Oh Lord! Please forgive me.” One can achieve anything in life with the help of God’s grace. (SSS Vol.40 p.169-170)

SAINT THYAGARAJA

Thyagaraja the Saint-Singer sang Rama Nama as being composed of two vital sounds Ra and Ma. Ra being the life-sound of the mantra devoted to Vishnu (*Om Namō Narayana*) and Ma being the life sound of the mantra devoted to Siva (*Om Namashivaya*). The two sounds became Rama²⁶, the One, which became Vishnu and Siva just as the Linga is the One from which all Forms manifest, the Elementary Form which symbolises the First Emergence of the Will of the Divine²⁷. (SSS Vol.9 p.43-44)

²⁶ Rama is the harmonisation of Vaishnavism and Saivism. (SSS Vol.3 p.165)

²⁷ **Combination of Hara and Uma**

Rama is present in Siva and Kesava

*“Oh Rama, You pervade everything right from a cheema (ant) to Brahma. You are in Siva and also in Kesava. Please take care of me.” (Telugu poem)
(SSS Vol.37 p.190-191)*

Thyagaraja said, “O Rama you are present in all, right from an ant to Brahma. You are present in Siva and Kesava. You are everywhere. There is no place where you are not there; there is no name which not yours.” But today man is carried away by delusions and does not realise this truth. *(SSS Vol.31 p.387)*

The same divinity that is present in an ant is also present in man. Likewise, difficulties are also common for all. The suffering that an ant undergoes is similar to that of man. When such a tiny creature like an ant is able to withstand suffering, why is it that man is not able to do the same? He is influence by his food and habits and thus become a slave to his mind. That is the reason he is unable to withstand suffering. We should face the challenges of life with fortitude and brush aside the difficulties. Never be cowed down by difficulties. You can attain God only when you

A third meaning of Rama is from Hara (Shiva) and Uma (His consort), Parvathi). It is Ra from Shiva and Ma from Parvathi. When you say ‘Rama’ you are worshipping both of them. You do not need to worship God separately. If you say ‘Rama’, she will satisfied, and He will bless you at the same time.

Universal Soul and individual soul

The next meaning is Ra, the cognate soul, the whole, the Divine, the Universal soul and Ma the individual soul, are one and the same. The river and the ocean, the drop and the ocean, the spark and the fire, all are one and the same. That is Rama. *(Alarm Bells! Divine p.16/17)*

face difficulties with courage and overcome them. (*SSS Vol.37 p.190-191*)

*" Seetamma maayamma, Sri Ramudu maa thandri
Vathamaja, Soumithri, Vainatheya, Ripu mardana
Bharathadulu sodarulu maaku, Oh! Manasa!"*

(Seethamma is my mother and Sri Rama, my father; Hanuman, Lakshmana, Garuthmantha, Bharatha and Satrugna are all my brothers, Oh! Mind! May you be aware of this.)

There is an underlying meaning in this reply. Thyagaraja's mother was in fact, Seethamma and father's name was Rama Brahman. From the spiritual angle, he referred to his divine parents Sri Rama and Sita in his Keerthana. Thus, he tried to reconcile his physical parentage with that of Spiritual parentage. His reference to Hanuman, Bharatha and Satrugna denotes his link to the spiritual family of Sri Rama, which is a Universal family of devotees. Thus, he established his identification with the divine family of Sri Rama who always protected him. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.191*)

Thyagaraja sang and said that if he had the grace of Lord Rama, he would have all the strength in the world²⁸. We should therefore do such good work which will enable us to acquire the love of God. (*SSB 1978 p.187*)

²⁸ Thyagaraja said that, if he is armed with the Grace of Rama, the planetary missiles could never injure him. (*1008 Pearls of Sayings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba p.192*)

Thyagaraja made an appeal to his mind; “Oh mind, think always about Sri Rama.” Thyagaraja sang: “ Oh Kausalya, what penance did you perform to enjoy the privilege of calling Sri Rama affectionately as a mother and showering your kisses on the divinely beautiful child Rama. What penance did Dasaratha perform to call Sri Rama to come to him? (SSS Vol.28 p.86)

Mighty Power of Rama

Saint Thyagaraja sang a song extolling the mighty power of Rama: “*But for the power of Rama, could a mere monkey cross the mighty ocean? Would Lakshmi Devi, the goddess of wealth, become His consort? Would Lakshmana worship Him? Would the intelligent Bharatha offer salutations to Him? But for the mighty power of Rama, would all this happen? Indeed, Rama’s power is beyond all description.*” (SSS Vol.35 p.121)

Rama puts an end to evil feelings and promotes good thoughts. Rama is the Emperor of Ayodhya. That name means ‘Impregnable,’ ‘with no enemy,’ no injurious or demeaning feeling or thought, can invade the heart when Rama is installed therein. Thyagaraja sang, “*Thelise Rama Chinthana cheyave Manasa*” (Oh! Mind! Meditate on Rama with the full knowledge of what He represents). (SSS Vol.15 p.130)

Attain Rama through Love.

It was Divine Love which impelled Thyagaraja to sing:

*Is it not because you had
The bliss - conferring Chintamani.*

*Oh Rama, that all of them
Gathered round you,
With their hearts in unison
To experience perennial joy
From the Source of all Prosperity.
From the Ocean of Compassion
And the embodiment of Intelligence
That you are, with no equal. (SSS Vol.20 p.242)*

POTHANA

Pothana was a great poet and devotee of Rama. He was one with pure heart. He was the one who composed the *Bhagavata* in Telugu. He firmly believed²⁹ that it was Lord Rama Himself who wrote the *Bhagavata* through him. (SSS Vol.34 p.51)

He decided to live by cultivating his small piece of land. (SSS Vol.42 p.30)

One day, while Srinadha³⁰ was going by the side of the fields in a palanquin he saw his brother-in-law Pothana³¹ working in his field. He derisively passed a comment on Pothana addressing

²⁹ Pothana was a great devotee of Rama and surrendered himself totally to the Lord; Rama Himself composed the great epic Bhagavatham on his behalf. Pothana always believed that his poetry, his life and even his very existence were all the gift of Lord Rama. He was a true devotee. (SSS Vol.42 p.30)

³⁰ Pothana's brother-in-law and also a great poet, (SSS Vol.42 p.30) Srinadha was a great scholar and writer who was the Court poet of the Andhra ruler, Singabhupala. (SSS Vol.23 p.59)

³¹ Pothana has a profound inner meaning. 'Po' means 'to drive out' and 'Thana' means the feeling of 'his'. So, he had driven away the feeling of 'mine' and thus became a great devotee. (SSS Vol.34 p.51)

him as '*Haalika!*' meaning, 'Oh farmer! Are you Ok?' Pothana gave an apt reply saying, 'How did it matter if I am a farmer? I feel it is better and nobler to make a living by farming than dedicating my poetry to earthly kings and living upon their charity. That gives me great satisfaction!' (*SSS Vol.34 p.51*)

The Hidden Treasure

The Divinity hidden in man is immense, but no one is making any effort to understand this. At one time, in order to make Pothana rise high in Society, Srinadha came to him with a suggestion. He said, "Brother-in-law, you are wasting your valuable poetry by offering it to Rama. You are committing a major mistake by doing so. Is Rama providing you with food, shelter and clothing? Is He looking after your general welfare? Is He protecting your family? Far from it! Hence, offer your poems to the king (*Singabhupala*). The king will shower upon you a torrent of gold. Your family can live happily."

Pothana replied, "Brother-in-law, you are mistaken. The protector is Rama and not the king. How long will the kings survive? For how long can they foster you? My real mother is this Mother Earth. By placing my faith on this Mother and constantly chanting Rama's name, I shall sanctify my life. It is futile to offer this sacred story of Rama to the kings and feed on the crumbs thrown at me. I would rather believe in Mother Earth to protect me and my family. My poetry is the embodiment of Saraswati—the goddess of learning. Saraswati must be offered to Brahma alone and not to mere mortals. How inappropriate it is to offer such a holy text to these wicked kings! I cannot condescend to do such a thing." (*SSB 1996 p.118-119*)

Pothana's faith in Lord Rama

Pothana replied: "Sri Ramachandra is Lord above all kings. When I have Sri Ramachandra, the King of Kings, what need is there for me to submit to earthly rulers? It is God who offers spiritual benefits, earthly benefits and other benefits to everyone. Cannot the protector of so many countless beings, take care of me?" Pothana firmly held to this belief.

Provoked by Pothana's stubborn attitude and attributing it to Pothana's conceit, Srinadha conveyed his feelings to Singabhupala. The ruler became furious³². He sent his soldiers to wrest the *Bhagavatham* from Pothana. Pothana was prepared even to give up his life, but would not surrender the *Bhagavatham*. On the orders of the ruler, his men set fire to Pothana's house.

Pothana prayed: "Oh Sri Ramachandra! Will you not protect atleast your own life-story, apart from protecting your devotees?" Appealing to Sri Rama to protect the *Bhagavatham*, Pothana closed his eyes in meditation. Except the *Bhagavatham*, everything else was consumed by the flames.

Realise the infinite worth of Lord's name

Singabhupala heard about this remarkable phenomenon. From that moment he became a devotee of Rama. It is only when one's devotion is firm, pure and unwavering that the Lord is ready to extend every kind of protection. (*SSS Vol.23 p.59-60*)

³² The selfish king became livid with anger. It has been appropriately said that a king is one who is full of *rajoguna* (emotional aspect). (*SSB 1996 p 119*)

EXPERIENCES AND EXAMPLES OF THE STRENGTH OF THE NAME OF RAMA

There were several incidents in which the strength of the name of Rama is seen:

Vigneswara was adjudged the great among the Gods by going round the word RAMA

On one occasion, gods began to quarrel amongst themselves as to who among them was greater than others. In order to get a decision, they all approached Brahma. It was decided that whoever goes round the world first will be adjudged as the greatest amongst them. As soon as they heard the decision, each one took his own chariot, and started going round the world. Vigneswara (Ganesh) by tradition has a mouse as his chariot, and because of this small vehicle, he was lingering behind and making very slow progress. At this stage, Narada appeared and asked him how long he would take at that slow pace to go round the earth. Narada suggested that Vigneswara (Ganesh) should write the word Rama and just go round that word Rama and quickly go to Brahma.

Vigneswara wrote the name Rama went round the same and immediately went back to Brahma. Brahma decided that he was the best form of god. It is our tradition that whenever good work is undertaken, we first worship Vigneswara. This is the reason why Vigneswara is also called Gananatha; the superior one amongst all the *ganas*. It is believed that he will remove all obstacles in the work that we undertake. This has now become a part of our culture. (*SSB 1977 p.5-6*)

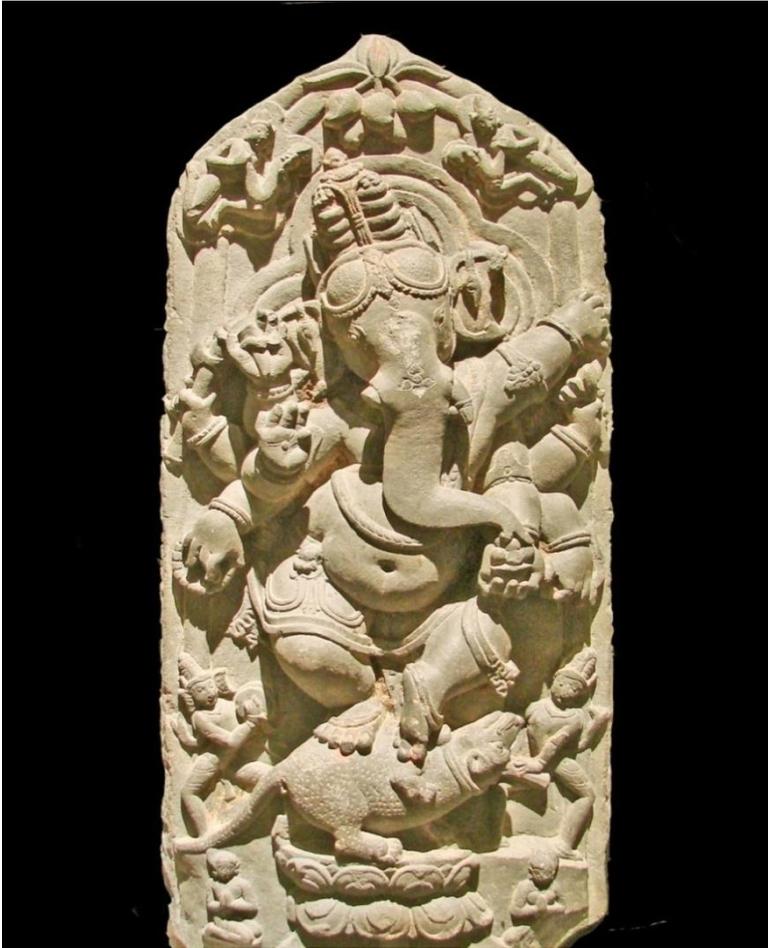


Figure 1: Lord Vigneswara

Source of the Photo:

Wikipedia- Original - The Hindu elephant-headed god Ganesha dancing on his mount - the mouse. 11th century sculpture, Museum of Asian Art, Berlin

Sumitra's conviction that Lakshmana could come to no harm:

“Lakshmana can never be put to any harm. He constantly chants Rama's name. Every cell of his body is filled with the divine name of Rama. So, nothing untoward can happen to him.” With such conviction Sumitra was composed³³. (*SSS Vol.35 p.125*) Urmila^{34&35} said: “The very breath of Lakshmana is filled with the divine name of Rama. How can any danger befall with such a person³⁶?”

Rama Nama combines the bijaksharas of both Siva and Vishnu

The grace of God descends upon eager Sadhaka, who listens attentively to the story of that grace. The name of God if recited with love and faith has that power. Once the mother of Agasthya boasted that her son drank all the waters of the ocean; but the mother of Hanuman who was there, said, “why go to that extent? My son leaped over it in a trice.” But there was the mother of Rama with them. She said, “Your son leaped over the ocean, uttering my son's name. Without it, he was helpless.” The name has that overmastering power. It can award unheard of, unimagined strength and courage. The other two women disputed the fact that it was Ramanama that strengthened Hanuman for the enterprise. So Kausalya asked Rama Himself.

³³ See Chapter, *Sumitra* - **SUMITRA'S CHARACTER THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS - Hanuman**

³⁴ See Chapter, *Urmila* - **LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM URMILA'S CHARACTER - Good conduct, good actions:**

³⁵ See also Chapter, *Urmila- Urmila meets Lakshmana after fourteen years:*

³⁶ *SSS Vol. 35 p.126*

He said, “Why, it was because this body was called Rama the name that combines the bijaksharas of both Siva and Vishnu that I Myself was able to conquer Ravana and his hordes!”

The name has much efficacy. By repeating the name, the Lord and his attributes can be easily identified. The tongue must be sanctified by the repetition of the name. It has also to use sweet expressions, which will spread contentment and joy. (*SSS Vol.4 p.41*)

Extraordinary achievement of Hanuman:

After Hanuman had the divine vision of Rama, he had at once undertaken the sacred task of searching for Sita. With the help of name of Rama and placing faith and belief in Rama and in the divine strength and power of Rama, he could jump across the miles and miles of the ocean. The extraordinary achievements on the part of Hanuman caused great surprise to others like Jambavan and Sugriva....He had the divine notion in his heart and the self – confidence, he could have vision of Rama, the Lord wherever he went. Hanuman showed the strength and necessary of self – confidence in a clear manner to the world. (*SSB 1977 p.96-97*)

The grace won by Sampathi

Rama nama can achieve the impossible; as the saying goes, the dumb can speak, the lame can climb hills. The wingless Sampathi could get back its wings and fly into the sky only through the grace won by recital of the Name. By means of Sampathi’s words the Vanaras were enabled to see things correctly. (*RKRV Part II p.118*)

Boulders got attached to each other

The Lord of Ocean appeared and said: “Ramachandra, there is nothing in the world that does not sink except Your name. Everything will vanish in the womb of time except Your name. Let warriors write the name of Rama on the stones and throw them into the ocean,” The Vanara warriors wrote the name of Rama and hurled the rocks into water. The boulders floated no doubt but got scattered about in different directions in the ocean. Hanuman then advised that warriors write “Ra” on one and “Ma” on another so that they get attached to each other. In this way, the boulders were kept together and the bridge was built. (*SSB 1996 p.63-64*)

Take the Name and make yourself light

The *Vanaras* (sub-humans) while building the bridge across the ocean carried huge boulders on their heads, repeating *Rama-nama* all the while and that made the rocks weigh less; it is even said that they wrote the name on the stones and that made them float! Each time they hauled or lifted a stone, they sang *Rama-nama* in unison and so they were a happy lot, doing *Puja*; not work, which is unpleasant. Rama's Grace helped all to overcome obstacles. Take the name and make your work light; that is My advice to you. (*SSS Vol.3 p.124*)

“Brahma vid Brahmaiva bhavati”

As soon as Rama, Lakshmana and Sita arrived, Bharatha prostrated before them and as a result of his being overjoyed, he went and embraced his brother Rama and felt exceedingly happy. He made his brother Rama sit in the chariot and himself was leading the chariot through the streets of Ayodhya, the citizens of

Ayodhya could not distinguish between Bharatha and Rama. The reason for this was Bharatha was also wearing his clothes and his hair like Ramachandra. Moreover, the brilliance in Ramachandra's face was exactly the same as the brilliance in Bharatha's face. Their bodies were different but their ideas, their thoughts and their views were identical. Bharatha was continually thinking and uttering the name of Rama. Consequently, Rama's form and Rama's brilliance entered Bharatha's body.

It is said, “*Brahma vid Brahmaiva bhavati*”. One who has the knowledge of Brahman will become identical with Brahman. As he was continually thinking of Rama he was transformed into Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.53*)

Mahatma Gandhi:

One day, Gandhi came running to his mother Putlibai, and told her that he was haunted by fear. She asked him to chant the Name of Rama whenever he was fear- stricken. From then onwards Ghandi chanted the Name of Lord Rama till his last breath. (*SSS Vol. 34 p.103*)

Dasavatara sthotram – Bhaktha Jayadeva

*NamasmaraNam Dhanyopayam nahi pasyamO Bhavatarane
RamaharE KrishnaharE Tava Naama vadami sada nu HarE //*

(For crossing the ocean of worldly existence, I do not see any shortcut other than chanting the divine name. I always chant Your name, Hey Rama! Hey Krishna!)

6.2.2 RAMA, HIS BROTHERS AND THEIR CHILDHOOD

HIS STORY:

The Childhood of Rama and his three brothers:

Rama and his brothers are said to belong to the *Surya Vamsa*³⁷ (solar race)³⁸. The children grew fast on the fond care of the

³⁷ The sun exists as an objective physical phenomenon. The moon and the earth are there. The earth has come from the sun. The moon has come from the earth. Both the earth and the moon have come from the sun. They are fragments of the sun. When you enquire deeply, you will realise that without the sun the world cannot exist; there can be no birth or death. Nothing can exist without the sun. This was the reason why the ancients worshipped the sun as Divine. Elements of the sun are present in every human being. Everyone has originated from the rays of the sun. The light within each one is derived from the sun. As his light is present within us, we are a fragment of the sun. Each human being, because he is a product of the sun, can claim to belong to the solar race. When Rama is said to belong to the solar race, it should be realised that the Principle of *Atma Rama* (the Indwelling Rama) present in every human being entitles him to claim lineage from the sun. Therefore, all of you are embodiments of Rama. Each one of you carries the imprint of the sun within you. Realising this truth and bearing in mind the fact that each of you belongs to the solar race like Rama; you should try to destroy your bad qualities and develop your virtues even as Rama destroyed the wicked and protected the good. This is the *yajna* (sacrifice) which every

mothers. But one curious thing was noticed early.) It was observed very soon that Lakshmana always sought Rama and Satrugna always sought Bharatha! (*RKRV Part I p.47*) The sons of Kausalya and Kaikeyi were happily playing in their cradles while Sumitra's sons were crying all the time, and were not taking milk. (*SSS Vol.42 p.83*)

Since the day of his birth, Lakshmana was always wailing! The nurses, the *ayahs* and others tried various remedies and palliatives; but nothing could alleviate his misery or stop his wail. Internal pain was suspected and medicines galore were tried. They were of no avail. So, Sumitra³⁹ was certain that the child's pain was beyond the reach of drugs. She sent for the Preceptor Vashishta. She fell at his Feet as soon as he entered the room. "Master," she appealed, "this Lakshmana is weeping since birth, and clamouring for something I am not able to discover. I have consulted doctors and treated him, as advised. But the wailing is increasing day by day. He does not relish even mother's milk! As for sleep, it is totally absent. How can he be healthy and hearty if he goes on like this? Kindly tell me why he is behaving so, and bless him that he may give up this continuous wail."

man has to do every moment of his life. *Yajna* does not mean merely performing a ritual sacrifice with priests and offering oblations in the fire. The evil tendencies in man are the result of differences based on physical distinctions. Once these differences are ignored, the divinity that is present in everyone will be recognised. (*SSS Vol. 22p.231-232*)

³⁸ *SSS Vol. 22 p.231*

³⁹ See Chapter, *Sumitra - Curious thing – Sumitra not destined to mother her twins*

Vashishta thought within himself for a while. Then he said: “Oh Queen! His pain is unique and you are trying to cure it by familiar means and drugs! His yearning is beyond the ken of mortals to understand. Do as I tell you and the child will be quiet and happy. The moment you do so, the child will cease wailing and begin playing about with gusto. Take him now and lay him beside Rama, the child of Kausalya. This is the panacea.” After this, Vashishta left, leaving his blessings on mother and child. Hearing his words, Sumitra⁴⁰ took her child to where the other child was, in its cradle. She laid him by the side of Rama. From that very moment, the wailing stopped! Laughter and play began! Those who saw this transformation took it as a great wonder! Lakshmana, who was until then suffering, began to prattle aloud in joy, kicking his feet about, waving his hands in glee, as fish do when they are thrown back into water, gliding gleefully along, in quick darts. He was in the presence of Rama, immersed in bliss and aware of the Grace Rama showered.

The story of Satrugna was also on similar lines. He was melancholic, averse to food and play. He appeared very weak and tired. Sumitra was worried at this development. So she invited the Preceptor to the palace and enquired from him the reason. Vashishta smiled again. He said, “Mother! Your children are not of the common stamp. They are born to enact a Divine Drama⁴¹! Place Satrugna on the same bed as Bharatha! Then his

⁴⁰ See Chapter, *Sumitra - Sumitra realises the Truth Mamaivamsho jeevaloke jeevabhuta sanathana:*

⁴¹ Lakshmana and Satrugna were the sons of mother Sumitra. Lakshmana followed Rama while Satrugna was always with Bharatha. They served their elder brothers with utmost love and devotion. During times of

daily routine will be joyful. He will be extremely happy. You need not worry anymore.” Vashishta blessed her and left. Sumitra followed his instructions immediately. Since then, Satrughna spent time in the company of Bharatha. The children were in unbounded bliss together; their progress was beyond measure! Like the splendour of the Sun, they grew in intelligence and glory from hour to hour.

The maids as well as many kinsmen of the royal family derived great joy watching the children at play. After they left, Kausalya used to insist that rites to ward off the evil eye were performed scrupulously. She was so affectionate and considerate towards the children that she never recognised the passage of day and the arrival of night or the passage of night and the dawn of a new day. She could not leave them out of sight even for the fraction of a second. While taking her bath or when she was engaged in worship inside the shrine, her mind was on them and she would hasten towards them as quickly as feasible. All her work she did in a hurry so that she could spend more time on their care.

The childhood of Rama was a simple but sublime part in his life⁴². The children, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna learnt to crawl on all fours, sit on the floor, and move about. Special arrangements were made to keep watch over them at all times, lest they fall and hurt themselves. Many varieties of toys

difficulties, they stood by their elder brothers, gave them good counsel and supported them in all respects. That was the purpose for which they were born to Sumitra. All this was a part of God's master-plan. (*Divine Discourse on Vijaya Dasami Day on 23/10/2004*)

⁴² See Chapter, *Kausalya - Divine sport of the child Rama*

were procured and placed before them. The mothers with the children, the children with the mothers and nursemaids, spent the days, with no sense of the passage of time, in one continuous round of joy. The children could raise themselves up and stand, holding fast the fingers of mother or maid. They could hold on to the wall, and get up. They could toddle forward a few steps on their feet. Their efforts and achievements gave merriment to their mothers. They lisped in sweet parrot voice a few indistinct words and made them burst into laughter. They taught them to say, Ma and Bap and were happy when they pronounced the words correctly.

Every day at dawn they rubbed medicated fragrant oil over their bodies. Then they applied detergent powder and bathed them in the holy waters of the Sarayu. Then, they dried curls in perfumed incense, applied collyrium to their eyes, placed dots on their cheeks to ward off the evil eye, and put ritual marks on their foreheads. They dressed them in attractive soft silk and helped them to recline in swings, where they slept soundly to the tune of melodious lullabies. Engaged in this pleasant task, the mothers felt that heaven was not far off in space and time; it was there all around them.

And what of the jewels for them! Oh, they were newer and more brilliant. Each new day—anklets, tinkling wrist strings of gold and precious stones, necklaces of the nine gems! For fear that these might hurt, by their hardness, the tender body; they were set on soft velvet tapes and ribbons. The plays and pastimes of the little boys defied description. When they were able to walk, boys of the same age were brought from the city and together

they played games. The city children were given tasty dishes to eat and toys to play with. They were also loaded with gift articles. The maids who brought them to the palace were also fed sumptuously. Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra had no care for their own health and comfort while bringing up their children; so happy were they with them.

After this period of nourishment and growth in the interior of the Palace, when they reached the age of three, the children were taken by their governesses to the playground, where they ran and rollicked to their hearts' content. When they returned, the mothers welcomed them and fostered them with great love and vigilance. **(RKR Part I p.47-56)**

INTERPRETATIONS

THE FOUR BROTHERS

The four brothers were always sharp and alert. This was depicted in Thyagaraja's song.

*“But for their devotion to Rama,
Would a monkey cross the ocean?
Would the goddess Lakshmi worship you?
Would Lakshmana willingly serve you?
Would the highly intelligent Bharatha offer his prostrations to
you?
Oh! How great indeed is the power of devotion
to Lord Rama's strength” (Telugu Poem)
(SSB 2002 p.58)*

Manifestation of the Vedas in Human Form

Who are Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna?⁴³ In *Treta Yuga*, the four *Vedas* assumed physical form and incarnated as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna. While *Rig Veda* assumed the form of Rama, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharvana Veda* manifested in the forms of Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna, respectively. (*SSS Vol.37 p.98*)

The *Vedas* thus incarnated in *Treta Yuga* to impart the most precious message to mankind. The two great sages Vashishta and Viswamitra declared to the world that the four *Vedas* had taken birth in human form as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna. As a consequence of great merit earned by Dasaratha, the four *Vedas* incarnated as his sons. If anyone asked Sage Viswamitra any questions about the *Vedas*, he replied, "All the four *Vedas* have incarnated as the four sons of Dasaratha to set an ideal to the world." Hence the *Vedas* are not formless; they have a form. (*SSS Vol.37 p.98*)

Lord Rama was *Pranava* itself (AUM). The three brothers are the syllables of "A," "U" and "M" in *Om*kara. Lakshmana was "A," Bharatha was "U" and Satrugna was "M," and the Lord was the *Pranava*. We can realise the sacredness of the *Ramayana* when we comprehend its inner significance, instead of being absorbed only in the external form of the narrative. (*SSS Vol.25 p.186-187*)

Four brothers are embodiments of four Vedas

Rama and his three brothers⁴⁴ are, from one point of view, the four *Vedas*⁴⁵ in human form⁴⁶. What are these *Vedas*? *Rig Veda* is the embodiment of Speech

⁴³ *SSS Vol.25 p156*

⁴⁴ Vedas - The oldest and the holiest of the Hindu scriptures, the primary source of authority in Hindu religion and philosophy. They are four in number --- the *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. (*SSS Vol. 1 – Glossary*)

⁴⁵ The sage Vyasa classified the Upanishads and allotted them among the four Vedas. The *Rig Veda* has twenty-one branches and each branch has one Upanishad allotted to it. The *Yajur Veda* has 109 branches and 109 Upanishads. The *Atharvana Veda* has fifty branches and fifty Upanishads were its share. The *Sama Veda* has a thousand branches and

(*Vaak*); *Yajur Veda* is the embodiment of Mind (*Manas*); *Sama Veda* is the embodiment of the Life Principle (*Prana*); and *Atharvana Veda* is the embodiment of the Intellect (*Buddhi*). Thus the four *Vedas* played about in the house of Dasaratha as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna. These four ends of life give fulfilment to human life, No human can find fulfilment without these four. There is a close connection between *Dharma* and *Artha*; Wealth should be acquired in a righteous way. Similarly, even desire should be acquired in a righteous way. Similarly, even desire should be sacred and righteous one. We should enjoy life basing ourselves firmly on the principles of *Dharma*. Unfortunately, the four ends of have been sadly neglected with utter disregard. *Dharma*, however, does not enjoy full freedom; it is subservient to God, its Master. (SSB 1996 p.15)

The *Yajur Veda*⁴⁷ lays down the rights and duties of man, the *Dharma* (righteousness) which ensures peace and prosperity for him, both here and hereafter. So, it is represented by Rama Himself. *Yajur Veda* says that *dharma* is the most important thing and that the practice of *dharma* is necessary for us during our life.⁴⁸

He put on the vesture of manhood in order to establish and exemplify *Dharma*. "*Ramah Vighrahavaan Dharmah*" is how the *Ramayana* describes Him--- Rama, the embodied *Dharma*. (SSS Vol.14 p.312)

the balance, namely, 1000 Upanishads were its share. Thus, the 1180 Upanishads were assigned by Vyasa to the Four Vedas. (*Upanishad Vahini* p.5)

⁴⁶ SSS Vol.14 p.311

⁴⁷ *Yajur Veda* describes the ceremonial and ritual aspects of worship (SSS Vol.10 p.) *Yajur-Veda*: Second *Veda*, consisting of a collection of sacred texts in prose relating to sacrifices. (*Dharma Vahini-Glossary* p.139); One of the four Vedas that lays down the rights and duties of man, the *dharma* which ensures peace and prosperity both here and hereafter.

⁴⁸ SSB 1977 p.85-86

Mankind should follow Rama's life

*Rig Veda*⁴⁹ enshrines *mantras* (potent sacred formulae). It elucidates them and elaborates their meanings, with the *mantra* "Rama" as their crown. Brother Lakshmana, who repeated it, recited it and relied on it, for everything in life and beyond, is indeed the embodiment of the *Rig Veda*. He teaches mankind that the *Rama mantra* confers on man the Constant Presence of the Lord. The *Sama Veda* contains songs in praise of Creation and the Creator and through adoration sublimated into song, the Lord yields Grace. Bharatha⁵⁰, whose every thought, word and deed was an act of thanksgiving, a paean of praise dedicated to Rama, was the *Sama Veda*⁵¹ itself. (*SSS Vol.14 p. 312*) Bharatha was always in the belief that singing the name of Lord Rama would give salvation.⁵²

Then, we have the *Atharvana Veda*⁵³ which is a collection of medical and ritual details, of charms and protective amulets to overcome internal and

⁴⁹ The *Rig Veda* is the Veda full of prayers to God for the realisation of the aims of life (*SSS Vol.7 p.299*); *Rig Veda* - One of the four Vedas containing hymns, mastery of which promotes humility and dedication as reflected in one's speech. (*Upanishad Vahini latest Edition- Glossary p.116*)

⁵⁰ Bharatha was the embodiment of *Sama Veda* and chanted *Rama Nama* incessantly with *bhava*, *raga* and *tala* (feeling, melody and rhythm). While Bharatha was engaged in *nirguna* worship (worship of formless God), Lakshmana rejoiced in *saguna* worship (worship of God with form). (*SSS Vol.37 p.98*)

⁵¹ *Sama Veda* extols the Gods through song and poetry (*SSS Vol.7 p.299*); *Sama Veda* - One of the four Vedas containing hymns, mastery of which grants intuitive vision. (*Upanishad Vahini latest Edition- Glossary p.117*)

⁵² *SSB 1977 p.85-86*

⁵³ The *Atharva Veda* gives the secret formulae for preserving health and security of body and community. (*SSS Vol.7 p.299*); *Atharvana Veda* - One of the four Vedas that teaches the possibility of man acquiring certain powers and mysteries by his own effort and exercises. (*Upanishad Vahini latest Edition- Glossary p.106*)

external foes. Shatrughna⁵⁴, whose very name means 'the destroyer of foes is therefore appropriately the *avatar* (incarnation) of the *Atharvana Veda*. This *Veda* enables man to conquer evil habits, attitudes and tendencies, so that he can listen to the Voice of God and gladly translate the words into daily life. Shatrughna demonstrated by his humility, loyalty and devotion the victory he had won over his ego, greed and anger.

Very often the mistake is committed, of forgetting that Rama came, in order to lay down the norms of life and that His life has to be observed and followed by mankind. He is the ideal Man, with qualities and virtues which every man can earn to elevate himself. Mere worship, empty adoration is not what the *Avatar* expects. Rama underwent trouble, disappointment and distress like any man, in order to show that joy was but an interval between two grieves, that grief was but a challenge, a rest, a lesson. He held forth the ideal relationship between son and father, husband and wife, brother and brother, friend and friend, ally and enemy and even man and beast. The Ramayana teaches also that, as a consequence of the individual's accumulated *karma-consequence*⁵⁵, children of the same mother may have opposite characters and careers. The waters of a pond breed leeches, as well as lotuses. Vali and Sugriva were brothers! So were Ravana and Vibhishana! (SSS Vol.14 p.312-313)

Four brothers represent four Purusharthas

From another point of view, Rama and the brothers can be understood as models of the four Primal goals of Man, the *Purusharthas*. Of these Rama was

⁵⁴ *Atharvana Veda* manifested itself as Satrughna who followed his three elder brothers and conquered not only the secular world but achieved victory over the kingdom of senses also. (SSS Vol.37 p.98)

⁵⁵ Karma is the seed out of which the individual emanates; the *jeevi* feels separate and limited, on account of the illusion created by karma or activity. As the karma, so the consequence. If it is good, the consequence will tend to attract you towards the means of liberation, that is, towards *sadhana* and *Sharveshwara chinta* (spiritual efforts and Godly thoughts). Just as three younger brothers followed the footsteps of the eldest, Rama, so too the other three *Purusharthas* (Aims of Man) must subserve the demands of the eldest, the first, *Dharma*. (SSS Vol.4 p.303)

Dharma (Righteousness); Lakshmana was *Artha* (prosperity); Bharatha was *Kama* (fulfilment of desires) and Shatrughna was *moksha* (liberation). These four are the progeny of every human being. (SSS Vol.14 p.313)

Rama is virtue personified (*Vigrahavaan Dharmah*). Rama is the supreme exemplar of the virtues that man must cultivate so that he might live as a master, as a husband, son, brother, friend, or even as a foe. The other three brothers of Rama personify the other three ideals: Bharatha is the embodiment of *Sathya*, Shatrughna of *Shanti* and Lakshmana of *Prema*. Study the Ramayana with the aim of imbibing from it the ideals for happy living, for making this life worthwhile, and you will be amply rewarded. Then you can deservedly style yourselves devotees of the Lord. (SSS Vol.6 p.67-68)

Rama is the embodiment of *Dharma* (righteousness), Lakshmana is the embodiment of *Sraddha* (dedication). Bharatha embodies *Bhakti* (devotion), Shatrughna personifies *Sakti* (valour). *Dharma* is associated with *Sraddha*. The protecting cover for *Bhakti* is *Sakti*. Hence, Rama and Lakshmana were always together as a pair, and Bharatha and Satrughna as another. (SSS Vol.20 p.46-47)

Dasaratha (Ten-chariot leader) is Man, having five sense organs of perception and five senses of action, ruling over *Ayodhya*, the city that is impregnable (the heart wherein God resides). These four goals have to be reduced to two pairs --- *dharma-artha* and *kama-moksha*. Man must struggle to attain prosperity only through righteous ways. The prosperity should be used to achieve and *maintain dharma*. This is the reason why Lakshmana follows in the footsteps of Rama and when Kabandha held Lakshmana in his deadly clasp, Lakshmana offered to stay in those arms, advising Rama to escape and live. This is the reason why when Lakshmana fell unconscious on the battlefield and could not be revived. Rama lamented, "Perhaps I may get another Sita, if this Sita passes away; but Oh! Lakshmana, nowhere can I get another brother like you. (SSS Vol.14 p.313-314)

The second pair of *Purusharthas* is *Kama* and *Moksha*; the only desire worth entertaining and pursuing is the desire for liberation. Bharatha had it and Shatrughna shared it. After the long pilgrimage to the shrines and holy spots

of Bharat, Rama had a few years, until he was aged fourteen, of apparent introspection and solitude. He disliked food and regal apparel. He was not interested in materials and men. He waved his fingers and palms for no clear reason; he wrote on the air only He knew what. He laughed without reason. Vashishta attempted to bring His mind back to normalcy, but that was only a stage which all *Avatars* are in, before they enter upon the task for which they have come down. Those years, the *Avatar* was designing His Master Plan. At the end of that period, the sage Viswamitra arrived at the palace, asking Dasaratha to send Rama (and the inseparable Lakshmana) with him, to save the hermits from the demonic gang who desecrated *Vedic* rites. The plan started unfolding. (*SSS Vol.14 p.314-315*)

Rama took truth as His very basis and in that way, He gave up the kingdom that was rightfully due to Him. He never had any aspirations for kingdoms. Ramachandra took truth as His foundation and based all His *karma* on the foundation of truth. It is in this context that it has been said that “*Sathyam nasti paro dharmah.*” Different from truth, there is no *dharma*. There is no truth which is different from *dharma*. He regarded *sathya* and *dharma* as the two foundation walls.

He also regarded them as the two wheels for the chariot of His life. He propagated that with *sathya* and *dharma*, one can carry on one’s life in this world. This is why Rama has been described by saying “*Ramo vighrahan dharmah.*” Rama is the embodiment of *dharma*. Rama’s form is *dharma*, Rama’s conduct is truth. (*SSB 1977 p.51*)

Nature of *Dharma*

Both Lakshmana and Bharatha dedicated all that was theirs to the Divine. They had no trace of selfishness or self-interest in them. They adhered to Rama’s path of *Dharma* (Ramayana). As all the brothers followed the path laid down by Rama, the *Ramayana* vindicates its title.

“*Ramo Vighrahan Dharmah*”..... (Rama is the very embodiment of righteousness,) says Valmiki. What is *Dharma*? Today all kinds of worldly *Dharmas* are proliferating. When we try to find out what is *Vaidik Dharma* (*Dharma* according to *Vedas*), there are confusing and conflicting opinions.

"*Dharayiti iti Dharmah*," it is said. (*Dharma* is that which sustains the world, that which upholds the world.) Every object in the world has got certain unique qualities.

The quality that is the vital essence of the object reveals its *Dharma*. For instance, it is the basic quality of fire to burn--burning is its *Dharma*. When the fire loses its capacity to burn, it ceases to be fire and becomes mere charcoal. Sweetness is the inherent quality of sugar. If sugar loses its sweetness, it is no longer sugar but sand. The Champaka flower has the natural quality of exuding fragrance. If there is no fragrance in it, it is not Champaka. In the same manner, for man the quality of *Ananda* that flows from his heart is his inherent *Dharma*. But man today, for the sake of external achievements, forgets this inherent nature. For all, whether they are educated or not, there is one common *Dharma*: They should extend to others the same honour and regard which they expect others to show towards them so that they may feel happy. We should not do to others anything which if others do to us will cause pain and unhappiness to us. (*SSS Vol.21 p.83-84*)

Do unto others as others do unto you

This means that we should not cause harm to others because we do not want them to do harm to us. This is the natural *Dharma* which is relevant to all people in worldly life. Not everybody can understand or follow *Vaidik Dharma* (Laws of Eternal Religion). Hence, in our ordinary daily life, the simple principle to be adhered to is, do unto others as you would like others to do unto you. However, what we notice among most people today is rampant selfishness and self-centredness. While they want to be respected and honoured by others, they will themselves show no respect or regard to others. *Dharma* is not a one-way traffic. It calls for "give and take." Today the spirit of sacrifice is absent among people. The foremost lesson of the *Ramayana* is readiness for sacrifice. It is only through *thyaga* (renunciation or sacrifice) that one attains *Yoga* (oneness with Divinity). The *Ramayana* proclaims the ideal of sacrifice. Obeying the commands of his father, renouncing the kingship and wearing the bark of the tree, Rama went to the forest as an exile. He was complying with what he regarded as *Aajna* (divine command). He demonstrated to the world what adherence to truth means. (*SSS Vol.21 p.84*)

Here Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna can be identified with the four *purusharthas*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Ramachandra has been looking at these four *purusharthas* as distinct ones. He took *dharma* as the base, *moksha* as the destination which we have to reach. When we have a ladder and when we want to climb to the top using the ladder, the ladder rests on the ground as the base. The ladder has also got a destination which we have to reach. This ladder rests on the ground of *dharma* and attempts to reach the top mansion which is *moksha*. In between there are two steps, the steps of *artha* and *kama*. Both these steps, *Artha* and *kama*, are to be joined either on one hand with *dharma* or on the other hand with *moksha*. If one is to expound it in a simpler way, one can say that *dharma* and *artha* join up and constitute one part, and *kama* and *moksha*, join up and constitute the second part. When *dharma* and *artha* are put together, we see that by a *dharmic* life, one may acquire wealth or *artha* or you have the aspiration to acquire wealth for the sake of *dharma*. Do not have *kama* towards the world. Do not have a desire to enjoy the world but have *kama* or the desire for *moksha*. All your earnings and acquisitions should be related to *dharma* and your desires to *moksha*. (SSB 1977 p.51-52)

The four brothers established the supremacy of the Vedas:

The *mantras* contained in the *Vedas* are of immense significance. When Sage Viswamitra realized that the *rakshasas* (demons) wanted to stop the chanting of *Vedic mantras* and destroy righteousness and truth on earth, he sought the help of Rama and Lakshmana who symbolized the divine forces that descended on earth to destroy the demonic forces and establish peace in the world. With the power of *mantras* taught to them by Sage Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana annihilated the *rakshasas*. This incident signifies the fact that with the power of *Vedic mantras* man can destroy his demonic qualities. By engaging themselves in the chanting of the *mantras*, the people of *Treta Yuga* annihilated their demonic qualities. Symbolising the divine powers of the *Vedas*, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna destroyed demonic forces and fostered divine forces in the world. The four brothers thus established the supremacy of the *Vedas* as manifestation of the aspect of God with form. Each *mantra* has a form. It has also its own inner significance. When chanting is done with contemplation on form, it leads one to the path of self-realisation. The *Vedic* seers declared: *Vedahametam Purusham mahantam Aditya varnam*

tamasah parastat. (I have seen the Divine Being who shines with the splendour of a billion suns beyond the realm of darkness). The seers and sages transcended the darkness of ignorance and visualized the effulgence of the Divine. They chanted the *mantras*, contemplated on the form of the Divine, performed *Yajnas* and attained peace and bliss. They made use of *mantra*, *tantra* and *yantra* in the performance of *yajnas* which ensured peace and prosperity of the people in *Treta Yuga*. With the help of the *mantras*, they quelled the *rakshasas* and established the reign of gods. (*SSS Vol.37 p.99-100*)

Symbolism of Ramayana:

The symbolism of the Ramayana may be viewed from another angle. The human body, with the five organs of *Jnanendriyas* (perception) and the *Karmendriyas* (five organs of action) represents the chariot, Dasaratha. The heart is Ayodhya, that which is not easily penetrable. The heart is, however, subject to pleasure and pain. The body is related to the three *gunas*--*Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Symbolically, of the three wives of Dasaratha, Kausalya represents *Satwa*, Sumitra represents *Rajoguna* and Kaikeyi represents *the Tamoguna*. This means that the human body is wedded to the three *gunas*. What is the *Dharma* that should be followed by this body? The fourfold *Purusharthas* (goals of life) are the goals prescribed for man: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. The four brothers may be regarded as symbolising these four goals. *Artha* (the acquisition of wealth) should be related to *Dharma* (Righteousness) and *Kama* (desires) should be related to *Moksha* (liberation). Man today ignores *Dharma* and *Moksha* and goes only after *Artha* and *Kama*. Consequently he becomes a prey to sorrow and misery. (*SSS Vol.23 p.41-42*)

LOVE AND UNITY BETWEEN THE BROTHERS

The ideal of brotherhood as depicted in the Ramayana is without parallel in any other epic anywhere in world literature. (*SSS Vol.13 p.211*) The four brothers Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna were parts of the same substance and facets of the same Divinity. The four brothers were virtually inseparable and manifested their divinity in equal measure. There was no

discord between them. (*DD 10th October 2005 p.7*) The unity between the four brothers was in fact the sum and substance of Ramayana⁵⁶.

Rama's expression of His fraternal love

He exemplified harmony and love among brothers. He treated his brothers as his own life – breath and showered his love equally on all of them. Thus Rama is an example of fraternal love for every family. He regarded his brothers as part of his own being and would not cause the slightest pain to them. Thereby he took his brothers to supreme state. Today brothers take their litigation to Supreme Court! This is not right at all. (*SSS Vol.27 p.109-111*)

Rama also shared with Bharatha the love that Lakshmana poured on him so profusely. He told Bharatha who prayed to him, with tears in his eyes, to return to Ayodhya as its ruler, "No, Father has ordered Me to rule over the forests, helping and saving the anchorites and hermits from the inroads of demonic hordes. He has willed that you should rule over the Kingdom of Ayodhya. Let us both be loyal to him." That was the expression of His fraternal love. (*SSS Vol.14 p.314*)

Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrugna had total unity among themselves. They delighted others by their unity. Even while playing games in their childhood, each aspired for the victory of the other. Once, the four brothers as young lads were playing a game. Shortly thereafter, Bharatha came to mother Kausalya, sat on her lap, and started weeping. She asked him, "Bharatha, why are you feeling sad? Have you lost the game?" (*SSS Vol.36 Part I p.103*)

Kausalya lovingly enquired, "Child, why are you crying? Did your elder brother scold you? Did your brothers fight with you?" In this way she tried to find out the cause of Bharatha's grief⁵⁷.

What love the brothers had for each other! Bharatha replied, "*Mother, I would have been happy if that were to be the case*"⁵⁸. Mother, none of my brothers

⁵⁶ *SSS Vol. 38 p.82*

⁵⁷ *SSB 2002 p.54-55*

would dream of scolding me and fighting with me. They all love me very much. But in order to make me win, despite my best efforts Rama always keeps losing the game. He always wants me to win.” The younger brothers should win and for that Rama would deliberately lose. That was always Rama’s style. Every brother followed this path and strove to make the other brothers win. Rama knew that if his brothers won and were happy he would be happy too. (*SSB 2002 p.54-55*) What an example of fraternal love!⁵⁹

Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna would tell their mothers that it was their great good fortune that they had Rama as their elder brother. They would praise Rama saying, he was full of love and nowhere could they find a brother like him. They always wanted to be in the company of Rama and serve him. There was such unity and love among them. They enjoyed intimate and inseparable relationship. (*SSS Vol.36 Part II p.63*)

While in exile, Rama would not bear separation from Lakshmana even for a moment. He would anxiously ask Sita about Lakshmana’s whereabouts whenever he was not found by his side. Rama thus taught the ideal of brotherhood by his own example. (*SSS Vol.36 Part II p.64*)

He would not eat alone delicacies but share with His brothers

Rama did not lack anything. But He was not interested in pleasures and comforts. Whenever mother Kausalya served Him various delicacies, He would not eat alone. He would eat only in the company of His brothers Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.95*)

Boundless Love for each other:

Among the four brothers there was boundless love and regard for each other. When Rama went to the forest and was in Chitrakoota, Bharatha came there to entreat him to return to Ayodhya and reign as the legitimate heir to the throne. Rama refused to return, saying that Bharatha should rule over Ayodhya in accordance with the promise given by Dasaratha. The argument between the two was ultimately resolved by Sage Vashishta who told Bharatha: “Do not

⁵⁸ *SSB 2002 p.53-54*

⁵⁹ *SSS Vol. 36 Part I p.103*

cause any pain to Rama, who is Divinity itself and who has come down to protect the good-and uphold *Dharma*."

Bharatha pleaded for taking Rama's sandals and administering the kingdom in Rama's name till he returned to Ayodhya. There are a series of episodes in the Ramayana to show how deep was the love between the four brothers and how devoted were the younger brothers to Rama. Such fraternal love is an example to the world for all time. (*SSS Vol.20 p.54*)

When Bharatha returned from Kekaya kingdom, he came to know from sage Vashishta that Rama had gone into exile and would not return for fourteen long years. He was disconsolate. He went to the sage, offered his respects and said, "Oh venerable preceptor, I do not want this kingdom, which has caused the exile of my brother Rama. Being the eldest son, only Rama has the right to rule over the Kingdom. Hence, at this very moment I shall go to the forest, fall at the feet of Rama and plead with Him to come and take over the reins of Ayodhya." In this manner, each of the four brothers was ready to make any sacrifice for the sake of the other. (*SSS Vol.36 Part I p.103-104*)

Love that existed between Rama and Bharatha

After reaching the forest, Rama sent word through Sumantra (who had driven the chariot) as follows: "My brother Bharatha would have returned to Ayodhya by now. Tell Bharatha that there should be complete unity in the family. He should love Kausalya and Sumitra in the same manner in which he would love his mother, Kaikeyi. He should not make any distinction between them. However, unable to bear the pangs of separation from Rama, Bharatha used harsh words against his mother. He did not spare even the family preceptor Vashishta. Vashishta approached Bharatha and told him: "Rama has left for the forest. You must get ready for the coronation. As soon as you are ready I shall fix the auspicious moment for the ceremony."

Bharatha lost for a moment the sense of respect he should have for the word of the preceptor. Rama was the very life-breath of Bharatha. He spoke to Vashishta in great anguish: "Am I to rule over a kingdom which banished Rama and plunged the whole of Ayodhya in grief? Do not mention the name of the kingdom that sent my Rama to the forest. I have no use for such a

kingdom tarnished by a grievous wrong." This was the kind of love that existed between the brothers.

Once, when the brothers were children, Rama came to his mother Kausalya in great joy. Kausalya asked him what the reason for his joy was. Rama said: "I am immensely happy today because Bharatha won in the game we were playing." Rama rejoiced in the successes of his brothers. Meanwhile Bharatha came weeping to Kausalya. She asked him: "Bharatha! Why are you crying? Rama is so happy over your victory." Bharatha replied: "Mother! I am very sad because Rama deliberately chose to lose so that I may win." The elder brother rejoices over the younger brother's victor. The latter feels sad about his victory and the defeat of the elder brother.

What mutual love prevailed among the brothers! Such was the pure and sacred unity that existed among the brothers at that time. (*SSS Vol.29 p.78-79*)

Example of Bharatha to stand by traditions

If you consider the conduct of Bharatha, you find that even though the kingdom was offered to him by his father and mother, he did not desire to enjoy what belonged by right to the eldest son, Rama. He considered it immoral and opposed to the traditions of the *Ikshvaku* family to accept the kingdom in such circumstances and firmly renounced it. When Dasaratha decided to take Kaikeyi as his third wife, with the consent of Kausalya and Sumitra, so that he could have a son to succeed to the throne, Kaikeyi's father imposed a condition that he would offer his daughter in marriage only if the son born to her would be made king, without regard to the claims of the son that might be born to the eldest queen. Dasaratha was not willing to accept this condition, but Kausalya and Sumitra persuaded him to accept it, saying that no one born in the *Ikshvaku* line would go against *Dharma*. This was amply borne out by the conduct of Bharatha.

Bharatha not only refused to ascend the throne, but he took a vow to stay out of the capital till Rama returned to the kingdom. He declared he was not prepared to sully the good name of his great ancestors for the sake of the throne. "When Rama has gone to the forest to honour his father's command, I

shall also go to the forest," said Bharatha. Ultimately, he secured the sandals of Rama, installed them on the throne and himself led the life of an ascetic in Nandigram, a village outside the capital. Is it conceivable that anyone would give up a great good fortune that came his way in the manner Bharatha did? Will anyone spurn the windfall that comes to him? But, Bharatha did not regard the kingdom as a blessing. He felt that it would be infamous to succeed to the throne. (*SSS Vol.24 p.62-63*)

Lakshmana's devotion to his brother

Turning to the harmonious relations that existed between the brothers' Complying with his stepmother's words, Rama might don the bark of trees, wear the mantle of an ascetic and leave for the forest. There was no such obligation on Lakshmana's part. But as a younger brother he felt that it was not proper for him to stay and enjoy life in Ayodhya when his brother was leaving for the forest. He was ready to renounce his mother and wife and accompany Rama, whom he considered as his life-breath.

Thus he followed Rama as an ascetic, treating Ayodhya without Rama as a jungle and a forest with Rama as Ayodhya. Indefatigably he served Rama and Sita night and day. The behaviour of brothers today in similar situations would be entirely different. They are likely to indulge in litigation over the sharing of property and lose them all in carrying the dispute upto the Supreme Court. They will not agree to enjoy the property in common and will ruin themselves through litigation. To such brothers, Rama should serve as an example. (*SSS Vol.24 p.60-61*)

Their affection and selfless attitude to serve people

One should recognise the affection that was shown between the brothers in the Ramayana and the sacredness of such affection. At no time and on no occasion did the brothers of Rama exhibit any selfishness. With a selfless attitude, they were regarding that service to the people was the main concern of their life.

All these good qualities were acquired by them from their Guru Vashishta, even while they were young and they shaped themselves so as to be ideals for others in the world. It is only when we can recognise and understand the true

nature of *satya* and *dharma*, even while we are young that we can get the most beneficial results out of such understanding when we grow older. (SSB 1977 p.54-55)

Spirituality promotes spirit of unity

The story of the Ramayana reveals the ideal relationship that should exist between brothers. Lakshmana and Satrughna served Rama and Bharatha respectively, with utmost devotion and sincerity. When Lakshmana fainted in the battlefield, Rama lamented, “In this world, I might find another mother like Kausalya, a wife like Sita, but definitely not a brother like Lakshmana.” A brother should be like this —one who respects elders and brings name and fame to the whole family. It is the unity amongst the brothers that brought reputation to the whole family. (SSS Vol.32 Part II p.107)

The relationship that existed between the brothers of Rama is an ideal to the rest of the humanity. They lived in unity in spite of troubles and turmoil. (SSS Vol.32 Part I p.101)

Any big task can be accomplished if the five fingers are united. Otherwise even a small task becomes extremely difficult. So, everyone should strive for unity.

*Spirituality destroys narrow mindedness
and confers unity, cooperation and universal peace.* [Telugu Poem]

Unity is very essential. Through unity, you can understand spirituality. Do not hate anybody. Do not develop ill feelings towards others. Then you can become a true human being. Spiritual practices are just a waste of time if you cannot overcome your selfishness. Do not engage in spiritual activities aspiring for your own liberation, because it would amount to selfishness. Work for the redemption of one and all⁶⁰. Let everybody attain divinity and

⁶⁰ **Be brothers in pilgrimage with all others**

Every other person has in his heart of hearts a picture of the God you revere. Recognise it and reconcile your misunderstandings; close up all

experience divine bliss. You should have such broad feelings. Your welfare lies in the welfare of the society. (SSSVol.32 Part I p.108)

Ideal Brotherhood:

After the marriage, Rama had to face many ordeals. He overcame them all with fortitude. He decimated the demonic forces. Lakshmana was His main weapon. With his help, Rama emerged victorious in the battle with demons. Many a time He lavished praises on His brothers saying, “My brothers are greater than Me, I owe My victory to them. I could win over enemies because of the strength of unity among us.” The lives of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna demonstrated the ideal brotherhood to the entire world. Such ideal brotherhood is not noticed today. Many wonderful events took place in the life of Rama.

*The stories of Lord Vishnu are amazing;
They purify the lives of the people in all the three worlds;
They are sickles that cut the creepers of worldly bondage;
They are like good friends who help you in times of need;
They are like shelters for the sages and seers doing penance in
the forest. (Telugu poem)
(SSS Vol.38 p.117)*

Rama demonstrated the ideal unity and coexistence in the world

Rama and Sita are depicted as lead characters. Not much importance is given to the other roles in the epic. If Lakshmana, Shatrughna, Urmila, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi were not there, the glory of Rama and Sita could not have been highlighted. Rama could not live even a minute without Lakshmana by his side. He would not eat without Lakshmana giving him company. Rama hence demonstrated the ideal of unity and coexistence to the world. In the Veda, there is a shloka that aptly describes this idealism.

*Saha Na Vavathu
Sah Nau Bhunakthu*

gaps and be brothers in pilgrimage, encouraging and inspiring each other along the arduous road. (SSS Vol.5 p.303-304)

SahaVeeryam karavavahai
Tejaswi Navadheethamasthu
Ma Vidvisavahai.

(Let us all move together, let us all grow together,

Let us all stay united and share our knowledge,

Let us live together with friendship and without disharmony)

The four brothers displayed such a unity amongst themselves. Today, if our children in the house, they take four different directions. (*SSB 2002 p.92-93*)

Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna became renowned on account of their strong sense of Unity. Contrast with Vali and Sugriva; they too were brothers but both had to undergo suffering on account of lack of unity. The Pandavas too illustrate how unity is strength. All the four younger brothers always bowed to the command of Dharamaja the eldest brother; they never went against his advice. The glorious example set by them in the Dwapara age continues to remain a shining beacon even in this Kali age. Disunity, discord, and dissatisfaction between brothers invariably produce pain and suffering. Unity, on the other hand, always paves the way for happiness. (*SSB 2000 p.81*)

Lesson for today's youth from the life of Rama

Even during their boyhood Rama and Lakshmana were careful about how they dressed. During the period of their early spiritual apprenticeship, they discarded princely robes, even though Dasaratha tempted them to wear costly jewels and clothes. When in the forest as exiles, they wore deerskin⁶¹ and had

⁶¹ When Rama and Lakshmana were wading through the Jungle after the loss of Sita, the sages who saw them described them as the 'Sun and Moon,' so majestic and magnificent was their mien. They shone with the splendour of courage and determination. When strength of body and steadfastness of mind reinforce each other, one's mien becomes attractive. Youth today has neither physical strength nor mental steadfastness, so young people appear old very early in life. When the body is weak, the mind, too, gets weak. You must try to develop physical well-being and health, for a gem has to be treasured in a safe, strong box. The gem of Divinity that is your reality also has to be kept in a strong box, namely, the body. (*SSS Vol.13 p.211-212*)

their hair knotted on top. They argued that a dress must be worn for one's own satisfaction and not in order to imitate someone else. They were never slaves to fashion or convention. They laid down the norms for others and never imitated others just to earn their favour.

Heroism was the hall-mark of the brothers. They met every obstacle squarely and exhibited the necessary enterprise and ability to meet and overcome opposition. The youth of today have to learn this lesson. They quaff before the tiniest obstacle and lose heart at the first difficulty they encounter. Like the heroes of the Ramayana they should march forward bravely, whatever the handicap, in the secular, the moral or the spiritual fields of activity. When the truth of One Reality in all, the Reality of God, is revealed, then there will be no more room for anger or hatred. They will seek and see only the good in every one. At present the passion in their eyes colours their vision. (*SSS Vol. XIII p 212*)

Man has only a short span of life, here upon earth. But even in this short life one can, by wisely using the time with care, attain Divine Bliss. Two men, in appearance the same, ostensibly of the same mould, grow under the same conditions, but one turns out to be an angel while the other stays on with his animal nature. What is the reason for this differential development? Habits and the behaviour formed out of these habits, and the character into which that behaviour has solidified. Man is the creature of character.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6.2.3 RAMA AS STUDENT – GURU AND PUPILS

HIS STORY

The Princes are initiated into studies

One day, Dasaratha while conversing with his queens, mentioned that the children will not learn much that is worthwhile if they moved about with the maids. Their intelligence and skills cannot be developed that way. So, an auspicious hour was fixed to initiate them into letters. Preceptors were called in to inaugurate the studies.

From that day, the charming little boys took residence in their teacher's home. They gave up the costly royal accoutrements and wore a simple cloth wound round their waists, and another thrown over their shoulders. Since education cannot progress well if children are in the atmosphere of parental love and care, they had to live with the teacher, imbibing lessons all through the day and night: for more is learnt by service to the teacher, by observing him and following his example. They had to live on whatever was given to them as food by the teacher. They shone like embodiments of the *Brahmachari* ideal (the Seekers of Truth). When the mothers felt the anguish of separation and

desired to see them, they went to the house of the teacher and made themselves happy, noting the progress of the children. *(RKR Part I p.56-57)*

Rama's outstanding interest in Studies

The teacher was also quite happy when he observed the steadfastness and enthusiasm of his wards. He was surprised at their intelligence and powerful memory, and he was filled with wonder and joy. Among all the four, he noticed that Rama had outstanding interest in his studies.

He grasped things so quickly that he could repeat any lesson correctly, when he had heard it just once. The teacher was amazed at the sharp intelligence of Rama. He resolved that his advance should not be slowed down by the need to bring the others to his level. So he grouped the other three separately, and paid individual attention to Rama who learnt very fast. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna too learnt their lessons admirably well, but they pined for the company and comradeship of Rama so much that, as soon as Rama was out of sight, they lost interest in study and in their duties towards their teacher. As a result, they could not catch up with Rama. They were following him a session or two behind.

Lakshmana dared tell his teacher once or twice that they had no need for any lessons or learning. They would be happy if they could but get the company of Rama! Rama was the very life of Lakshmana. The teacher observed this strange relationship between the two and drew much inspiration contemplating on it. He reminded himself of the statement of the sage Vashishta that

they were no other than Nara and Narayana, the inseparable Divine Forces. (*RKR Part I p.57*)

The Princes live in Gurukul

The brothers lived in the preceptor's house and served him with devotion⁶². They renounced the comforts of the palace and gladly underwent the hardships. They carried out the wishes of the master in humility and with loyalty. They finished their studies in a very short period and mastered the subjects they were taught. One day Emperor Dasaratha proceeded with his Minister to the home of their teacher. He was beside himself with joy when he saw them reciting Vedic hymns and heard the sacred formulae rolling out of their tongues, clear and fast, like a cascade of bright pearls. He was happy that his sons had learnt so much.

⁶² **Teacher-pupil relationship in the olden days:** In those days the sages lived with their pupils in hermitages, in quiet sylvan surroundings on the banks of rivers. Each hermitage was a university with the sage as the *Kulapati* (Chancellor). They were proficient in ail the branches of knowledge and eager to give the knowledge over to whoever could receive it and make the best use of it. They succeeded in their mission as a result of their own efficiency, the enthusiasm of their pupils and the sublimity of the environment. It was all so simple and sincere, so fresh and free. The environment which surrounds educational institutions today is quite the opposite of this ancient picture. Then the pupils lived with their preceptor in his residence and imbibed not only information but also inspiration, not only manners but also morals. They rose with the dawn, bathed in cold water and went through the rigorous schedule of prayer, study, meditation and household chores. They ate the food that the preceptor gave them. There was no distinction made in any of these disciplines between the prince and the peasant, the son of a *Pundit* (scholar) or of an illiterate. There was no opportunity to waste time in idle pursuits or trivial gossip, or in satisfying vain whims and fancies. (*SSS Vol.13 p.229*)

Rama rose and fell at the feet of his father. Seeing this, the three brothers too came forward and prostrated before him. The teacher invited the Emperor and the Minister to seat themselves on raised seats covered with deerskin. Dasaratha began conversing with the teacher in order to find out how far the children had advanced in studies. Rama signed to his brothers that they should not overhear their talk. He left the room with the permission of the guru, carrying his books with him and calling on the others to follow him. The brothers took the cue from Rama in all matters and so they silently obeyed his merest gesture.

Vashishta tells Dasaratha that the princes have mastered all arts:

Vashishta and Dasaratha noted this incident. They appreciated the upright conduct of Rama, his understanding of the trend of the teacher's conversation and the immediate reaction of humility and the way in which he was an example and ideal for the three brothers. They were glad that they had learnt so much discipline. Vashishta could not contain himself. He said, "Maharaja! Your sons have mastered all the arts. Rama has mastered all the Sastras. He is no ordinary mortal. As soon as I began teaching him to recite the Vedas, he used to repeat them as if he knew them already. Only He who has inspired the hymns can repeat them so, not any other. The Vedas are not 'books' which he could have perused while at leisure!

They have come down from guru and disciple, through recitation and listening⁶³ only. They are not available anywhere, except from the preceptor! That is the reason why it is referred to as *Sruthi*⁶⁴ (That which is heard). It is the Divine breath of God that

⁶³ The ancient system of education in India was based on *Sabdapramana*, i.e., the word of mouth. The practice of writing everything was not the main mode of teaching. The students listened to the teachings imparted by the preceptor with utmost interest which got imprinted on their heart straightaway. This was the main reason of high standards of education in ancient India. The entire process of communication was oral. There was no rigid timetable, or even curricula and syllabi. The teachers taught the student any science or subject that he was keen to learn. There was no interference from the government. The teaching-learning process was entirely heart-to-heart. The students kept their hearts open and the teachers filled them with knowledge. It was this heart-to-heart learning that enabled India to propagate wisdom and knowledge throughout the world. Lessons were taught at any time; it never mattered whether it was day or night. The hearts of the teachers were highly pure and sacred. They did not charge any fee from the students for imparting knowledge to them. It was the responsibility of society to look after the needs of the teachers. Depending on their capacity and capability, the citizens contributed towards the livelihood of the teachers and provided them with all comforts. But never was any fee collected from the students. Thus, the education system of India was deeply sacred, highly valuable and profoundly blissful. But, unfortunately, the Indians are neglecting their ancient system of education and hence are losing an invaluable heritage of knowledge and bliss. (**SSB 2002 p.21-22**)

⁶⁴ *Sruthi* refers to the process of learning, the *Vedas* from a preceptor by practising the precise manner of chanting the *mantras* and thereby acquiring proficiency in the recitation of the *Vedas*. The sounds have to be reproduced exactly as taught by the preceptor by listening to him with intense earnestness. The *Vedic mantras* are thus learnt entirely by listening. (**SSS Vol.22 p.206**)

The great sages, who were the embodiment of the treasure gained by long ascetic practices, received Veda as a series of sounds and spread it over the world by word of mouth from preceptor to pupil. Since it was “heard” and preserved by generations, the Veda is known as *Sruthi*, “that which was heard or listened to.” (**Sathya Sai Vahini p.176**)

has shaped itself into these Manthras. I have not seen so far anyone who has mastered them as Rama has done. Why should I say, ‘seen’? I have not even ‘heard’ of anyone who has accomplished this remarkable feat! “I can tell you of many more superhuman achievements of your son Maharaja! When I think of my good fortune in securing these boys as my pupils, I feel it is the reward for the asceticism I practised so long. They need learn nothing further. They have now to be trained in bowmanship and archery, and similar skills appropriate for royal princes. They have completed their studies under me and become efficient in all that I can teach. The day too is very auspicious. Take them back with you to the Palace.”

At this, Dasaratha, who was afflicted for months with the pain of separation, shed tears of joy. He could not contain his delight. He turned towards the Minister by his side, and directed him to convey the good news to the Queens and ask them to come over to the hermitage with the offerings that the pupils have to present to the preceptor while leaving his custody. Sumantra proceeded very fast to the Palace, and communicated the news. He got ready the gifts and returned quicker than anticipated.

Meanwhile the boys had their belongings packed at the suggestion of Vashishta and the articles were loaded into the chariot. As directed by their father, the children worshipped the Guru according to prescribed ceremonial, gave him the gifts, and fell at his feet, asking his permission to leave for home.

Vashishta drew the boys to his side, pressed their hands and patted them on their heads. He blessed them and most

unwillingly allowed them to leave. The pang of separation brought tears in his eyes. He walked up to the chariot with his pupils. The boys ascended the vehicle, and it moved away. They turned back towards the Guru and looked in his direction with folded palms, for a long distance. The preceptor, too, stood at that place, his cheeks wet with tears.

Dasaratha noticed this bond between the teacher and the pupils. He was greatly pleased. They reached home. The guru entered the hermitage with a heavy heart. Wherever his eyes were turned, he noticed darkness and no light. He feared that the attachment he had developed might confirm itself as a shackle. He decided to sit in Dhyana in order to suppress the rising tides of memory. Soon, he overcame the outer illusion and merged himself in inner Ananda. He realised that the boys were embodiments of Dharma, *Artha*, *Kama*, *Moksha*—the Four Goals of Human life (Righteousness, Welfare, Endeavour and Liberation) and that they had taken human form in order to re-establish on earth these grand ideals of gracious living. (*RKR V Part I p.59-60*)

This gave him unruffled peace. Dasaratha resolved to supplement the education the boys had received, by training them in the use of arms; so, he called in expert archers and others and made arrangements to teach them the science of attack and defence. But who can claim to be the teachers of these boys who were already past masters in every field of study? They were only “acting” the roles of humans and pretending to learn.

To Him who holds the strings of this puppet show, who can teach to pull the string? Men who could not recognise their Reality underneath the camouflage of Maya sought to train them and teach them the objective skills useful for external living. They have come to save the world from disaster; so, they have to be in the world and of the world, respecting the conventions of the world, so far as they subserve their purpose. Men could not understand their acts, for, they are beyond human intellect or imagination.

They will be helpless if asked to explain them. But people must learn the ideals they put into practice. So, Rama was presenting himself as a cinder covered with ash, or a lake with a thick float of moss or the moon hidden by a curtain of cloud. The brothers were following the footsteps of Rama.

Rama and Lakshmana were revealing knowledge of stratagems and skills which even expert instructors did not know about. They were wonder-struck and were even a little fear stricken. But the four Princes never shot an arrow at an animal or bird. They never broke the vow taken solemnly by them that they will use arms only on occasions of great urgency, not for the pleasure of killing or wounding. The trainers took them often to the forest for hikes and game shooting; but when they spotted animals or birds and invited them to shoot; they remonstrated and said, “These arrows are not to be used against innocent targets. They are to be used for the protection of the good, the welfare of the world, and the service of the people. That is the purpose for which they are with us. We shall not insult them, using them for these silly pastimes,” they averred and desisted. The teachers

had to accept their arguments. Every word, every deed of Rama demonstrated his compassion. Sometimes, when Lakshmana aimed his arrow at a bird or animal, Rama came in between and protested, “Lakshmana! What harm has it done to you or the world? Why do you long to shoot it? It is quite against the code of prescribed morals for kings to punish innocent beings; don’t you know?” (*RKR V Part I p.62-64*)

Mastered all disciplines

The children mastered the four Vedas before their tenth year. Indeed before the age of ten, they became masters of all types of knowledge – moral, secular and spiritual. These four children strove to secure the welfare and the well – being of all people.

The foremost knowledge obtained was that of the Spirit, for spiritual learning is supreme learning. All secular disciplines are like streams, where as spiritual knowledge is like a mighty ocean. These four children also cultivated noble virtues and supreme qualities. The children cultivated qualities which were not tainted by selfishness. They further mastered military arts like archery, swordsmanship and equestrian skills. The four brothers were past masters in horse -riding and elephant – riding. They rode so fast people could hardly see them. It was Kaikeyi who initiated Rama into archery, as she was an expert archer herself. She taught Him military skills with great love and rare affection. (*SSB 1996 p.21*)

Dasaratha and his ministers discuss about the governance of the state with the Princes

The Emperor often sat among his ministers with the princes near him, and discussed with those around him the problems of political administration, judicial trials and the application of moral principles in the governance of the state. He related stories of their grandparents and others of the royal line, how they earned the love and loyalty of their subjects, how they fought wars with “demons” and for “gods” and how they won the Grace and support of God in their endeavours. The father and the sons were both exhilarated when these tales were told. Many a day, the ministers took turns in this pleasant task. As they grew with the passage of years, the ministers became confident that they could be entrusted with some fields of governmental activity. The people dreamt that when they came of age and took hold of the reins of government, the earth will be transmuted into heaven. When people saw the princes they felt a bond of affectionate attachment springing between them. The conversation that ensued among them was marked by sweet concord. The city of Ayodhya had no one who did not love those simple, humble, virtuous, selfless Princes, or who did not evince a desire to watch them. They were as dear to the children of Ayodhya as their own bodies, as precious to the city as its own heart.

Dasaratha sends the Princes to learn *Para Vidya*

When they were in their eleventh or twelfth year, one day, Dasaratha called to his presence the minister Sumantra, who was the repository of virtue, and commissioned him to arrange for teaching of the princes, the spiritual Science of Liberation (the

Para Vidya). He said⁶⁵ that however proficient a person may be in secular sciences (*Apara Vidya*), *Para Vidya* alone can give him the strength to carry out his Dharma (Rightful duties). The highest moral culture must be imparted to them at this tender age itself. Success or failure in later life was built upon the impressions and experiences gained in the early stages of life. The early years are the foundations for the mansion of later years.

Elated at the prospect of the princes getting this great opportunity Sumantra had all preparations made to his satisfaction. He got ready himself to accompany them. The Queens came to know of the pilgrimage that the Princes were undertaking. They were delighted that the Princes were going on such a holy venture and they made many things ready to render it as happy and useful as possible. They arranged a few nurses for them and some comrades of their own age to accompany them. The Princes too, were beside themselves with joy at the prospect of visiting the sacred places of the land. They enthused their companions and sought from the King equipment and clothes for them also. The next day, when the auspicious hour specially selected for the journey arrived, the Princes bowed before their parents, touching their feet with their foreheads. They fell at the feet of the Preceptor. The mothers placed holy dots on their foreheads and cheeks, to ward off the evil eye and to guard them against evil. They discarded royal robes and put on the habiliment of pilgrims, that is to say, silk dhotis round the waist and silk shawls wrapped round the shoulders and taking leave of all, they

⁶⁵ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **THE GURU AND THE PUPILS**

ascended the chariot. The palace resounded with shouts of victory rising from thousands of citizens who had gathered to see them off. The chariot moved on with guards before and behind.

Days, weeks, even months rolled by! They went to every temple and sacred spot. They imbibed the holiness of each place. They worshipped at each shrine with faith and devotion, they learnt after deep enquiry the history of each place and the antecedents of the shrines. Thus they journeyed from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from the eastern sea to the western, spending more than three months⁶⁶. (*RKRV Part I p.64/67*)

Vashishta teaches Rama Yogavashishta:

The parents noticed a change in the boys as a result of the pilgrimage. The transformation was very surprising and they hoped that the strange ways of life they had assumed might weaken with the passage of days. They watched their behaviour and attitudes with great attention. But they continued, with no sign of diminution.

Rama stayed mostly indoors. He did not bathe at fixed hours as he had been doing so far. He had a dislike to wear royal robes. He desisted from delicacies. He never sat on the golden throne. He appeared as if he was immersed in the contemplation of the Absolute, of something beyond the senses and the mind. Since their brother appeared so morose and was ostensibly sulking, the

⁶⁶ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **Sumantra travels the length and breadth of the country with the Princes:**

three younger brothers always kept near him. They never left his presence, for games or for any other reason.

The four used to gather in a room and bolt themselves in. The mothers had to tap the door at intervals to bring in their food! However hard the Mothers tried to discover why they behaved so, they never revealed the reason! Rama alone deigned to answer their queries thus: “This is my nature; why seek to know the reason for my being so?” The mothers soon felt that this state of things could no longer be kept away from gaze. They informed Dasaratha.

He sent word that the boys be brought to his apartments. But finding that the sons, who previously would have rushed in, took a long time to come, he was filled with wonder and worry. He made ready to proceed to their room himself. Just then, the attendant announced that the princes were approaching! The father was overwhelmed with bliss. He embraced them and held them tight to his breast. He sat, with the sons on both sides. He enquired from them about things, light and serious. Formerly, if he asked just one question, the boys used to reply to ten: but that day, when he asked ten, they scarce replied to one.

Dasaratha drew Rama onto his lap, and pleaded fondly with him, “Son! Why this refusal to talk? Why this silence? What is it that you desire? Tell me what you need? I shall fulfil it immediately, without fail. Since you do not mix with the brothers and play with them as formerly, they too are unhappy.” Though the King lovingly stroked the chin and looked at the face of Rama, Rama did not say anything more than that he was quite content and

needed nothing. Watching this strange behaviour, Dasaratha grew anxious and agitated. Tears welled up in his eyes. The boys remained unaffected by his grief. The father spoke some soft words to them about how sons should conduct themselves and sent them to their apartments in the Palace. He called Sumantra so that he might confer with him. He asked him whether anything had happened during the pilgrimage to put the boys out of gear or whether he had brought them back too soon when they were themselves eager to visit a few more places of interest to them⁶⁷. (*RKRV Part I p.71-73*)

The King was sad. He neglected everything else. He ignored the demands of empire and spun many stories in his mind to account for the behaviour of the children. They are entering the years of adolescence and so, such temperamental revolutions are natural, he surmised. He shared this opinion with the queens and set his mind at rest, for a little while.

Noticing the agitation of the King and the Queens, Vashishta turned his attention inwards and sought the reason for the sorrow, through inner vision. The truth was quickly revealed to his penetrating purity. Within seconds, he turned towards the queens and assured them, “There is nothing wrong with the boys. These are not just ordinary children. They are free from the least trace of worldly desire. Their minds are untarnished. Do not get anxious. Bring them to me.”

⁶⁷ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **Dasaratha tries to know the cause from Sumantra:**

The King and Queens were happy at this assurance. They sent for the princes and left. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna quickly got ready to meet the Guru, when the news that he wanted them reached their ears. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna were able to proceed to the altar room, with their eldest brother. There, they fell at the Feet of the Guru and reverentially stood before him. Seeing them, Vashishta asked them with great affection to draw near and sit beside him. They all sat close to him, but Vashishta wanted Rama to come still nearer. He fondled Rama lovingly, playing with his hair and patting his back.

He said, “Rama! Why have you thus become quiet and silent? Your mothers and father are suffering from grief and fear; You have to demonstrate the validity of the precious axioms, *Matru Devo Bhava* (Treat the mother as God) *Pitru Devo Bhava* (Treat the father as God) by your own action, isn’t it?” Vashishta placed before Rama many such lessons and truths for his consideration.

Rama sat smiling, listening to the Guru. When he had finished, he spoke calmly, “Master! You speak of mother; but, who exactly is ‘mother’? Who exactly is ‘son’? Why, what exactly is ‘body’? And what is the ‘*Jivi*’ (the individual)? Is this objective world real? Or is the Supreme Soul real?”

When Vashishta observed Rama raising such profound philosophical problems, he noticed also a halo of bright rays of spiritual splendour that emanated and surrounded his face! He knew that the Light was an indication of Divinity, attempting to surge outwards! So, he wanted Rama himself to provide the

answers to the questions that Rama put forward. And the replies and explanations Rama gave were verily the Voice of God. Vashishta could see this fact clearly.

Vashishta saw that the words that flowed from the lips of Rama were indeed drops of the Nectar of Immortality, which can ensure Peace for mankind. He blessed the King and Queens and returned to the hermitage. The dialogues between Rama and the Preceptor form the text of “*Yogavashishta*,⁶⁸” a treatise which is meaningful and mellow. It is also referred to as the *Ramagita*.

Rama spent his days immersed in Vedanta, communing with himself, talking while alone to himself, silent in company, and often laughing at nothing in particular. Dasaratha grew concerned. He was worried what would happen to the brothers. He sought to keep the younger three apart; but, they never agreed to be isolated from Rama. So, they had to be left in his company always. (*RKR Part I p.75-79*)

INTERPRETATIONS AND INNER PERCEPTIONS

GURU AND PUPIL – ACHAARYA AND SHISHYA

*Brahmaanandam Paramasukhadam
Kevalam Jnaanamurthim
Dvandvaathitham Gaganasadrasm
Thathwamasyaadi Lakshyam
Ekam Nithyam Vimalam Achalam
Sarvadhee Saakshibhutham*

⁶⁸ See Endnote No. 2- *Yoga-Vashishta*

Bhaavaatheetham Trigunarahitham
Sadgurum Tham Namaami (SSS Vol.18 p.72)

Who is a Guru?

“Without a preceptor, all learning is blind.⁶⁹ To see your own eyes, you need a mirror; to see yourself in your native grandeur, you need a *guru* (preceptor). (SSS Vol.6 Second Edition p.22)

Who is fit to be a *Guru* and who is fit to be a *shishya* (disciple)? If we examine the Gita, we will know whether we are the ideal *shishyas* (disciples) or not. In the Bhagavath Gita, the *shishya is Narotthama* (the highest among men), the *Guru is Purushothama* (the Supreme Person); the *shishya* is a MahAtma (high-souled), the *Guru is ParamAtma* (the Over-soul); the *shishya* is *Aadarsha-murthi* (an ideal person), the *Guru* is an *Avatara-murthi* (incarnation of the Divine); the *shishya* is a *Patradhara* (an actor), the *Guru* is *Sutradhara* (the director of the play); the *shishya is a Dhanurdhara* (wielder of the bow), the *Guru* is *Yogeshwara* (the Lord of Yoga). It is this type of *Guru-Shishya* relationship which illustrates the ideal combination. This (SSS Vol.17 p.90)

The signs and qualities of a true Guru

The true *Guru*⁷⁰ is one, who has no ego or selfishness, and who can raise the *shishya* to his own level. Donning the saffron robe, mouthing a few *mantras*

⁶⁹ (*Divine Discourse on 29/7/1969 Gurupurnima day Prashanthi Nilayam*)

⁷⁰ An authentic *Gurus*, have the double qualification of *gu* and *ru*: *gu*. (*Divine Discourse on 29/7/1969 Gurupurnima day Prashanthi Nilayam*) *Guru* (spiritual preceptor), who knows the Truth by experience and whose daily activities, words and thoughts reflect this realisation. The *Guru* is called so because the letter *GU* signifies *Gunaatheetha*---one who has transcended the three *gunas* (qualities)---the *Tamasic*, the *Rajasic* and even the *Satwic* (ignorant passionate and virtuous); and the letter *RU* signifies one who is *Roopa Varjitha* (one who has grasped the formless aspect of God-head (SSS Vol.1 p.26) and [who have transcended Form and Flavour, those who have merged in God, or the

(sacred formulas) and expounding some texts are the signs of many *Gurus* these days. The signs of a true *Guru* are large-heartedness, absolute selflessness, purity in living, freedom from acquisitiveness, absence of envy, and equal mindedness in his conduct towards everyone. Freedom from envy is an essential quality in a *Guru* or *shishya*, because envy is the root cause of many evils⁷¹. The *Guru's* role is to lead the *shishya* on the Godward path. He must teach the true purpose for which each of his sense organs is to be used-- his eyes, his tongue, and his limbs. All the senses are to be used for discovering and experiencing the Divine. (*SSS Vol.17 p.90*) The pupil (*shishya*) has to sit near the *Guru* (*Acharya*) or Preceptor, paying steady attention to what is being communicated to him. Then only can he learn the fund of knowledge and the skill of discrimination. (*Vidya Vahini p.3*)

Guru-shishya relationship a cherished tradition of Bharatiya culture:

The sacred relationship between the *guru* (teacher) and the *shishya* (pupil) has been idealised in Bharat as in no other country. It has come down to us over

Atma Itself. It is only these who can help you to attain. (Divine Discourse on 29/7/1969 Gurupurnima day Prashanthi Nilayam) Of course, he could come to that stage only through the sublimation of the lower into the higher qualities and the steady and conscious ignoring of the part played by mere name and form. In the preliminary stages of spiritual Sadhana, name, form and quality all have their part to play in the moulding of the spirit. The *Guru* destroys the illusion and sheds light; his presence is cool and comforting. (*SSS Vol.1 p.26-27*)

⁷¹ If you do not come across such preceptors, do not get downhearted; pray for guidance and from your own heart you will receive the Geetha that you need from the Charioteer who is there. You can easily get plenty of preceptors the moment you seek; for, it has now become a profession, full of competing practitioners, each one trying to collect as many disciples, as much money, and as wide a reputation as he can. There are some who have developed swollen heads, while others suffer from short sight or bitterness or itching palm. How can persons challenging each other for dry disputations be revered as *Gurus*? When they do not possess, along with the elation of scholarship, the ecstasy of Divine Experience, they are not entitled to that holy mission He who seeks a *Guru* can find him in every word spoken within his hearing, in every incident that happens around him. (*SSS Vol.9 p.76-77*)

the aeons as a cherished tradition. The words of the preceptor, at the time the pupils left the *gurukulam* (school in which *shishyas* live with their *guru*, serving him and learning from him) for their homes, were vibrant with meaning. “Worship your mother and father as God. Regard your teacher as God and receive your guest as God Himself”, (*Matru Devo bhavah, Pitru Devo bhavah, Acharya Devo bhavah, Athithi Devo bhavah*), the *guru* would say.

“*Sathyam vada, Dharmam chara*” (speak the truth and practise *dharmam*). This is also one of the important aphorisms enunciated by the ancient *gurus* of India. It emphasises the importance of *sathya* and *dharmam*. *Sathya* is the eternal, absolute and unchanging truth. *Dharmam* is often translated as righteousness, but it is much more than that. *Dharmam* is a power-packed term epitomising an entire philosophy and a way of life. It is the *summum bonum* of Indian ethics. A *shishya* or disciple is one who has grasped the content of *sathya* and *dharmam* by constant *sadhana* or spiritual practice. *Sathya* and *dharmam* sum up the code of conduct and scale of values explicated in the immortal scriptures of India. (*SSB 1979 p.170*)

Faith in the Guru:

The *Sastras* say:

*Have faith in the doctor, so that you may get cured of illness;
Have faith in the mantra (holy formula) with which the
preceptor initiates you, for then alone can your sadhana be
fruitful;*

*Have faith in the sacredness of the temple, for then alone is your
pilgrimage profitable;*

*Have faith in the astrologer's predictions, for, without it, why
bother yourselves with him and his abracadabra?*

*Have faith in the Guru, for then alone will your steps be steady
and firm, on the path to self-realisation.*

*Faith in the Guru should bring faith in the Atma (true Self), or
else, the Guru is a handicap.*

(SSS Vol.7 p.79)

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The Guru has very often to tell you that you have forgotten your real name or that you have lost the most precious part of yourself and yet are unaware of the loss. The Guru is the physician for the illness which brings about the suffering of alternate birth and death. He is an adept at the treatment needed for the cure. If you do not get such a Guru, pray to the Lord Himself to show you the way and He will surely come to your rescue. (*SSS Vol.1 p.27*)

The guru is the person who discovers that you have fallen into a wrong road that leads to further and further darkness. For, he knows the right road and he is full of love for all who strive to escape the travails of the night, without lamps to light their steps. This is a day when the First of *Gurus* is remembered with gratitude. He is called Narayana, because Narayana is the reality and if you do not get a *Guru* from outside yourself, if you pray, the Narayana inside you will Himself reveal the road and lead you on. It is always preferable to be prompted by that inner *Guru*, because most of those who claim to that status are themselves rolling in objective pleasure or are bound by greed, envy or malice. *Guru* also means 'heavy'; many have only the qualification of physical weight, not of spiritual height! (*SSS Vol.5 p.22*)

Rama- the ideal student:

The world is becoming more and more deeply immersed in irreverence and cruelty. Codes of decent behaviour are being ignored and laughed at. The material is receiving greater attention than the moral and spiritual. Faith in the victory of truth, justice and goodness is fast disappearing; the distinction between good and bad is seldom recognised. The child Rama, when he was brought into the hall where Dasaratha, Kausalya and Vashishta were together, touched the feet of Kausalya first, of Dasaratha next and of Vashishta last--- thereby demonstrating that it was aware of the ancient discipline: "Revere the mother as God, revere the father as God; revere the preceptor as God." Gratitude for these three is absent only among animals which soon ignore the parents, once they are weaned. Keeping them as well as the preceptor in grateful memory is the sign of the human kind. (*SSS Vol.6 p.211*)

Their affection and selfless attitude to serve people

It is very necessary for you to recognise the affection that was shown between the brothers in the Ramayana and the sacredness of such affection. At no time

and on no occasion did the brothers of Rama exhibit any selfishness. With a selfless attitude, they were regarding that service to the people was the main concern of their life.

All these good qualities were acquired by them from their Guru Vashishta, even while they were young and they shaped themselves so as to be ideals for others in the world. It is only when we can recognise and understand the true nature of *satya* and *dharma*, even while we are young that we can get the most beneficial results out of such understanding when we grow older. (*SSB 1977 p54-55*)

Sages guided the monarchs of ancient kingdom

This consideration goaded the monarchs in the ancient kingdoms of India to seek counsel from some sage, who had no affiliations and prejudices, who therefore knew what best to do, in any crisis. They were men full of love for humanity, compassion for the distressed, and understanding of the motives of the wrong-doers. They were of five grades of spiritual greatness: *Pundits, Rishis, Rajarishi, Maharishis and Brahmarishis*. They were free from any trace of ambition, or avarice to amass land, wealth or fame. Sage Vashishta, the Preceptor and Counsellor of Emperor Dasaratha, initiated Rama into the mystic formula, called *Adhithyahridhaya*, the 'Heart of the Sun,' directing him to recite it whenever victory appeared to slip out his grasp! These counsellors steered the kingdom safe. (*SSS Vol.7 p.143*)

Vashishta gives lessons of liberation to the Avatar as part of the game:

Rama learnt from Vashishta (it is part of the game of the *Avatar* to bestow on the preceptor Vashishta the merit of having taught the way of liberation) the method of conquering desire and he demonstrated by his equanimity that he could go into long exile, with as much exaltation as he could go towards the throne for his Coronation. 'Rama' means the Joy that comes of Love. He loved bird and beast, demon and sage, to prove to the world that God saves those who love His children. (*SSS Vol.7 p.433*)

Viswamitra imparts the knowledge of archery:

When we look at the story of the *Ramayana*, we find that at a certain point, Viswamitra comes to Dasaratha and requests him to send his sons for the

specific purpose of protecting his *yagna* in the forest. . (SSB 1977 p.136)
During the journey⁷², he said, “I shall teach⁷³ You two *mantras*: *Bala* and *Athibala*. Come and sit near me and receive the instruction.” The sage taught the two *mantras*. (SSB 2000 p.215) Not only did he teach *Manthras*, but he also gave them all the weapons⁷⁴ that were in his possession and taught them how to use those weapons. (SSB 1977 p.136)

⁷² SSB 1977 p.136

⁷³ After teaching the *mantras* to the children, he regretted his audacity to teach *mantras* to the very embodiments of Divinity! (SSB 1996 p.24)

⁷⁴ Viswamitra gave to Rama powerful arrows like *Gandaka*, *Dharamaja*, *Dharmaka*, *Vishnukula*, *Bhramaku*, etc., for he was a master of archery. (SSB 1996 p.26)

6.3 DIVINE MASTERPLAN – DRAMATIC ACTS

Everything is governed by the Divine Will.
Whatever happens in this world is only the
Divine Drama.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6.3.1 PROTECTION OF THE YAJNA OF VISWAMITRA–THE MISSION COMMENCES

HIS STORY

Years rolled by and the four brothers grew up as young men. Dasaratha thought of performing their marriages. One day when he was thinking on these lines, a messenger entered and informed him about the arrival of Sage Viswamitra⁷⁵. Everything happens according to time, situation and circumstances. God creates the necessary circumstances to fulfil His divine plan. Dasaratha personally went up to the entrance and welcomed the sage, saying, “Swami, it is our great good fortune that you have come today. I am contemplating on performing the marriages of my sons. So, I am extremely happy and indeed blessed to have you with us today. Please tell me what I can do for you. I will

⁷⁵ Sage Viswamitra was performing a *Yaga* [Vedic ritual]. He knew very well that only Rama, Himself the embodiment of the *Vedas*, could protect the ritual he wished to perform. So, Viswamitra went to the palace of Dasaratha to seek the assistance of Rama. (*SSS Vol.35 p.116*)

certainly fulfil your desire⁷⁶.” Viswamitra said that he had come to take Rama with him to protect his *yajna* from demons. Viswamitra’s words were like a bomb blast for Dasaratha. He thought to himself, “I begot these children as a result of performing several rituals and sacrifices over a number of years. Moreover, Rama has never entered a forest or seen a demon. He has no hatred towards anybody. He is full of love and forbearance. How can I send tender-hearted Rama to the forest to fight the demons who are very cruel?” Thinking thus, Dasaratha felt very sad.

⁷⁶ The Emperor was very pleased to see the Revered Sage and said, “O sage, what brought you here?” Viswamitra replied by asking a question, “Will you do what I ask you to do?” Without taking even a second to think about it, Dasaratha replied, “Of course, without fail”. Dasaratha thus committed himself and became bound to his word. (*ibid*)

*One’s action must match one’s capacity,
Must be pre-determined,
Taking all aspects into account,
Both good and bad,
Must never be in haste,
And also be consistent with the goal.
Otherwise, it can prove deathly and dangerous.*

Before you give your word, you must think carefully. You should not glibly or blindly give your word and then regret as well as retract. Dasaratha gave a promise because of his immense faith in sage Viswamitra. The sage said, “O King, I want you to send your son Rama with me to the forest in order to protect the *yaga* I am performing there.” Dasaratha was stunned. He thought, “This son Rama was born to me after countless prayers, after observing so many austerities, and after performing so many *yajnas*. Is it possible to send such a dear and tender son to the forest to fight demons and protect the *yaga*? Rama is so young. He has never seen a demon. He may be frightened by those terrible creatures.” Dasaratha’s love for Rama produced in him a surge of such thoughts. (*SSS Vol.35 p.116*)

He said to Viswamitra, “Oh venerable sage, my son is very young. How can I send him to forest?” Viswamitra said, “Oh king! You promised that you would fulfil my desire. Now you are going back on your words. Kings belonging to Ikshvaku clan never failed to keep up their promise. If you go against your promise, you will bring disrepute to your clan. So, decide as to whether you want to put your clan to disrepute or send your son with me.” Dasaratha thought for a while but was unable to decide. He called Sage Vashishta and sought his advice. (*SSS Vol.35 p.114-115*)

Vashishta called Dasaratha to his side and counselled him. He said, “King! You are coming in the way of an imminent cosmic revelation⁷⁷, a mighty fulfilment. Since your heart is affected by parental affection, the truth is veiled before you. Your sons will come to no harm⁷⁸. No, never. There is no height of heroism that is beyond them. Formidable Divine Forces have taken these human forms for the very purpose of destroying demons and demoniac powers. So, without further delay, send for the boys. You should not calculate now their physical strength or the measure of their intelligence. Calculate rather the Divine that is bubbling up from them every minute of their lives. There is no strength which can stand up to that, remember!” After some more advice on these lines, Vashishta sent for the Princes, Rama

⁷⁷ *RKRV Part I p.87/88*

⁷⁸ Vashishta said, “Dasaratha, your sons are not ordinary mortals. They are born to you because of Divine Will. They are born out of fire, which means they are the embodiments of power and wisdom. No danger can ever befall them. So, uphold your promise given to Sage Viswamitra.” (*SSS Vol.35 p.115*)

and Lakshmana. As soon as they heard that the sages Viswamitra and Vashishta wanted them, both of them rushed along and entering the hall, bowed in reverence. First, they fell at the feet of the father, then at the feet of Vashishta, the family Preceptor, and next, at the feet of Viswamitra. With a smile playing on his lips, Viswamitra addressed the boys when they rose and stood reverentially on one side. He said, “Boys! Will you come with me?” The boys were elated at the prospect.

On hearing this, Dasaratha was further disheartened. His face turned pale. Rama saw his father sorrowing over his approval. He approached him softly and said, “Father! Why are you sad when I am going with the great Sage? Is there any better way of utilising this body than putting it at the service of others? This body has been given to us for that very purpose. And to share in the holy tasks of ascetics and to be able to grant them some relief from harassment, is this not high use? There is nothing impossible for us, is there? We will destroy the demons (the Rakshasas), however fierce they may be and bring peace to the sages. If permitted, we are ready to start off this very minute.” These words charged with courage served to reduce, to some extent, the anxiety of Dasaratha.

But the King was still struggling. He could not decide what to say. He drew Rama to himself and told him, “Son! The Rakshasas are no ordinary foes! Reports say that among them are Sunda, Upasunda, Maricha, Subahu, etc. These are atrociously cruel. Their physical appearance is indescribably horrid. You have had no occasion yet to look upon such terrifying forms. I cannot contemplate the moment when you come face to face

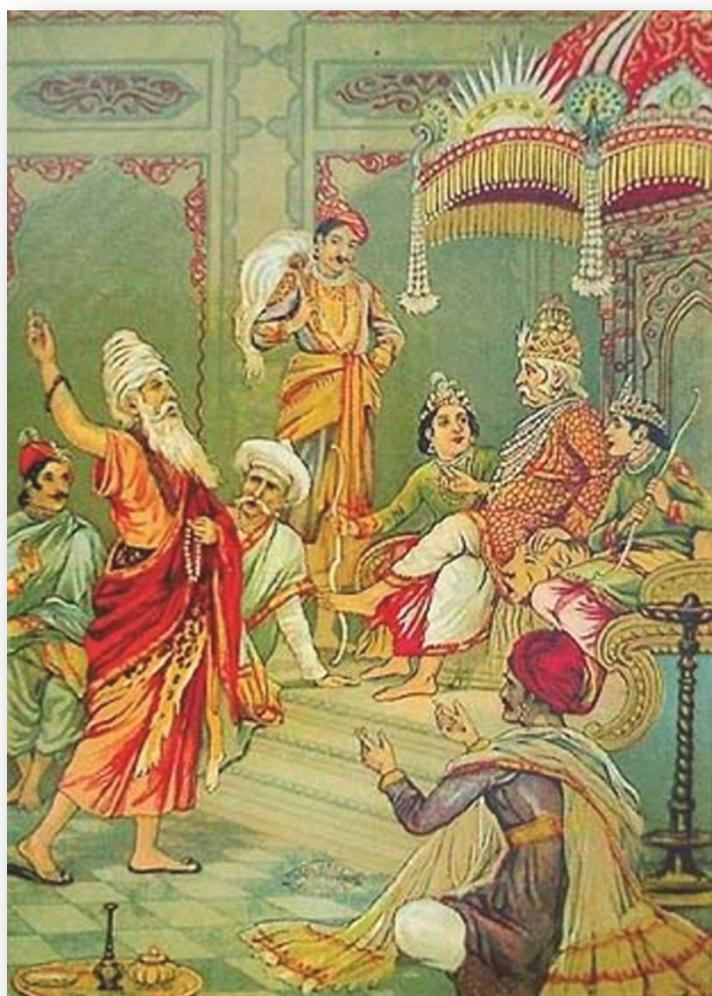
with them. How can you battle with those tricksters who are adepts at camouflage and physical transformations? You have not so far heard even the word ‘battle’! Nor have you seen actual combat on the field. And you are now suddenly called to fight such formidable foes! Alas! Destiny is indeed very cruel! Alas! Have my sons to face on the very threshold of their lives this monstrous ordeal?”

With these thoughts revolving in his mind, Dasaratha shed profuse tears out of the anguish of his heart. Lakshmana noticed his father’s mental weakness. He said, “Father! Why these tears! We are not timid girls! The battlefield is our legitimate arena. War is our rightful duty; the safeguarding of righteousness is our genuine responsibility. The service of sages and the maintenance of moral codes are our very breath. I am surprised you are sad that we go on such a glorious errand! The world will laugh at you for this display of weakness. Send us with your love and blessings. I too will accompany⁷⁹ my brother and return with the glory of Victory.”

Rama saw his father overpowered by affection for him. He moved towards the throne and held his hand lovingly. He said,

⁷⁹ Here is an important point worthy of note. Viswamitra had come to take only Rama with him. Rama was prepared to go with him. Rama did not ask Lakshmana to accompany him. Neither Viswamitra nor Dasaratha asked him to follow Rama. Lakshmana followed Rama of his own accord because he was an *amsa* of Rama. Just as shadow follows an object, Lakshmana followed Rama. Seeing this, Viswamitra thought to himself, “Everything happens according to the Divine Will.” (SSS Vol.35 p.115-116)

“Father! It appears you have forgotten who you are. Bring into your memory who you are, in which royal family immortalised by which forefathers you were born, and how much fame they had attained. Then, you will not weep as you are doing now. You took birth in the Ikshvaku dynasty. Till this day, you have spent your years, as the very embodiment of Dharma. The three worlds have acclaimed you as the dutiful observer of vows, as the guardian and practitioner of Dharma, and as the most redoubtable hero on the battlefield, as well as elsewhere. You are aware that there is no greater sin than retracting the word once given. Going back on the word you have given to the sage will tarnish your fair fame. Your sons cannot tolerate this ill fame. When you cannot act according to your word, you can have no share in the merit of the sacrifices performed by you or even of the beneficial acts done by you like digging wells, and planting trees. Why dilate? We, your sons feel that it is a mark of disgrace, for which we have to bend our heads, even to listen to the talk that Dasaratha broke his plighted word. This is an indelible blot on the reputation of the dynasty itself. Your affection for your sons is blind. It is not based on discrimination. It will bring on us punishment, not protection. If really you are moved by affection towards us, you should pay attention to the promotion of our fame, shouldn't you? Of course, we are in no position to advise you. You know all this. Your affection has drawn you into this miasma of ignorance. It has made it difficult for you to recognise your duty. As for us, we have not the slightest shred of fear. The Bride of Victory will certainly espouse us. Do not hesitate, bless us and entrust us to the sage.”



Source of the Photo: ((from Wikipedia))

Artist Raja ravi varma

Date 19th century

Rama pleaded thus, and bending his head low, he touched the feet of his father.

Dasaratha drew Rama to himself and fondled his head. He said, “Son! All you have said is true. They are gems of great worth. I am not a fool to deny them. I shall proceed this moment with my four-winged army and protect the sacrificial ceremony of this sage at the cost of all that I possess. But my mind does not accept the proposal to send you, just now being trained in the arts of war and weaponry, into the arms of those demoniac Rakshasas. No father will knowingly offer into the tiger’s paw the sons he has borne. And is it right for you too to plunge us into the flames of grief? We gained you through austerity, and fostered you as the very breath of our lives. Alas! What can anyone do when destiny itself is against us? I shall not blame you or anyone else. It is the consequence of the sins I have myself committed.”

Dasaratha bewailed thus, with his hand upon his head. At this, Rama broke into a smile. He said, “Father! What is this weakness? You speak of thrusting us into the tiger’s mouth. Haven’t you realised yet that we are not goats to be so offered? Believe us to be lion cubs, send us on this sacred task with your blessings. Kings must not delay sacred tasks!” Hearing these rather sharp remarks of Rama, Vashishta rose, saying, “Excellent! Dasaratha! Did you hear the lion’s roar? Why the jackal howl hereafter? Arise! Send the message to the mothers and fetch them. Place your sons at the service of Viswamitra.” Hearing these words, Dasaratha felt he could not do anything else than obey. He sent word that the Queens should come into the presence.

The Queens put in their appearance with veils over their heads. They touched the feet of the sages and of Dasaratha and afterwards, they moved towards the children and stood by their side, fondling with loving fingers the crown of their heads. Vashishta spoke to them first. He said, “Mother! Our Rama and Lakshmana are ready to leave with Viswamitra in order to guard his Yajna rite from interference and obstruction by demoniac hordes. Bless them before they leave.” As soon as she heard this, Kausalya raised her head in surprise saying: “What is this I hear? Are these saplings to guard and protect the Yajna which the great Sage is celebrating? I have heard that the Manthras themselves with their Divine potency will be the best armour. How can mere man dare take upon himself the burden of saving the Yajna from harm. The responsibility for the successful conclusion of the Yajna lies on the rectitude of the participating priesthood.”

This appeared to Vashishta as correct; but yet, he thought it best to shed a little more light on the situation. “Kausalya! Mother! The Yajna of Viswamitra is no ordinary rite! Many obstacles are affecting it and creating anxiety.” Vashishta was continuing with his explanation when Kausalya intervened and said, “I am really amazed to hear that anxiety overshadows the Yajnas performed by sages and rishis. I believe that no power can stand against any sacred resolve. The sage is nursing this desire and craving for its fulfilment in order to manifest the Supreme Light and Peace; that is my surmise. He might have put forward this request in order to test the King’s attachment to his children. Or else, how can we believe that these tiny sprouts of tenderness will guard from harm the Yajna that this sage, endowed with all mystic and mysterious powers, is proposing to celebrate?”

While Kausalya was saying this, her hand caressing the head of Rama, Dasaratha who was listening to her talk, suddenly realised the truth in a flash and arrived at a bold decision. He said, “Yes! The words of Kausalya convey authentic truth. This is but a plan to test me. I am certain about it. Master! How can I, a weakling, encounter your test? I shall abide by your wish, whatever it is!” With these words, Dasaratha fell at the feet of Vashishta. Vashishta looked at him and said, “Maharaja! You have proved yourself worthy. These boys are not of common stamp. Their skills and capacities are limitless. We know this. Others do not know. This occasion is but the inauguration of their triumphal march. It is the prologue to the history of their victorious career. It is the taking on by them of the vow of *Dharmarakshana*, the Guardianship of Righteousness. They will return soon with the Bride of Victory. Therefore, without further thought, hand them over gladly to Viswamitra.”

Vashishta called the boys to his side, and placing his auspicious palm on their heads, he recited some hymns pronouncing his Blessings on them. The boys fell at the feet of the mothers and received their blessings. They stood ready to depart.

Dasaratha noticed the glow of joy and courage on their faces. He suppressed the grief that was surging within him. He placed his hands on the shoulders of the boys and came near Viswamitra. He fell at his feet and said, “These two, Oh Master, are from this day your sons; their health and happiness are dependent on you; if you order that a few personal guards may be sent with them, I shall gladly comply.”

At this, Viswamitra burst into laughter. “Oh! King, you are really insane! Is there anyone who can guard them, these heroes who are coming to free the Yajna from obstruction? Do they need any? They are out to guard the Yajna which we cannot guard. Do such mighty heroes need someone to protect them? Of course, your affection has blinded you. King! I shall bring them with me to you when the task for which I am taking them is accomplished. Do not worry. Rule over the kingdom without injustice or interruption.”

Viswamitra rose from the seat. Everyone offered reverential obeisance to the great sage. He walked out of the hall first, and the two princes followed him. As soon as they reached the main gate of the palace, people heard heavenly drums and clarions resounding from the sky. A shower of flowers rained upon them. As they moved along, the music of conches rose from every doorstep. The peal of trumpets was heard from every few yards of the road. They appeared to men, women and children, to the citizens of all ages, as two cubs trotting behind an elderly lion. No one knew why the princes were walking barefoot and leaving the palace with the celebrated sage; so, each one started asking his neighbour what the mission was on which they were bound. The ministers, courtiers and citizens accompanied them only as far as the City Gate, for, that was the royal command. There they bade farewell to the princes and turned back. (*RKR V Part I p.88-95*)

THE MISSION STARTS

When they reached the banks of the Sarayu River, Viswamitra said, “Rama come here.” He called only Rama and not Lakshmana. Though he was not called, Lakshmana also went and sat by the side of Rama. Viswamitra said, “My dear ones, I am taking you to *Siddhashram* where *yajna* is going to take place. You have come here to protect the *yajna* from demons. I don’t know how many days you have to stay in the forest. You are used to royal comforts and delicious food. But there is no one to prepare food for you in the *ashram*. You may have to stay awake day and night forgoing food and water in order to protect the *yajna*. So, I will teach you two mantras⁸⁰: *Bala* and *Athibala*. With the power of these mantras, you can remain without food, water and sleep for any number of days.” (*SSS Vol.35 p.115*)

On the second day, Viswamitra, accompanied by Rama and Lakshmana, proceeded to Siddhashram⁸¹. Shortly thereafter they could experience the pleasant vibrations of Siddhashram. The cool breeze and the Vedic chants charged the place with holiness. Viswamitra then explained, “Sons! This is our Siddhashram. Lord Vamana⁸² was born here. Lord Shiva resided here for a few days.”

⁸⁰ Knowing full well that Rama was the divine incarnation and had the power to protect the *yajna*, why did Viswamitra teach him these mantras? These are only external activities meant for the world. *SSS Vol.35 p.115*

⁸¹ *SSB 1996 p.32*

⁸² Vamana, who was none other than Narayana born in the lineage of Kasyapa - *ibid*

At Siddhashram, Viswamitra entrusted Rama and Lakshmana with a job. He said, “Sons! You have come here to protect a *Yagna*. You should undertake that responsibility. This was also the command of your father. From this moment onwards you are expected to desist from eating and resting. This itself is a big *Yagna* that you two shall perform. You should sanctify it and emerge successful.” Rama and Lakshmana were equal to the task. They never displayed any tiredness, difficulty or weakness.

As the dawn broke, the great *Yagna* started. The instant the mantras were uttered, Rama and Lakshmana went into high alert and patrolled the place. A huge roar could be heard. One of the sages told the brothers, “There come the demonic hordes. They are being led by Maricha and Subahu. Be ready.” Rama and Lakshmana were without food or water or sleep⁸³. (*SSB 2002 p.70*)

No sin in Killing Thataki

Viswamitra said to Rama, “Oh Rama! This Siddhashram is harassed by the demoness Thataki, who possesses the strength of a hundred elephants. You will have to kill her.” To this Rama replied, “Guruji, I don’t wish to kill a female, since the scriptures forbid it.” Viswamitra replied, “Females should be killed if they commit atrocities. It is not sinful to kill a female who is a curse to the world.” Rama then quoted the scriptures as saying, “It is not righteous on the part of anyone to kill the one who is frightened, one who is asleep, one who is intoxicated, one who

⁸³ Yet they successfully discharged their duty and killed the demons and saw to it that the *Yagna* was performed successfully. *SSB 2002 p.69-70*

has sought protection, and one who is a female.” Viswamitra answered this by saying, “Though the scriptures forbid the slaying of a woman, it is not sinful to kill a woman who has perpetrated crimes on mankind.” Still unconvinced, Rama asked, “Was there anyone in the past who has killed women?” *When Rama asked the sage whether there had been any precedent in this respect*⁸⁴, Viswamitra then replied, “Indra himself killed Mandara, the daughter of Virochana for she had inflicted great suffering on mankind. Indra justified his act by asserting that Mandara deserved to die. Vishnu killed the wife of sage Bharadwaja, since she indulged in violence.” (*SSB 1996 p.24*)

Viswamitra was happy that Rama put these qualms dictated by Dharma. “I am not ignorant of the fact that the killing of a woman is a heinous sin. Nevertheless, the protection of spiritually progressive men—the Brahmins, the virtuous, as well as cows—this is important. Dharma is intertwined with these three. There is no sin when the act is done for the promotion of Dharma and the removal of *Adharma*. Don’t you know the dictum, ‘*Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah*’; Dharma saves those who save it? This is not violence used for one’s aggrandisement. When violence is used for preserving the peace and prosperity and the world, I assure you, it cannot draw down any bad reaction. Moreover, creation, preservation and dissolution are expressions of Divine law. They happen according to the Divine will. They are not bound by the whims of man. You are Divine Manifestations. You have the authority and the duty. No dirt can stick to fire; so too, no sin can contaminate the Divine. The will

⁸⁴ *SSS Vol.31 p.77*

that creates, the obligation that protects, can also carry out the duty to punish. The punishment that awaits the sins of the mother and her son cannot be avoided. It must be considered fortunate that Thataki ends her life at your hands today, before she adds to the heap of sins for which she has to suffer much. You will only be serving her best interests and the interests of the country. This is neither wrong nor sinful. If you entertain the feeling of compassion now, it would cause unlimited damage to the world. It would be promoting the decline of Dharma. It would help Thataki to indulge in more sins. Why should I dwell more on this point and relate to you a thousand arguments? I have seen all through my spiritual eye. You have incarnated in human form to destroy the Rakshasa brood. This is your mission, your task. You have to carry it out today and throughout your career. The guardianship of Dharma and the destruction of the Rakshasas, (people with demonic tendencies) are the very purposes which have persuaded you to take birth! I knew this truth, that is the reason why I rushed to you for help; or else, why should I seek your support and service? (*RKR Part I p.106*)

Hermits, anchorites, and those performing austerities in forest retreats, entreat the help of the rulers of the land for the sake, not of themselves, but of the whole world. They give up attachment, and sustain themselves on the roots and fruits gathered by them. After some months or years of the regimen, they harden their lives even more, so that they may lose the body consciousness and merge in the Light. Why should such people worry over what happens to the world? But, the Wise, the Realised, besides saving themselves by the illumination of revelation, endeavour to tell others the path they have trodden, the glory of the goal they

have reached, to persuade others to practise the disciplines that made them ready to receive the Truth. If the Wise care only for themselves and their liberation what is to happen to the world? People will descend further into iniquity that is all. Dharma will be submerged. Hermits keep up relationship with the world for this reason, not for quenching any private craving of theirs. They live as the lotus on water. They may be entangled in the world, for all appearances; but, they have no attachment with the world. They will not allow the world to tarnish them. Their aim is one and one only: the progress and welfare of the world. They attend only to the fostering of Dharma. They depend only on God.”

When Viswamitra bared the truth in these words, Rama responded as if he was a novice, unacquainted with all that he had heard. He said: “The world will not understand that the words of hermits and sages have holy significances embedded in them. I interrogated you on the morality of this act so that we may know how you elaborate on the justice of the act. Do not read any other meaning into my question. My father, Dasaratha, told me to obey Viswamitra the Sage and do what he commands. I wish to follow what my father orders. You are a great Rishi. You have undergone severe austerities. When such as you declare that Thataki can be killed without incurring sin and that the act is just and moral, I know I do not commit wrong. I am ready to carry out any task you impose on me for fostering Dharma and for promoting the welfare of the people.” (*RKR V Part I p.107-108*)

Slaying of Thataki:

Hearing these accounts, Rama decided to slay Thataki⁸⁵. Rama realised that the noble and righteous women should not be touched but evil demons who committed atrocities must be killed. While they were deliberating thus, they heard deafening sounds emanating from Thataki. She rained stones on them. By discharging his arrows, Lakshmana stopped the volley of stones. She then began to rain blood and fire. Rama encountered her bravely and repulsed her attack. Thereupon, Thataki assumed an ugly form and made deafening and frightening sounds. Rama employed the technique of *shabdhabhedhi* by which the discharged arrows reach the very source of sound and attack it. The demoness was thrown on the ground immediately. After some time Maricha and Subahu, the sons of Thataki launched an attack. Like Thataki, they also rained fire, blood and stones on Siddhashram. Rama then used *Manasa Astra*, which hurled Maricha⁸⁶ to a distance of a hundred miles. Rama then released the *Agniastra* on Subahu, who collapsed on the ground then and there. Rama followed this up by launching the *Vayu Astra* on the followers of Subahu, who melted into thin air instantaneously. Eventually Siddhashram regained its original serenity and peace, and the inmates of the hermitage—sages, students, women, and children— were filled with unspeakable joy. The sages gathered in front of Rama and extolled Him, “Oh Rama! You are verily the incarnation of Lord Narayana. You are the Omniscient, the

⁸⁵ See Chapter, *Thataki*

⁸⁶ That experience made Maricha realise the Divine puissance of Rama. He declared that he had not seen anyone who could equal Rama in power. (*SS, 3/90, p 116 & 117*)(*SSS Vol. 23 p.43-44*)



**Figure 3: Thataki vadh-Rama Killing Demon
Thataki**

Summary of the Photo

Author Raja Ravi Press

Description English: "Taraka vadh," a print by the Ravi Varma Press,
n c.1910's

Date 1910s

Source http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/bce_299_200/ramayana/taraka/taraka.html

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Omnipotent, and the all-pervasive One. In Your youth itself, You have achieved what no one could achieve before.” Viswamitra then started the performance of the *yajna*, which lasted over five days. In accordance with the promise they had given to Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana guarded the *Yajna* continuously, moving around the sacrificial altar, forsaking food and sleep. Upon the conclusion of the *yajna*, Viswamitra asked Rama and Lakshmana to relax, for they had had no rest during the previous five days. (*SSB 1996 p.24-25*)

INTERPRETATIONS

The first canto in the *Ramayana* is called *Balakanda* (the canto describing the boyhood of Sri Rama). Sage Viswamitra came to Dasaratha and sought the help of his two sons, Rama and Lakshmana, for protecting his *Yaga* (sacrifices). Rama and Lakshmana were fourteen years old when the Sage sought their help. When Dasaratha was hesitating to send his sons in view of their tender age, Viswamitra remarked, "O! Dasaratha! Swayed by paternal affection, you have mistaken them to be mere mortals, of flesh and blood, whereas in fact they are Divine incarnations. Do not give vent to sadness. They are the embodiments of Divinity. Send your sons with me without any hesitation". (*SSS Vol.25 p.181*)

Significance of the Mission:

Viswamitra took Rama for the sake of protecting his *yajna* in his *ashram*. After Thataka, the *rakshasi*, was killed in the *ashram*, there were two sons of Thataka who were still alive. They were Maricha and Subahu. While Subahu was killed, Maricha was allowed to go alive. There is some significance which we should recognise here. The reason for this is that Maricha had a future role to play in the destruction of Ravana. So that the task of destroying the *rakshasas* by Rama can be completed according to plan, Maricha was allowed to go alive. (*SSB 1997 p.15*)

Here we see that not only did the *rishis* realise the divinity of Rama, but also Rama knew that He was God Narayana in human form. In order that He may fulfil the task for which He had come, He spared Maricha earlier, so that Maricha could play his part in Rama's master plan. (SSB 1997 p.17)

These *rishis*, while projecting a picture of Rama to ordinary persons as an ideal human being, an example for all of them, knew that they were hiding to some extent the truth of Rama as an incarnation of God. This was the reason why Viswamitra, when he took Rama for the protection of his own *yagna*, handed over all his weapons which were in his possession to Rama. God took the human form of Rama as a *leela* of His. The *rishis* took advantage of this human form of Rama and used Him for the purpose of the destruction of the *rakshasas*. (SSB 1997 p.15-16)

Three women representing three gunas

Rama, while going with the Sage Viswamitra, encountered three women of three different temperaments. The first woman he encountered was Thataki of *Tamasic* temperament. The *Tamasic* nature makes a person mistake truth for untruth and untruth for truth. It robs one of the capacity for discrimination. Rama killed Thataki while keeping guard over performance of Viswamitra's Yajna. The two brothers saw to it that Yajna was performed without any obstruction.

After successful completion of the Yajna, Viswamitra proceeded to Mithila, accompanied by Rama and Lakshmana. On the way Rama came to the hermitage of the Sage Gautama. There he absolved Ahalya of the curse which had turned her into a stone. Ahalya might be deemed a woman of *Rajasic* temperament. After imparting moral advice to Ahalya, Rama went to Mithila with Viswamitra.

It was in Mithila that Rama encountered Sita representing *Satwic* quality. Having killed Thataki of the *Tamasic* temperament and redeemed Ahalya representing *Rajasic* temperament, He accepted Sita who represented *Satwic* quality. The marriage of Sita and Rama is symbolic of the union between *Prakriti* and *Paramatma*. (SSS Vol.25 p.181-182)

6.3.2 SWAYAMVARA – WINNING SITA - PRAKRITHI MARRIES PARAMATMA

HIS STORY

DIVINE PLAN OF THE MARRIAGE OF DASARATHA’S SONS

The total dedication of Rama and Lakshmana to the task entrusted by Viswamitra can be understood from the following episode. As the Yajna concluded, a troop of soldiers came to the ashram. They handed an invitation to Sage Viswamitra. This was a personal invitation from King Janaka⁸⁷ of Mithila. (The message from Janaka was received that he was performing the Swayamvara of Sita⁸⁸). He had sent the invitations to all kings and princes to try and lift the bow of Lord Shiva and win the hand of his daughter Sita. In such an assembly, he prayed that great sage too be present to shower his blessings. Sage Viswamitra with great excitement, narrated to Rama and

⁸⁷ See Chapter, *Janaka – WINNING SITA*

⁸⁸ *Dasara Discourses 2001 p.114*

Lakshmana the uniqueness of the great bow of Lord Shiva, (*SSB 2002 p.70*)

.....Viswamitra told Rama, “Now I want your wedding to be performed.” Those capable of lifting the Siva dhanush (Siva’s Bow) might come to try their prowess.”..... Rama and Lakshmana were not interested in the wedding⁸⁹, but were curious about Siva dhanush. Viswamitra persuaded Rama saying that Siva dhanush was worth seeing. Rama pleaded that His father’s instructions were to go and protect the Yajna and not to go to Mithila to see the Siva dhanush. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.114/115*)

Viswamitra said, “I have given word to Dasaratha for a few more things: I have to keep these words too! I have promised him that I would myself bring you back to him and so you cannot return without me! A unique Yajna is taking place in Mithila city. There is enough time for me to take you to Ayodhya and reach Mithila on the day of Yajna begins. If you two accompany me to Mithila, you can witness the Yajna and proceed to Ayodhya with me from there itself. Rama answered “Master! Since my chief vow is obedience of the orders of my father, I have to submit a prayer before you” Viswamitra asked, “Come! Tell me, what is

⁸⁹ In order to arouse interest and enthusiasm in them, Viswamitra said, “The *yajna* is not an ordinary one. In the palace of King Janaka, there is a Shiva *dhanush* (bow of Shiva) which ordinary mortals cannot lift. It is very difficult to move it even an inch. One day it so happened that Sita, the daughter of Janaka, lifted the bow. That day Janaka decided to give his daughter Sita in marriage to a man of valour who could tie the string to the bow. This *yajna* is arranged in this connection.” (*SSS Vol.35 p.118*)

the prayer is.” Rama replied, “My father directed me to guard the Yajna of Viswamitra from defilement and sacrilege, and make the great sage happy. He asked us to return victorious, He has not directed us to attend Yajnas elsewhere. Should I not receive special permission from my father before moving on to Mithila?” *(RKRV Part I p.122).*

Viswamitra countered that Dasaratha had given general permission to act according to Viswamitra’s directions.⁹⁰

“Rama! Dasaratha did not stop with that only! No! He said, Go and obey all that the sage commands you to do. Do not transgress his commands by even the width of a grain, Master, you must yourself assume full responsibility for my children; you must yourself bring them back to me. You have yourself listened to what he said when we left Ayodhya. Rama realised the truth that was inherent in this plan and he nodded in agreement saying. “We shall do as you desire”. *(RKRV Part I p.122/123).*

They had therefore no choice but to go along with Viswamitra to Mithila. There they saw the Siva dhanush, which they were eager to see. Their whole attention was on the Siva dhanush only. You should always concentrate on the job on hand. The attention of the public was fixed on the two accompanying Viswamitra. *(Dasara Discourses 2001 p.115)*

⁹⁰ *Dasara Discourses 2001 p.115*

It was during the journey to Mithila that Sage Viswamitra gave to Rama powerful arrows like *Gandaka*, *Dharmaja*, *Dharmaka*, *Vishnukula*, *Bhramaku*, etc., for he was a master of archery. The hermits and others who lived in the ashram chose to accompany Viswamitra as far as Mithila, for they knew that Viswamitra would never return to Siddhashram. The animals that lived around shed profuse tears when Viswamitra chose to go to Mithila. Viswamitra had great compassion for animals and treated them with unbounded love and affection. The birds and beasts also followed Rama and Lakshmana, since they were fascinated by these two princes of Ayodhya. During the journey, Viswamitra narrated to them the past history of the Ashrams that they came across on the way. At last, they reached the hermitage of Gautama where Gautama's wife, Ahalya⁹¹, lay in one place like a stone, having been earlier cursed by her husband. Rama, the incarnation of Lord Narayana, knew everything, but pretended as though He did not know anything. As He moved toward Ahalya, the vibrations that emanated from His feet brought a new surge of life into her petrified form. She immediately clung to the feet of Rama, and prayed to Him to forgive her and shower grace on her. At that very instant, Sage Gautama arrived on the scene and accepted the purified Ahalya. Gautama knew that Lord Rama would come and sanctify his ashram. After redeeming Ahalya, Rama and Lakshmana, accompanied by Viswamitra, Gautama, and a host of other sages, proceeded towards Mithila. (*SSB 1996 p.26*)

⁹¹ See Chapter, *Ahalya*

SWAYAMVARA

Emperor Janaka welcomes the sages to the Swayamvara:

When Janaka welcomed the sages who came to his palace for the *Swayamvara* (selection of the groom by the bride) of his daughter Sita, Sounaka the leader replied, "We have come because the Lord is here, as the son of Dasaratha; we have long prayed for a chance to feast our eyes upon the Lord and He has condescended to appear in human form. We are wedded to Him. This is the *Swayamvara* which we have done already" Only those who have decided that He is their Lord and Master can have that inexhaustible joy. (*SSS Vol.6 p.146*)

Rama and Lakshmana in Mithila

*Rama and Lakshmana along with Viswamitra reached Mithila*⁹². The arrival of Rama and Lakshmana, who moved like lion cubs in the streets of Mithila, created a sensation. People admired them and began talking about these two handsome princes. (*SSB 1996 p.26*)

Like a powerful magnet at work, the gaze of all citizens was attracted towards the two princes. Even the women working inside their houses came out to catch a glimpse of the two boys. Children at school too came rushing out. Everyone stared at the two brothers without batting an eyelid. They wondered, "Oh! What a heavenly beauty these boys have. They are resplendent like the sun and the moon. Where have they come from? They

⁹² *SSB 2002 p.52*

kept wondering among themselves, but none of them knew the answers.

Finally a young housewife appeared and explained to the women thus, “My birthplace is the city of Ayodhya. Since I am married into a family in Mithila, I now reside here. These handsome boys are the sons of emperor Dasaratha. They are extremely handsome and bear the names Rama and Lakshmana. Even in Ayodhya wherever they appear they would instantly attract everybody’s attention.” In this way the lady gave the other women all the details of the attractive princes.

Meanwhile, though they were the centre of intense attraction, Rama and Lakshmana never raised their heads. They were enjoying their walk with their heads bowed down. Some women, in order to attract the attention of the princes, threw flowers on their path hoping that at least then the princes would look at them. They made every attempt possible to catch the eyes of Rama and Lakshmana. Some even waved the sacred Aarati. However, the princes remained unperturbed and would not look at anybody. The youth of those days had such sacred vision. At that young age none of them ever looked at women. (*SSB 2002 p.52-53*)

Emperor Janaka received them with due courtesy and extended to them warm hospitality. Janaka had made all arrangements⁹³ for them in a spacious mansion. Rama pretended as though He

⁹³ See Chapter, *Janaka - Emperor Janaka oversees the arrangements for their Stay in Mithila:*

was tired and lay down. Keeping one leg on the other, He started massaging His own feet. Sage Narada arrived there to see Lord Narayana in human form. Observing the Lord massaging His feet, Narada said, “Lord, are You tired because You have walked a long distance?” To this Rama replied, “Narada, do I ever get tired? Never. This body of Mine has come for your sake and not for Mine. With this human body of Mine, I have to bring succour to the ailments of man.” (*SSB 1996 p.26-27*)

The Anxiety of a Mother

The citizens of Mithila were amazed by the beauty, gait and looks of the brothers. The following day the bow of Lord Shiva was to be displayed. A big function was organised. Rama came to the assembly along with his brother. Ravana also had come. There were several other powerful kings and emperors in the hall. On seeing such a gathering, the wife of King Janaka, Sunetra, while watching from behind the curtains started thinking thus: “There are so many handsome and valiant young princes in this assembly. Will it not be better to select one of them, marry my daughter to him and quickly discharge the responsibility? Why does the emperor need to complicate the issue by announcing that the one who bends the bow of Lord Shiva would be the eligible groom? Several heroic personalities have attempted in the past and have failed. Will these youngsters assembled here succeed? How will their tender bodies bear the burden of the heavy bow?” She was very much worried about the issue and was discussing it with her companions. Her fears came true when no one in the assembly could even lift the bow. (*SSB 2002 p.53-54*)

Shiva's Bow is broken

Thousands of strong men wheeled the great bow of Shiva into the open court. Many a Prince from far-off parts of Bharat had assembled there, to win the hand of Sita. They were more interested in winning the hand of Sita than in facing the trial of strength. But Rama and Lakshmana came there in simple obedience to the command of Viswamitra and without any expectation. One after another, the Princes tried to lift the bow of Shiva; but they returned to their seats humiliated. (*SSB 1996 p.28*)

At that time, Ravana came to try his strength. With his massive fearsome personality, he walked up proudly towards the bow⁹⁴. He tried with one hand and then with both to lift the Bow. In spite of his mighty effort, he could not lift it and instead fell back on the ground with Bow on top of him. There was nobody to help him out, as he lay trapped under the bow. Rama's instinct was to go to Ravana to get him out of his predicament⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ He was very powerful and had a fearsome personality. He was the first one to come forward to lift the bow. As he was proceeding towards the bow, kings were surprised at his gait and personality. They thought, "If he is able to lift the bow, King Janaka has to give his daughter in marriage to him. The very sight of Ravana is terrifying. How can Janaka give his daughter in marriage to him? Anyway, let us see what is going to happen." (*SSS Vol.35 p.119*)

⁹⁵ The one who is swayed by ego is sure to suffer in life. When people laughed loudly at his plight, Ravana felt deeply wounded, as though he had lost all his ten heads. (*SSB 1996 p.28*)

Viswamitra seized the opportunity and told Rama to go⁹⁶ and pick up the Bow. Rama's aim was not lifting the Bow; but to help Ravana. Help ever hurt never. This was Rama's motto. Rama walked up⁹⁷ to the place and lifted up the bow⁹⁸ with his

⁹⁶ At that instant, Rama walked quietly towards the bow, much to the chagrin and amazement of the princes gathered. Commotion arose in the court when Rama, a tender boy of fourteen, was walking towards the bow of Shiva, for it was an audacious act on the part of a young boy to dare to lift the matchless bow of Shiva. (*SSB 1996 p.28*)

⁹⁷ The earth is endowed with several forms of energy. In between Akasha and the earth is permeated by a vast medium of energy field. The power of planet earth is unimaginable. Hence, earth is considered to be the storehouse of all energies. Predominant among the energies is the power of magnetism. Repeated investigations have failed to throw light on the nature of this energy.

At the time when Rama went to lift Lord Shiva's bow, Bhoodevi rejoiced. The various kings and princes who had assembled were not of the right age for Sita. Their looks too were of no match to those of Sita. Rama alone looked extremely youthful. His physical features were beyond description. He was extremely handsome. Bhoodevi decided that Rama was the right match for Sita. She saw to it that there was no obstruction on Rama's path to victory in the assembly. When Rama lifted Lord Shiva's bow, he used his left hand as if to indicate that he required just his left hand to accomplish something which others found impossible. This was actually the great strength of mother earth at work. She reduced the weight of the bow and enhanced Rama's strength. The wonderful powers of the earth are indescribable. However, all the minerals, metals and chemicals that are in the earth are present in man too. Energies like the electric, chemical, magnetic, etc., these and many more strengths are immanent in man. One cannot say how many, but every kind of energy and material in the core of earth are already in man. But, there is no realization in man regarding his great potential. The power of the divine in man is extremely sacred. Man is tremendously powerful because of this Divinity in him.

He can do anything, if only he wills. Today, thanks to the influence of science, man has reached the moon. He has also brought back dust from

left hand and put it aside. All were astonished. The weight of the Bow was phenomenal and the power required for lifting it was of a cosmic proportion. It was far beyond human capacity. The divine power is truly cosmic in nature. This power was present in Rama. While the people were watching this spectacle with Rama walked up⁹⁹ to the place and lifted up the bow¹⁰⁰ with his

the moon. Actually, these are all expressions of the inner strength of man. It is a pity that man cannot recognize his own strength. At present, everyone is asking the others, “Who are you?” Very few ask the question, “Who am I?” All your problems get solved when you inquire into this question. In the answer to this question is embedded the answer to all questions. (*SSB 2002 p.112-113*)

⁹⁸ The moment he did that a severe turbulence struck and shook everybody. Lakshmana then got up and with one foot pressed down the earth firmly. Even Viswamitra didn't know what Lakshmana was up to. He asked, “Lakshmana, what is happening? What are you doing?” Lakshmana humbly bowed the head and said, “This is the help I must render to my elder brother”. What Lakshmana meant was that, when Rama raised the bow, there was a sudden tilt in earth's balance leading to the turbulence. By pressing down the earth Lakshmana was balancing the shift. (*SSB 2002 p.54*)

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wonder, Janaka came there. He said “one who can lift it can string it also.’ But, Rama said that without His Preceptor’s command, He would not do that. Then Janaka looked at Viswamitra who in turn indicated to Rama to go ahead. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.114-116*)

lifted Lord Shiva’s bow, he used his left hand as if to indicate that he required just his left hand to accomplish something which others found impossible. This was actually the great strength of mother earth at work. She reduced the weight of the bow and enhanced Rama’s strength. The wonderful powers of the earth are indescribable. However, all the minerals, metals and chemicals that are in the earth are present in man too. Energies like the electric, chemical, magnetic, etc., these and many more strengths are immanent in man. One cannot say how many, but every kind of energy and material in the core of earth are already in man. But, there is no realization in man regarding his great potential. The power of the divine in man is extremely sacred. Man is tremendously powerful because of this Divinity in him.

He can do anything, if only he wills. Today, thanks to the influence of science, man has reached the moon. He has also brought back dust from the moon. Actually, these are all expressions of the inner strength of man. It is a pity that man cannot recognize his own strength. At present, everyone is asking the others, “Who are you?” Very few ask the question, “Who am I?” All your problems get solved when you inquire into this question. In the answer to this question is embedded the answer to all questions. (*SSB 2002 p.112-113*)

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Rama Strings the Bow

When Rama lifted the sacred bow of Lord Shiva out of its box, strung the thread and twanged the string¹⁰¹, a peel of thunder was set off¹⁰². Everybody wondered as to how a boy of such a tender age could achieve such a stupendous task. The bow could not have been lifted even if a thousand men were to make an attempt to do so. Several elephants were required to pull the box into the hall. How could Rama lift such a heavy bow? How could he manage to string it? News of this wonderful feat spread throughout Mithila and created a sensation. (*SSB 2002 p.55*) They hailed the good fortune of Sita profusely. They were happy that Sita won the hand of a person who was virtuous, powerful and handsome. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.51-52*)

¹⁰¹ Janaka was reminded of the incident of Sita having lifted the bow. He was overjoyed with the feeling that he had found a suitable match for Sita. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.51-52*)

Once, while engaging in play, Sita lifted the giant bow of Siva with astonishing ease. Struck by this feat, Janaka decided that Sita should be given in marriage only to one who could handle Siva's bow and be worthy of Sita's hand. With this resolve, he invited princes for Sita's *Swayamvara* (self-selection of a husband by the bride herself). Rama arrived and lifted Siva's bow as lightly as Sita had done. Janaka realised that Rama and Sita were well matched in every respects---beauty, character and strength. (*SSS Vol.20. p.48*)

¹⁰² But the instant Rama reached the bow and raised it with His left hand, there was thunderous applause. When Rama bent the bow to tie the string, the bow snapped with a deafening sound. The people clapped loud and long, rejoicing that a worthy one had at last arrived to win the hand of Sita. (*SSB 1996 p.34-35*)



Figure 4: Sri Rama breaking the bow

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist [Raja Ravi Varma](#) (1848–1906)

Title **English:** Sri Rama breaking the bow

Description **English:** [Sri Rama](#) breaking the bow to win [Sita](#) as wife.

Date Unknown date

Medium oil on canvas

Viswamitra enquired, “Rama, are You ready for the marriage?”
Rama said, “Swami, My father sent Me to *Siddhashram* to safeguard your *yajna*. I did not have his permission even to come here.” (*SSS Vol. 35 p.119-120*)

Rama said, “O Master! The descendants of Ikshvaku always observed the command of their parents. They would not do anything without the permission of their parents. Hence it is not proper on our part to act without the permission of our parents.”
Rama was steadfast in his adherence to Truth. He always spoke Truth and never swerved away from it. It is said,

*The world is born of Truth.
Everything merges in Truth.
There is no place in the world
where the power of Truth is not felt.
This is the pure Truth
that all of you should know (Telugu Poem)*
(*SSB 2002 p.79-80*)

Rama went so far as to say that He would not even look at Sita without obtaining the permission of His parents¹⁰³.

The sage was in a fix. There was absolute silence in the assembly. Everyone was surprised at Rama’s reply. Rama was firm in His stand¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰³ *SSB 1996 p.28*

¹⁰⁴ *SSS Vol.38 p.113*

Viswamitra¹⁰⁵ whispered this into the ear of Janaka. He also supported Rama's view as he was well-versed in *Rajaneeti* (royal protocol). Immediately, he sent his messengers to King Dasaratha to bring him and his family to Mithila with royal honours (*SSS Vol.35 p.119-120*) along with a few disciples of Viswamitra with an invitation to King Dasaratha¹⁰⁶. Viswamitra's disciples narrated to Dasaratha¹⁰⁷ all that had happened. The king, the queens and the people of Ayodhya were filled with joy and jubilation at the prospect of the marriage between Rama and Sita. (*SSS Vol.38 p.113*)

King Dasaratha¹⁰⁸, his family and their entire entourage reached Mithila in three days. Rama and Lakshmana did not move out of their room during this period. The four brothers were extremely happy to meet each other. (*SSS Vol. 35 p.120*)

Janaka started making preparations for the wedding of his daughter to Rama. Kushadwaja was the brother of Janaka. He had two daughters named Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi. King Janaka too had a second daughter Urmila. As the marriage preparations were going on Sage Vashishta consulted Kusadhwaaja and proposed that his two daughters be given in marriage to Bharatha and Shatrughna. Kushadwaja promptly agreed. Janaka shed tears of joy at the turn of events and was

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter, *Janaka - Viswamitra asks that the news be communicated to Emperor Dasaratha:*

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter, *Janaka - Dasaratha wants to know the reason that brought the envoys of Janaka to Ayodhya:*

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter, *Janaka - Dasaratha seeks the consent of the Ministers, Sages and Brahmins of the court:*

prepared to give his second daughter Urmila to Lakshmana.
(SSB 2002 p.55-56)

THE CELESTIAL WEDDING - SITA KALYANAM

The Invitations, preparations and celebrations:

It seemed as if the entire population of Ayodhya had come to witness the marriage of Sita and Rama. (SSS Vol. 42 p.85) The people of Mithila were fascinated by appearance of Rama. They went in ecstasy watching the conduct and beauty of Rama. They thought that Rama and Sita made an excellent match. They sang songs¹⁰⁹ inviting people to see the marriage of Rama and Sita. One such song goes like this:

*Welcome to all for Rama's wedding;
together we shall witness the joyous scene.
Many have gathered already,
decked up in all their finery.
With necklaces the ladies are adorned
Of jewels pure and gleaming.
Rama shall tie the knot today
to beautiful Sita, oh what a fine match they make.
Father Dasaratha has made ready bounteous feasts.
All learned sages are assembled with Vashishta
presiding.
Oh, what a multitude has assembled
to rejoice, hearts with joy overflowing.*

¹⁰⁹ See at the end of this chapter, **LYRICS OF FEW OF THE WEDDING SONGS**

*Wedding of the holy pair
Rama and Sita, such a sight is indeed rare.
The sight shall confer great merit.
Rama looks the cool full moon,
and Sita is a matching double.
The compassionate Rama who loves all
will confer his grace on us all.
Come quickly to see the holy wedding of Rama and
Sita.
(Telugu Song)*

People sang songs like this, rejoicing at the marriage of Rama and Sita. The people of Ayodhya as well as Mithila were greatly delighted. They rejoiced immensely. (SSB 2002 p.108-109) There is an episode in Ramayana, which indicates what love the people of Ayodhya and Mithila bore to Rama and Sita. The people of Ayodhya set out in their thousands to witness the wedding of Rama and Sita in Mithila. The whole of Mithila was rejoicing over the auspicious occasion. Women were summoning all women and children to witness the sacred wedding. They were telling the other ladies; “Sisters”! What a unique opportunity to witness the glorious wedding of Rama and Sita.” (SSS Vol.27 p.116-117)

The Marriage Rituals:

The marriage celebrations at Mithila lasted four days. Though to us our marriage rituals appear to be merely materialistic, they are laden with deep, spiritual significance. On the first day of the marriage, the bridegroom’s party proceeded to the house of the bride, accompanied by pundits and priests, to hand over the

wedding invitation. On the same day, the bride's party, accompanied by Sumangalis (women whose husbands are alive), proceeded to hand over the wedding invitation to the bridegroom's house. (*SSB 1996 p.31*)

On the second day, the history of the dynasties to which the bride and the bridegroom belonged was read out aloud, and due gratitude was expressed to their respective ancestors. The names of the great Kings who brought glory to Kosala and Mithila were read out and their virtues extolled. The great Emperors who adored the Ikshvaku dynasty were remembered, and their virtues were praised. Similarly, the names of the great ones who reigned over the Kingdom of Videha were read out, beginning with Emperor Nimi who founded the great city of Mithila. These rituals bring out the truth that gratitude is an important aspect of life, and should be expressed towards all those who had contributed to the glory of one's lineage and country. (*SSB 1996 p.31*)

On the third day, great acts of charity were performed. Cattle and cows, beautifully decorated with ornaments and golden linen, were given away in charity to the deserving ones. Giving away cows in charity is significant, for the cow is one of the four mothers of man (*Dehamata Gomata, Bhoomata, and Vedamata*). (*SSB 1996 p.31*) On the fourth day, the ritual of *Kanyadana* took place. (*SSB 1996 p.32*)

Kanyadana

*The brides and the grooms*¹¹⁰ were then readied and brought to the stage¹¹¹. Janaka brought his daughter Sita, followed by Urmila, Mandavi, and Sruthakeerthi. These three were the daughters of Janaka's brothers Saaka and Kusadhawaja. Urmila was the daughter of Saaka, while Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi were the daughters of Kusadhawaja. In the meanwhile, Dasaratha brought his four sons. The curtain between the brides and bridegrooms was raised. (*SSB 1996 p.32*)

As they were all seated on the stage they appeared to light up the entire city of Mithila. The ladies experienced unlimited thrill. They praised their good fortune at being able to witness the wedding of not just Sita but all the four princesses. (*SSB 2002 p.56*)

The wedding was going on. But the four brothers would not raise their heads and look at anybody. In the modern age on the other hand conversations and frivolous behaviour begins much before marriage! But here the brides and grooms sat with their heads lowered in humility and modesty throughout the ceremony. They carried out the instructions of the priest without raising their heads. (*SSB 2002 p.56*)

At the time of *Kanyadana* (giving away the daughter as charity) Janaka, in accordance with the injunctions of the Scriptures said, "I am giving my daughter as charity to You." The groom was

¹¹⁰ Rama, adorned with most beautiful ornaments, was brought to the marriage pandal. (*SSB 1996 p.29*)

¹¹¹ *SSB 2002 p.56*

then expected to say, “I accept your daughter”, but Rama remained silent without uttering a single word. The priest who was officiating at the marriage said to Rama, “Oh Rama! The auspicious moment is getting over; hurry up and say, ‘I accept your daughter.’” Rama then replied, “Those in the Ikshvaku lineage never accept charity. Since you have used the word *dana* after the word *kanya*, I cannot accept her. Those in the Ikshvaku dynasty only give charity and never accept it. If you remove the word *dana* after *kanya*, I am prepared to accept her.” Janaka who understood the mind of Rama, withdrew the word *dana* after the word *kanya*. Then, Rama said, “I accept your daughter.” (*SSB 1996 p.33*)

But Rama would not look at Sita despite Janaka’s entreaties. (*SSB 2002 p.56-57*)

Mangala Sutra:

Rama was looking elsewhere and refused to look at Sita. Janaka noticed this and said to Rama, *Mama putri iyam Sita* (‘this is my daughter Sita’). To this Rama replied, “I have not yet tied the Mangala Sutra (wedlock thread). It is sinful to see the lady before marriage to her, I do not wish to bring disrepute to the great Ikshvaku lineage by my misconduct.” This statement of Rama testifies to the fact, that He was the Embodiment of Dharma. Rama observed the principle of one wife, one word, and one arrow. While the priests were chanting mantras and the musicians were playing on the musical instruments, Rama tied the Mangala sutra around the neck of Sita. (*SSB 96 p.32*)

Garlanding Ceremony:

Sweet notes of auspicious music reverberated in the air. The *Vedic* priests chanted the sacred *mantras* full-throated and blessed the couples. King Dasaratha shed tears of joy. Everyone was filled with divine bliss watching the marriage proceedings. It is customary during the occasion that the bride and the bridegroom exchanged garlands. (*SSS Vol.38 p.115*)

The brides waited with garlands in their hands, as did the grooms. The three brothers would begin their tasks only after Rama started it first. The parents too waited behind the children. They went up to Rama and bade him to place the garland around Sita's neck so that other remaining brothers could also do the same. Rama did so and all the brothers followed suit. It was now the turn of the brides. Sita waited with the garland in her hands. Moments passed but Rama would not bend his head! His was a valour and dignity that raised, strung and broke the mighty bow of Lord Shiva. He did not want to bend his head before a woman. And in order to protect his own honour, he kept standing. Rama was tall, broad shouldered and valiant. Though young of age all the brothers were tall and physically strong. The long delay made the people impatient. They wondered as to why Rama refused to bow His head. Rama too was not keen to remain thus. (*SSB 2002 p.57-58*)

Sita had to garland Rama first, before the other brides could garland their respective bridegrooms. Sita, being short in stature, could not garland Rama who was *ajanubahu* (tall personality). Unless Rama bent His head before Sita, she could not garland Him. But He did not want to bend His head lest people should

blame Him for not maintaining the honour of His lineage. Unable to garland Rama, Sita was holding the garland in her hand for a long time. There was another secret in this act of Rama. Lakshmana was the incarnation of Adishesha who carried mother earth on his hood. (*SSS Vol.38 p.115*)

Rama looked at Lakshmana and made an almost imperceptible signal. The four brothers were always sharp and alert. This was depicted in Thyagaraja’s song¹¹².

Rama looked at Lakshmana as if to say, “Look, why don’t you raise that part of the earth where Sita is standing to enable her to garland Me.” (*SSS Vol.38 p.116*)

He caught Rama’s signal and understood that Rama wanted him to raise the portion of earth where Sita was standing. With an equally slight shake of his head, he indicated that this plan would defy the laws of nature and was hence not suitable for execution. If Sita was raised, so would everyone else! Rama signalled back to Lakshmana to hit on some plan to break the deadlock. *Lakshmana, being endowed with intelligence, thought of a plan to solve the problem*¹¹³. All of a sudden, he fell at Rama’s feet and would not get up. Rama was forced to bend down and raise Lakshmana from his feet. Grabbing this chance, Sita at once placed her garland on Rama’s neck. The moment Sita garlanded Rama; the other sisters too proceeded to garland their grooms. This incident amply demonstrates the lofty, disciplined and

¹¹² Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama, His Brothers And Their Childhood - THE FOUR BROTHERS*

¹¹³ *SSS Vol.38 p.116*

honourable style of functioning and behaviour of the brothers. (*SSB 2002 p.58-59*) The four brothers and their brides shone like brilliant gemstones. The onlookers shed tears of joy watching the grand spectacle. (*SSS Vol.38 p.116*)

Thalambraalu:

One of the rites in the marriage ceremony in India is *Thalambraalu*¹¹⁴. Since Janaka, the father of Sita, was immensely rich, he arranged for the pouring, of pearls instead of rice. Sita held a palmful of pearls in her hand over Rama's head. The white pearls in the palms of Sita shone with reddish splendour as her palms were of reddish hue. When she poured the pearls on the white turban Rama wore for the occasion, the pearls shone with the white hue of the turban. The pearls rolling down the body of Sri Rama assumed a dark colour reflecting the bluish colour of Sri Rama, *they shone like sapphires*¹¹⁵.

The pearls shining with reddish hue in the hands of Sita are symbolic of the *Rajo Guna*, conveying the message that one is of *Rajasic* nature in the company of *Prakriti*. The pearls shining with whitish splendour are symbolic of the *Satwa Guna* indicating the fact that one acquires the *Satwic* nature in the company of God. The nature of persons who belonged neither to *Prakriti* nor God will be *Tamasic* persons like the colour of the pearls that rolled down from Rama's head. People of divine orientation shine with *Satwic serenity* and purity. People with a

¹¹⁴ It (*Thalambraalu*) is an Indian custom that the bride and the bridegroom should pour on each other's head a handful of sacred grain. (*SSB 1996 p.29*)

¹¹⁵ *SSB 1996 p. 29*

worldly outlook display *Rajasic quality* while those who are neither worldly nor Godly are *Tamasic*. (*SSS Vol.25 p.182-183*)

Promise to be made by bridegroom

According to the Indian tradition, the bridegroom should make the promise *arthecha, kaamecha, dharmecha, naathi charami* (I will please her with regard to wealth, desire, and righteousness). Rama refused to give such a promise for He felt that one should be ready to renounce one's partner in life if she came between Him and His people. So, He vowed, "The welfare of my subjects is of Supreme importance to Me. If I find that she displeases My subjects, I will renounce her." That is how Rama set high standards of conduct as a ruler. The rulers of those days were particular about every word they uttered, for they would never go back on their word. (*SSB 1996 p.33*)

The Encounter of Rama with Parasurama

On their way (*back to Ayodhya after the wedding*), they heard a deafening sound. When they looked around to find where the sound had come from, they were confronted by Parasurama¹¹⁶ who looked very fierce. All of them were perturbed and they began to think, "What is this great impediment after the glorious celebration of the marriage?" Dasaratha and others became fear-stricken. Parasurama came forward and asked, "Who has broken the Siva bow?" "It is I who has done it," said Rama. "If that is so, let us see if you can bend my bow." Saying so, he gave his bow in the hands of Rama.

¹¹⁶ See Chapter, *Parasurama*

Rama strung and armed that bow with an arrow with His left hand. (SSS Vol.42 p.86) Seeing that, Parasurama offered his salutations to Rama and submitted his two *kalas* (splendours) to Rama, who was already endowed with twelve *kalas*. Rama thus shined with his own twelve *kalas*, two *kalas* from his brothers and another two given by Parasurama, that is, with all the sixteen *Kalas* of the *Virat Purusha*. With the surrender of Parasurama, Rama's power became full and complete. (SSS Vol.41 p.59) *Parasurama* then went his way. Experiencing the joy of victory, all of them reached Ayodhya and participated with great joy and enthusiasm in the festivities held there. The people of Ayodhya held joyous celebrations. (SSS Vol.42 p.86)

When Parasurama was nearing his end, he recognised the divinity in Rama and he surrendered to Rama. It is not as if there was no good reason for these *rishis* to refrain from proclaiming the powers and the strength and the divinity of Rama. (DD 29/7/1969)

Rama gave over the bow and arrows to the God Varuna, with an unperturbed smiling countenance. He prostrated before Vashishta and Dasaratha, who were by his side. Dasaratha was all the while shivering with fear, apprehending what might happen to his son from this Apparition, what calamity will land on him. Now, he was free of anxiety. He drew Rama near and fondled him affectionately in various ways. He raised the son's face towards him holding it by the chin and, finding it rather difficult to express his feelings in words, said, "Dear Son! I am indeed lucky. I was afraid whether I would be able to see you again. Your resolute courage, your heroism is beyond

imagination.” Thus, he praised Rama very much and appreciated his exploit in many ways. In reply, Rama said, “Dharma has to win: Victory is the inevitable concomitant of righteousness. In the preliminary states of the struggle, it may create some fear and some obstacles which might appear formidable. It will cause even weakness of mind. It might arouse suspicions of defeat and failure. But instead of bowing or bending before it one has to fix his attention on the goal itself. Then it can never fail. Failure can never affect it. Men do not peer deep into the truth of Dharma’s might. They are carried away by superficial handicaps and worries and so they give up the path and suffer. What has happened is for the best. I ascribe this to your blessings.”

Saying this, Rama again fell at the feet of his father. “The armed forces are awaiting your orders to resume the march and proceed towards Ayodhya. Kindly communicate your commands to them,” said Rama. At this Dasaratha was filled with delight. He said, “Son! Why should we delay further? Grief and joy afflict us one after the other and cause distress to the person and his body. We can go to the capital city and seek to live there happily in the best manner possible.” He called the ministers to his side, and required them to order the troops to march.

The soldiers cheered in joy and began to move forward. The interlude of fear had ended. Dasaratha spent the remainder of the journey describing, and enjoying the description of, the amazing events of the day. As they neared the City, some regiments were sent in advance in order to inform the citizens of the arrival of the party, with the sons and daughters-in-law. The memory of the grandeur and glory of what they had experienced at Mithila and

on the way home gave speed to the feet and they flew like arrows from bowman's hand into the City. They announced that Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna were entering the City with their brides and that Dasaratha had sent them to give the glad tidings.

*They were received with much love and gaiety*¹¹⁷. The citizens of Ayodhya decorated and embellished the streets and houses in a variety of attractive styles. Plantain trees were tied to posts on both sides of the road. Bunches of coconuts were hung from the posts. Rosewater was sprinkled. The entire City was made charming and attractive.

Musicians with their instruments took positions all along the route. Fireworks were collected and distributed all along the line, so that it could be made one continuous stream of colour and cheering noise. They awaited, with the deepest feeling of joy, the party, counting the minutes as they looked into the distance to catch the first glimpse. Women in veils crowded the windows and terraces of the mansions, or peeped from behind curtains tied across them.

Emperor Dasaratha entered the Capital City of Ayodhya with his sons and their brides. Music rent the air as soon as they were sighted. People cheered enthusiastically, shouting Jai, Jai, till their throats were hoarse. Women waved lights, threw flowers on their path and sprinkled rosewater. The young men were like bright stars. When the populace saw the ennobling scene, many

¹¹⁷ *SSB 2002 p. 59*

forgot where they stood or who they were. Their joy knew no bounds. Their thirst could not be quenched, however long they gazed; so they walked long distances backward, so that they could keep their eyes fixed on them! Thus, the entire route was covered and they reached the gates of the palace. There, Brahmins had stationed themselves so that they could recite Vedic hymns invoking good fortune and prosperity on the newlyweds. Maids waved lights and performed many rites to ward off the evil eye. They prayed the daughters-in-law to come in, placing the right foot first.

Meanwhile, at the entrance to the zenana, there stood the queens, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, awaiting their approach with avid eagerness. They sprinkled sandal scent, tucked flowers in their hair, and placed dots of red on their foreheads. When the sons came, the queens were overwhelmed with joy. They drew them near and fondled them, patting their heads and chins. They blessed them profusely. Then the four sons and daughters-in-law prostrated before the three mothers. When they did so, their eyes streamed tears of joy, for their happiness knew no bounds.

Meanwhile, the maids brought rice, boiled in milk, in golden plates. The mothers placed the food in the mouths of the newlyweds, and persuaded them to eat it. They gave them milk to drink. Then, they were taken to the inner apartments. In the evening, ladies from Ayodhya were invited to the palace for sharing in the auspicious ceremonial of welcoming the newlyweds. An imposingly beautiful dais was got ready. Golden seats were placed upon it. The queens brought costly clothes and jewels with precious gems set on them in artistic patterns. They

commissioned talented maids-in-waiting to help the daughters-in-law to put them on, and they themselves supervised the wearing of the costume and jewellery. They held them by the hand and led them to their seats.

By that time, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna had come there and taken their seats wearing princely robes, and costly jewels as well as crowns. Each sat to the right of his bride. The mothers as well as the ladies who had been invited from the City feasted their eyes on the splendour of the scene and their ananda was immeasurable. While they were going through the ceremonial, gifts were distributed outside the Palace to people in profusion. Cows, cash, gold, land, grain, vehicles and horses were all given away in plenty.

Brahmins came before the dais and cast auspicious rice grains on the heads of the newlyweds to the accompaniment of the recitation of Vedic hymns. Then women in married status waved 108 lamps before them to ward off the evil eye. After this the sons rose and with their wives they prostrated before the mothers, the father and the Guru, Vashishta. Then, they retired to their own apartments. (*RKR V Part I p.205-209*)

INTREPRATATIONS

Divine plan

In the divine story, you will observe one special fact; no incident is unconnected with the rest, no happening is without significance. For example, Parasurama exterminated the *Kshatriya* rulers of his time by systematic campaigns directed against each. How then, why then, did Dasaratha and

Janaka survive? The truth of the matter is: Parasurama made two exceptions under which his victims could save themselves and survive. This secret was known only to these two survivors. He had resolved within himself that he would not kill a bridegroom or a person engaged in a *Yaga* so, whenever Parasurama reached the frontiers of their kingdoms and was on the point of crossing them, Janaka got himself initiated in preparation for a *Yaga* (ceremonial sacrifice in which oblations are presented) and Dasaratha fitted himself out as a bridegroom about to wed another princess. Of course, this was according to the Divine Plan, for Dasaratha had to live to get Dasharathi and Janaka had to discover Janaki. (SSS Vol.2 p.257-258)

Dramatic acts of God to prove His omnipresence

Once, while proceeding to Mithila, Rama sat on a stone in the sage Gautama's ashram. That very moment, a woman emerged from the stone. However, Rama did not feel proud that by a mere touch of his feet, the stone had turned into a woman. On the contrary he felt sad that his feet had touched the wife of a great sage and thereby he had committed a wrong. This shows that God dwells in the minds of sages. God indulges in dramatic acts like these to demonstrate His omnipresence in the universe and to teach the world the greatness of Nature. (SSS Vol.28 p.85)

RAMA KALYANA – MERGING OF ATMA WITH PARAMATMA

Rama Kalyana does not mean the marriage of Rama and Sita at physical level. *Rama Kalyana* is *Atma Kalyana*; it signifies the merging of *atma* (individualised soul) with *Paramatma* (universal soul). The *Ramayana* is not the story of an individual. Rama symbolises the cosmic and universal spirit. (SSS Vol.38 p.118)

Marriage between Prakriti and Paramatma:

The marriage of Rama and Sita was verily the marriage of *prakriti* and *Paramatma*. Since Sita was born of the Earth, she was endowed with the magnetic power of the Earth. That is why she could easily lift the bow which was also a part of *Prakriti*. With the aid of magnetic power, the bow slowly raised itself, as Sita once tried to lift it. The same principle operated when Rama tried to lift the bow of Shiva. Since Rama was a magnet Himself, it was not that difficult for Him to raise the bow. It was all a part of Divine drama

enacted for the benefit of mankind. The marriage of Rama and Sita was performed on a most magnificent scale, and people vied with each other to sing the glory and grandeur of the Divine wedding. (SSB 1996 p.29)

The confluence or coming together of two divine aspects is for the welfare of the world.

The marriage between Rama and Sita is the confluence of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* – He understood the meaning of *Turiya* state - If you take out fullness out of a full thing, what remains is also full - man's aspects are all divine aspects.

We should realise that the strength of *Paramatma*, which has changed as a result of *maya* and projected itself as material creation, is symbolised by Sita and the divine strength of *Paramatma* is symbolised by Rama. The marriage between Rama and Sita is really the confluence of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Since Viswamitra understood very well the meaning of *Turiya* state, he has also understood the symbolic meaning of creation, which is Sita, and he described Sita in this manner. State of *Turiya* can be regarded by us as literally the form of Atma. If a piece of salt went into the ocean to find out ocean, it gets dissolved in the ocean and cannot come back in its original form. So also, when we learn that *jeeva* which wants to learn the nature of Atma when it goes there, it will be completely merged in the Atma and cannot come back. Here, it has been established that the nature and meaning of Rama is the silent interval that exists between two primordial sounds of Om. The meaning and the aspect of Rama should also be recognised by us and it conveys to us the kind of connection that exists between one human being and another. Here we can take the example of Divinity, the Brahman, which is a single entity and which has no parallel. Its manifestations are in the form of so many different human beings. If we take a piece of glass prism, we notice that light appears through this prism as being made up of so many different colours. The seven colours that see through the prism are not different and distinct. What basically exists is one single ray of light that is being broken into seven different colours because of the existence of prism. It is not the natural form of the original ray of light. When we light the wick of an oil lamp and try to look at it from different angles, we can see that the light appears to us in a totally different form. All these different forms can be seen

in the light of the wick.. They are not different. They are coming from the same source. It is in the context that in Vedantic parlance, it is said that if you take out of fullness from what is already complete and full, then what remains will also be full. Infinity subtracted out of infinity leaves infinity as the reminder.

There is a small example: we go to a shop and we wish to buy a kilo of jaggery. From his stock of the shop keeper has, he will cut a small piece, and will give it after weighing a kilo. The sweetness in the kilogramme of jaggery which you have purchased is in no way different from the sweetness in the same block. The difference is only in the measure. We bring it home, we make small pieces are made out of this kilo of jaggery and put in water and make it into sweet juice and drink. Even when small pieces are made out of this kilo of jaggery and put into water, there is no change in the sweetness of jaggery. The big block, the kilo of jaggery and small pieces of jaggery may differ in the quantity and measure but the taste has not changed. Thus the source is full, from that we have removed fullness and we have experienced this fullness and what remains is also full. If you take out fullness out of a full thing, what remains is also full. Thus the name of Rama demonstrates to us that man's aspects are all divine aspects. They are closely connected with aspect of divinity. (*SSB 1977 p144-145*)

Symbolic meaning of wedding of Rama and Sita - Prakriti Marries Paramatma

The wedding of Rama and Sita is not a wedding of one young man and one young woman. This wedding is a union of *Prakriti* (*Cosmos*) with the *Purusha* (Supreme Lord). An old lady sang a song calling upon all women to join the company of people going for the wedding. She described the decorations in Mithila, the divine beauty of Rama and Sita, the splendid scene in the palace and depicted the memorable scenes they would witness at the wedding. (Swami sang the song in His own mellifluous voice with such verve and charm that the entire wedding scene seemed to appear in all its splendour before the gathering). A similar appeal went forth from the men's side to all men, describing the wedding as an occasion that would eradicate all the beholders of their sins. "Come, all ye, for the glorious wedding of Kausalya's son" was the refrain of the song.

The whole world seemed to rejoice at the wedding of Rama and Sita, because it had its cosmic significance. It represented the union of *Prakriti* (Sita) with *Purusha*, the Super Absolute. Every being in Cosmos, whatever may be the gender, in external form, is essentially feminine. *Prakriti* (Nature) is feminine. She represents one half of the Lord – *Ardhangi*. The *Paramatma* (the Supreme Overself) – is the *Purusha* (the Supreme Godhead). Together, *Prakriti* and *Purusha* represent the concept of *Ardha Nareeswara* – the Divine conceived as half – male and half - female. This union of male and female is found in every human being¹¹⁸. Everyone should understand this aspect of the Ramayana story. (*SSS Vol.27 p.117*)

Sita's aspect is symbolic *Vijnaana and Prajnana* or knowledge and wisdom. She is the embodiment of *Sakthi*. Viswamitra, who recognised this aspect of Sita¹¹⁹, was wanting Rama, the Divinity, to secure this aspect of Sita.

The story of Ramayana teaches us the confluence or the coming together of these two divine aspects. Such a confluence is for the prosperity of the world.

All the great and divine ideas that are contained within us feel exhilarated when we look at the coming together of these two aspects. All the good qualities that are contained in Sita¹²⁰ were being described in terms of beautiful gems, diamonds, pearls and flowers. Everyone was anxious to go and see the marriage of Rama and Sita. They believed that Rama will look after people with greater joy and bliss and will give them all kinds of weapons and strength during the marriage. When we see the meaning of the words that have been used on that occasion, we realise that creation with all its beauty,

¹¹⁸ Sita and Rama had the magnetic power in full measure *Poornamada Poornamida* (That is whole and this whole etc.). Rama was embodiment of magnetic power, so also was Sita. Sita represents *Prakriti* (nature) and Rama is *Paramatma* (God). They are made for each other. Divinity can be recognised by its infinite attraction power. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p. 52*)

¹¹⁹ See Chapter, *Viswamitra - Knew the divine aspect of Rama:*

¹²⁰ Viswamitra always proclaimed that these two aspects, beauty and happiness, really come out of our own mind (*SSB 1977 p.141*)

with all its attractiveness is in the form of Sita who is born out of the earth. The beauty of creation is being described by Viswamitra in this story.

The marriage ceremony of Rama should not be regarded by us as a simple marriage where Rama married Sita on his own, but we should regard it as a confluence of all the noble qualities that are born with us, with the divine spirit of *atma* which is Rama. We call this moment an auspicious moment, no that is the moment where the aspect of *jiva* is brought together with the aspect of *Paramatma*. When our mind can get fixed on God that is also referred to as an auspicious moment. Many people ask the question, why is it, Swami, that my mind is not getting fixed on Divinity? When we look at it from another angle, say we want to get a girl married to a boy, we talk of issuing an invitation which is called a *Lagna Patrika*. The word *lagna* truly means confluence, the coming together of the *jivatma* and *Paramatma*. (*SSB 1977 p.148-149*)

Sita was no ordinary woman. She was the embodiment of *Maha Maya* (supreme divine illusion). Rama acquired *Maha Maya* as his mate. Sita, for her part, sought oneness with the *Atma* principle represented by Rama. The marriage of Rama and Sita represents the association of the *Atma* and the *Maya*. It is in this combined form of *Atma and Maya* that Rama entered Ayodhya.

SANKRANTI FESTIVAL

The Sankranti festival is also an occasion, when the bullocks are decorated elaborately and taken to various houses in the village. The bullocks are worshipped and fed sumptuously as an expression of gratitude for all the hard work they have done in the fields. Even the bovine members of the house hold are feted. A symbolic marriage is performed between a pair of bull and a cow, naming them as Rama and Sita. They are taken along streets and made to dance to the delight of everyone. The cow named Sita is enquired, Rama is black. Do you like him? Sita would swing her head in disagreement. Then, she is counselled, “Please do not say no; Rama is great. He is handsome and respectable!” Then, Sita would nod her head in agreement. (*SSS Vol. 42 p.3*)

LYRICS OF FEW OF THE WEDDING SONGS

1. Kalyaanamu Choothamu Raarandi

Kalyaanamu Choothamu Raarandi

(Come all; let us all go to wedding...)

Sri Sitaraamula Kalyaanamu Choothamu Raarandi

(The sacred wedding of Lord Sri Rama and mother Sita, Come one, come all)

1. Choochuvaaralaku Chaala Punyamata

(Whoever witnesses the ceremony is bestowed with great merit)

Punyapurushulaku Dhanya Bhaagyamata

(It is a great fulfilling opportunity and fortune for virtuous men)

Bhagyamabhaagyamu Bhedamu Ledata

(There exists no difference between fortune and misfortune)

Bhakthaavesula Mukthi Daanamagu... (Kalyaanamu Choothamu)

(It is a gift of liberation and salvation for all those thirsty for devotion)

2. Ambaaripai Aragu Tejamata

(A splendorous form sitting atop an elephant)

Dhagadhaga Merisedi Divya Raamudata

(It is Lord Sri Rama, the Divine shining effulgently)

Rama Ankamuna Ramani Sitayata

(On Lord's lap is seated His consort, mother Sita)

Sitaraamula Sodara Sevakulu Mana Kshememadugunata

(The siblings and the servants of the Divine couple would inquire everyone about wellbeing of all)

Kshemamu Adigina Manakika Koduva

(What else do we need on being asked about our welfare?)

Kadalare Kadalare Badulika Palukaka... (Kalyaanamu Choothamu)

(Come on; let us move forward without any say in return)

2. Raare Choodara Podamu

Raare Choodara Podamu Raamula Pendli

(Come one; come all, let us attend the sacred wedding of Lord Sri Rama and mother Sita)

Ayodhyaavaasula Raamula Pendli... (Raare Choodara Podamu)

(It is the marriage of the Lord Sri Rama, the resident of Ayodhya)

1. Sthreelu Minchina Mikkutaalu; Muthyapu Thoranaalu

(The first half I am not sure...The buntings are decorated with precious pearls)

Moolalaki Kitikeelu; Vajraala Arugulu

(The corners are adorned with windows and the floors are studded with diamonds)

Talapaina Neelaalu; Nooraarlu Bazaarlu... (Raare Choodara Podamu)

(I am not sure of the meaning of this line....)

2. Veena Sannamulu Vintha Nagaarlu

(The procession was filled with the music of instruments Veena, clarinets, and drumbeats)

Radhamulu Gajamulu Turagamu Menaka

(Followed by chariots, elephants, horses and Menaka)

Vaariventa Ghana Vruddha Kaushikudu

(Elderly sage Kaushika was in the procession following)

Vaariventa Raja Dasharathudu

(With him, was the King Dasaratha)

Athaniventa Manthri Samanthrudu

(With him, was the minister Samanthra)

Athyadbhuthamuga Aanandamuga

(With great pomp and show filled with happiness and joy)

Ayodhya Anthayu Kadili Vacchinadi... (Raare Choodara Podamu)

(Entire city of Ayodhya came forward)

3. Vashistha Rappinchi Khadgamulu Theppinchi

(Sage Vashishta was called and also the swords were brought forward)

Doolaalapai Guppinchi; Yipinchi Meppinchuta

(I am not sure of this line)

Sthreelaki Yekkuva Bhooshanaalu; Mundara Darbaarulu

(The women folk were adorned with jewels and ornaments and there were Darbars)

Padyam

Sitaku Ramudu Soothramu Gattutaku Thaanu

(The sacred thread is to be tied to mother Sita by Lord Sri Rama)

Yiddari Okka Yeedu Jodu Koorchinaaru

(The age and match has been set between the Divine couple)

Sitaku Thaguvaadu Sri Raamudu...

(Lord Sri Rama is the perfect match for mother Sita)

6.3.3 TWO BOONS - ABDUCTION OF SITA AND SEARCH FOR SITA

HIS STORY:

Rama's nature:

Rama was supremely gentle. However harsh others might speak, he used to reply soft and sweet. Though others might do him harm, he never remembered it against them. He only sought to be good and be of service to them. Whenever he found time he used to discuss with aged monks, revered Brahmins and learned scholars, codes of good conduct and rules of morality. He analysed the mysteries of Vedantic thought in simple words and like an ordinary enquirer, he posed problems before pundits for elucidation. The sages and scholars who had mastered the science of Vedanta and philosophical enquiry were elated at the elaborations given by Rama of the knotty points he himself raised. They praised in a thousand different ways his intelligence and scholarship.

Rama spoke to his subjects even before they spoke to him, so ardent was his love towards them. He lovingly enquired about their welfare and was full of sympathy for them. So, the subjects

too loved him as their staunchest friend and dearest kinsman, and they revered him for his affectionate interest in them. Rama followed strictly the various rules of living, dictated by tradition, whatever the inconvenience or discomfort. To whomsoever he spoke, he had a charming smile on his face, a merry twinkle in the eye and lasting sweetness in his words. No one noticed the slightest trace of anger, dislike, despair or hate in his face.

He was the embodiment of compassion and sympathy. He was full of eagerness to rescue those who surrender their wishes to his will. Undesirable habits to which royalty is an easy prey never dared approach him. He was not a victim of the evil habit of garrulity and dalliance. In spite of this, if anyone displayed before him his cleverness in argument, he would never fail to foil him by cleverer counter argument and put him in his place. He never knew illness of body or anxiety in the mind. He recognised the needs of the people and, even before they represented them to the ruler, he considered the response that could be made and remedied the grievance, after taking the permission of Dasaratha and making the ministers interested in the solution. Dasaratha too did not obstruct his wishes in any way. He put them into execution the moment he came to know about them. Rama paid detailed attention to even the smallest detail of administration and took adequate precautions to see that problems and complexities do not raise their heads once they had been solved and set right. Another quality which was evident in Rama was: He never revealed in advance what he had resolved in his mind. Until it took final shape no one could make out his will or wish. And his anger or resentment, or his satisfaction would never be futile. He would not delay or allow himself to be diverted or

deceived. With such supreme characteristics, Rama shone in glory. Dasaratha was delighted observing the way Rama was winning the love and loyalty of his people. He heard from ministers, priests and others the growing popularity of Rama and was thrilled. (*RKRV Part I p.213-215*)

Preparations for Coronation:

People of Ayodhya rejoiced to see the royal couples. One day at three o'clock in the morning, Dasaratha had a dream¹²¹. It was his belief that whatever one saw in a dream in the early hours would come true. He had dreamt that he had become very old and that his hands and legs were shaking. He woke up in a disturbed state of mind considering this as a bad omen. (*SSS Vol.35 p.123*) Dasaratha realised that he was growing old and that it was time he should have crowned one of his sons as heir to his kingdom. Since Rama was the eldest of the four sons and he had all the qualities of a worthy king, he thought of crowning him as the heir to his kingdom. *He sent word for Sage Vashishta and obtained his permission*¹²². This news was received by the subjects of the kingdom with great joy and happiness because all of them thought that Rama was most suited to assume the reigns of the kingdom. (*SSS Vol.41 p.60*)

Manthara poisons Kaikeyi:

¹²¹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - **PREPARATIONS FOR THE CORONATION**

¹²² *SSS Vol.35 p.123*

Manthara¹²³, the servant-maid of Queen Kaikeyi, was smitten to the quick when she heard that Rama was to be crowned as the Emperor of Ayodhya. The hard-hearted Manthara then went to Kaikeyi and gave her the news. Kaikeyi felt overjoyed when she first heard from Manthara that Rama, who was dearest to her heart, was going to be crowned as the Emperor next morning. Inflamed with anger, she began poisoning the mind of Kaikeyi, though the queen had nurtured deep love for Rama. (*SSB 1996 p.36-37*) Manthara reminded Kaikeyi of the two boons granted to her by Dasaratha. She suggested to her that she must demand from Dasaratha that Bharatha be crowned as his heir to the kingdom and Rama be sent to the forest for fourteen years. *Manthara ultimately succeeded in changing the mind of Kaikeyi*¹²⁴. Though Kaikeyi loved Rama more than Bharatha, she was influenced by the evil advice of Manthara. She removed all her ornaments and lay down in great anger in her chamber. Dasaratha went to her chamber and enquired as to what the reason for her anger was. (*SSS Vol.41 p.60*) Kaikeyi expressed her demands to *Dasaratha*, as tutored by Manthara - banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years and Bharatha's coronation immediately. (*SSS Vol.34 p.80-81*) When Kaikeyi demanded the two boons granted to her by Dasaratha earlier, he was very much distressed. But as Kaikeyi persisted with her demands, he relented and agreed to make her son Bharatha the crown prince of Ayodhya. But when she put forth the second demand, asking him to send Rama to the forest for 14 years, Dasaratha was crestfallen. (*SSS Vol.41 p.60*)

¹²³ See Chapter, *Manthara*

¹²⁴ *SSB 1996 p.37*

Sumantra shocked at the sight of the Emperor – Kaikeyi asks him to fetch Rama:

Sumantra being an old faithful had the freedom to enter any of the inner apartments of the palace. So he hurried into the chambers of Queen Kaikeyi, in search of the Emperor. Entering the Hall, where the Royal beds were, Sumantra was shocked out of his wits¹²⁵. He was aghast at the sight of the Emperor. When Sumantra stood hopeless, sunk in sorrow, Kaikeyi intervened and said, “Oh best of ministers! The Emperor spent the entire night without sleep, in anxiety about Rama. If you can go immediately and bring Rama with you here, the mystery will be unravelled. I am telling you this. Do not misunderstand me but bring Rama here quickly.” Sumantra took her instructions as the commands of the Sovereign. He hastened to the Residence of Rama. (*RKR* *Part I p.264-265*)

Within the Palace, the companions of Rama, elated and happy, ready with their bright countenances and splendid robes were waiting to accompany him to the Festival Hall. Sumantra went into the apartments that lay still deeper inside the Palace. There he saw Rama, seated on a golden cot, scattering Divine Light around him, and Sita standing by his side, gently fanning him. He shone like the Moon with the star, Chitra.

¹²⁵ See Chapter, *Sumantra* - **Sumantra is aghast at the Sight of Dasaratha:**

Rama tells Sita that his parents summoning him at this hour broods obstacles:

Sumantra was in a hurry. He could not brook delay. He said, “Rama! Mother Kaikeyi and your Father have both asked me to bring you quickly to the Palace of that Queen. They have sent me on that mission here. I have hurried hither for that same purpose.” As soon as he heard those words, Rama turned towards Sita and said, “Sita! This is a sign of some obstacle, and not of anything else. I am not unaware of this, but I kept silent and said, ‘Yes’ for everything, so that Father might be happy. Father’s orders are to be honoured, lest he be pained.” While Rama was talking in this strain, the heart of Sumantra was pounding fast inside him. He was trying to interpret Rama’s words and the picture of Dasaratha lying wailing on the floor. He was now convinced that the obstacle Rama spoke of was genuine.

But Sita interrupted Rama; she said, “Lord! What are you talking about? On this auspicious occasion you should not speak thus. Whatever the obstacle, father-in-law’s words must be honoured. If he is content, we are content. For his sake, we must renounce whatever has to be. Do not hesitate even a little, go immediately. Whether the Coronation takes place or not, we shall be equally happy. Mother Kaikeyi has inordinate affection towards you. Anything that she directs us to do, any order that she gives us, will be for our good beyond doubt. There is no one here on earth who is as solicitous for our welfare as Mother Kaikeyi. When Father and such a mother send word that you should hasten towards them, how happy we should be!” Saying this, Sita followed Rama to the main door of the Hall and wished him well.

Rama told her, “Sita! Don’t I know all this? For me, the days that are past, the days that are around us and the days yet to come are all the same. I welcome each day with full joy. To uphold the reputation of Father, I am prepared to do anything I am prepared to go anywhere. I am indeed immensely happy that you share my feeling and second my resolve.”

The Chariot takes Rama to the Palace of Kaikeyi

Rama moved out, accompanied by Sumantra. When they ascended the chariot waiting on the road in front of the Palace, people raised shouts of “*Jai, Jai Ramachandra Prabhu ki Jai.*” The acclamation shook the skies.

Sumantra announced to the populace, “Now the chariot is not taking Rama to the Coronation Hall. It is taking him to where the Emperor is. So, allow the chariot to go as fast as it should. Rama will return in a few moments, so wait here.” Sumantra explained the reason for the hurry, and drove in hot haste. When Rama was proceeding thus along the city streets to the Palace of Kaikeyi, in his divine chariot, as soon as he was sighted, heroes cheered like lions. Minstrels and courtiers started paeans of praise. The strains of many instruments of music filled the sky. Acclamation of “Jai,” “Jai” rose from the thick masses of people on both sides of the road. Women in their best clothes, bedecked with jewels, thronged the terrace of the house and filled the windows, eager to wave lamps when Rama passed by.

When he approached the Palace, they showered floral petals and waved sacred lamps. People gazed upon the Prince until he passed beyond reach of the eye. Then, they relished with joy the

picture of “Rama in the chariot” they had imprinted on their hearts, and, stood without stirring wherever they were, like idols of themselves, lost in contemplation of the Bliss that filled them.

The chariot rode into the precincts of the Palace of Dasaratha named Vardhamana, as imposing as Mount Kailas itself. It passed through the three quadrangles guarded by vigilant bowmen.

Rama aware of the Divine Play:

Then, Rama alighted from the vehicle. Thereafter, he moved through two more quadrangles on foot. While walking across, he told his companions and even Lakshmana to stay back. For Rama knew what was about to happen soon. In spite of this, he was acting like a mortal, as naturally as any would under the circumstances! Finally, Rama entered the apartments of the Queens and the place where Dasaratha had fallen on the bed. His hair was dishevelled. He was wearing clothes of ‘yesterday.’ He was lying on the bed without any regard to propriety. Rama was astonished at the spectacle. Kaikeyi was standing by the side of the bed.

Rama asks Dasaratha the reasons for his sorrow and consoles him:

Dasaratha’s face had lost all trace of brightness. He was lamenting and wailing. He raised his head. His eyes fell upon Rama. His tongue failed to spell out what he longed to say. Tears streamed from his eyes. Though he tried to speak, no sound came. Rama had never before seen or experienced such a fearsome scene. He was filled with anxiety. He hastened to the

presence of his father, and held both his feet in his hands. “Tell me, father, why you lament so? What is the cause? I shall try to confer joy on you, in the best manner possible. I shall dedicate my very life for the sake of restoring your ananda. Tell me what has caused this grief, do not weep,” he pleaded. At this Dasaratha exclaimed, “Rama!” and broke into tears again, unable to continue. He lost consciousness. Rama tried to revive him and console him, but he fell deeper into grief and could not be pacified. Then, Rama mustered courage and took his father to task, “Father! What is all this? You have to instil courage into young persons like me. On the other hand, you are weeping and wailing and filling us with fear! No. This is not right. This is the occasion to be happy; but is it Dharma, is it proper, for you to sink into grief? Till this day, whenever you were angry or worried my coming to you used to remove in a trice all signs of those troubles, and to make you beam with ananda.

You used to gain peace again when you drew me near, didn't you? How is it then that the longer you look at me the more you suffer from sorrow? This makes my grief too more painful. Can you not mention the reason for this strange behaviour and bring solace to me? Won't you tell me? Has any wrong been committed by me? Or, if there is anything I have to do, tell me, I shall do it without fail. I shall correct myself, if you tell me my faults. Do not grieve. Do not doubt or hesitate. Tell me with the authority of affection what I have to do, and I shall bow to the order. Father! Your being plunged in grief is not good augury for you, for me as well as for the Empire.”

Prays to Kaikeyi to tell him the reason for Dasaratha’s grief:

Praying thus, Rama turned towards Kaikeyi. With folded palms, he asked her, “Mother! Have I committed any wrong? Tell me who that execrable sinner is who caused such grief to father! The moment father saw me, he used to beckon me lovingly, draw me close to him, and fondle me caressingly! Now, he does not even look at my face; why is it so? He does not utter one word. He keeps his face turned away from me! If, however, the fault, the crime is mine, I am ready to suffer any punishment to atone for it. It is enough for me if father is happy. Or, is he suffering from any illness or disease? Have my brothers, Bharatha and Satrugna sent any bad news? They are well, aren’t they?”

Mother Kausalya and Sumitra are well, I hope! I am overcome with grief, since I am unable to understand the reason for father’s agony! I shall do whatever is needed to bring joy back to him, however hard it may be. His command, however painful, I shall discharge to the full, most loyally, with bowed head. Whoever is born, the father is the cause of his birth. Therefore, the father is everyone’s visible God. I seek nothing higher than his happiness. Have compassion on me. Tell me what has taken place. Mother! Was your self-respect hurt by any incident, resulting in your speaking some harsh words against father? Or, did my mother act against his will and hurt his feelings? Mother Kausalya will never behave like that. And Sumitra? I am more certain about her. She will not at all act so. And father will certainly not lament so distressingly, even if either of them acted so foolishly. There must be some very serious reason for his plight. When father is reluctant to tell me what that is, at least you can tell me about it and console my grief.”

Kaikeyi reveals the two boons that she asked Dasaratha:

Looking at Rama who was so pathetically praying to her, Kaikeyi gave up all sense of mercy and moderation, all consideration for the husband who might be plunged in deeper misery when he hears her words spoken in utter disregard of the calamities they were sure to usher in. She brushed aside the claims of love, and cast off her own innate dignity and motherly status. She said, "Rama! Listen! Years ago, during the battle between the Devas and the Asuras (Gods and Demons) your father was wounded by dire demonic arrows and he suffered unbearable pain. I nursed him back to health and happiness¹²⁶.

He appreciated my sacrifice and service and told me to name two boons¹²⁷ promising to grant them to me. At that time, I felt that

¹²⁶ When one acts without foresight, one has to repent for the consequences of the indiscriminate action. This was the case with King Dasaratha. In the war between the gods and the demons, he fought on the side of the *Devas*, taking Queen Kaikeyi, the daughter of the king of Kashmir with him. She was well-versed in the art of warfare. It was Kaikeyi who taught the strategy of war and the art of archery to Rama. While Dasaratha was engaged in the battle, one of the wheels of his chariot was about to come off as the linchpin of the axle had come out. Kaikeyi saved the situation by using her finger as a pin to hold the wheel in position. After the end of the battle, Dasaratha noticed that Kaikeyi's hand was bleeding profusely. Seeing her plight and realising her courage and sense of sacrifice, Dasaratha told her, "Kaikeyi, you ...can ask from me two boons." He did not specify what type of boon she should ask of him or when. He promised these boons without any thought of the consequences. Kaikeyi asked for these boons later, at a time which was advantageous to her but disastrously mortal for him! (*SSS Vol.17 p.122*)

¹²⁷ See Chapter, *Kaikeyi - Kaikeyi recalls the two boons given by Dasaratha and tells Rama that scions of the Ikshvaku line never break their promised word:*

the only thing I craved for was his recovery and victory; so I replied: I shall ask you for the promised boons when I feel the urge later.’ I asked now for those two boons: one that my son Bharatha should be crowned Emperor and two that you should be sent into the Dandaka Forest for a period of fourteen years. (*RKRV Part I p.269-274*)

As a result, your father is creating this hubbub! I shall not modify nor withdraw my demands. Since you are his very life breath, he does not like to send you into exile. He is reluctant to ask you to go. He apprehends you may take it amiss. That is the reason for this grief. Rama! No other calamity or deluge has happened here. The father can be saved from the sin of breaking his word only when his very image, the son, resolves to fulfil the vow he fails to fulfil. Else, if he who vowed and he who is the son of the person, who vowed, both neglect it, then the father has to meet the doom of eternal downfall. You are not unaware of this.” (*RKRV Part I p.274*)

Rama unaffected on hearing the boons of Kaikeyi – says that no act is nobler than dedicating the body to the services of the father:

Rama was not affected in the least, while listening to these words uttered with such deliberate hardheartedness. With a smile playing on his lips, he replied, “For this reason, it is not proper that father should lament. He nodded his head as if to signify his approval of the proposals made by Kaikeyi.

But when the conversation fell on his ears, Dasaratha felt as if his heart was being sawn within. He rolled and groaned in

extreme agony. Rama turned towards Kaikeyi and said, “Mother! It will happen as you have contemplated! I am reverentially placing my head the promise made by my father. It is enough if father draws me near him as he lovingly used to do until now and speaks to me affectionately, and blesses me. Well, if I am at least told that I don’t deserve these, that I have not earned that merit. I will accept it without demur and with equal joy and satisfaction. For, father always wishes the best for me. He blesses me always and desires that I progress ever. He is great seer. He is for me not only the father, but the preceptor who teaches the highest path. What responsibility and duty have I than conferring joy on him, who is both father and teacher? This is my dearest duty, my Dharma. I will derive immense ananda in the forest for fourteen years. Not merely fourteen, if father’s wish is such, I am prepared to live all my life, in the forest itself. Rama is the servant and support to the parental word, not its opponent. Is there any act of gratitude nobler than dedicating this body, which was received from father, to his service alone I shall offer it with ananda. I am not one who waits to be told to do so.

Mother why did you not mention to me that Bharatha is the person to be crowned? I and my brother –there is no difference between us? We know no distinction among ourselves. Why is it you say,’ ‘This is your father’s command’? Do I ever disobey your commands No I never do so. Whether you say it or my father says it unhesitatingly carry it out. I am leaving Ayodhya this very day, and proceeding to the forest. Mother! Send proper messengers charged with the task of bring Bharatha from the grandfather’s place. It is best to get him quickly. If my moving into forest and the coronation of Bharatha happen at the same to

me, father will be saved from physical strain and mental anxiety and the sense of void. And you can fully be content! Who can say how events will shape themselves?”

When Kaikeyi heard these words from Rama, she was filled with ananda and apprehension¹²⁸. The quicker you depart from Ayodhya, the sooner he will recover from agony. Until you leave Ayodhya, I am afraid, he will not take food or bathe. Therefore, if you yearn to restore him to happiness, the sooner you depart the better.” Dasaratha lying prostrate on the bed heard these heart piercing words of Kaikeyi. He could not contain his anger and sorrow. He burst into indistinct fury, “Fie on you, traitorous demon!” and turning to Rama, he cried, “Rama” twice, before he fainted again.

Three objectives of Rama

Rama sat on the bed, with the head of his father on his lap. He stroked the forehead and consoled and comforted him with sweet lovingness. He also spoke to Kaikeyi, “Mother! I am not a covetous fellow poisoned by worldly ambition. I have no desire to win over the people and establish my rule over the kingdom. I wish to live like a hermit. I yearn to foster and maintain righteousness (Dharma), that is all. I have also one more resolve: to confer joy on my most revered father. To realise these three objectives, I am prepared to undertake any task. A son has no greater duty, no higher good, than serving the father. Mother! Though father has not directly spoken to me, you are telling me what his command is, aren’t you?”

¹²⁸ See Chapter, *Kaikeyi* - **Kaikeyi’s fear**

This is quite enough. Besides, you are speaking in his very presence, and despite his hearing what you say, he is unable to alter or deny anything. Therefore, I infer that your words are virtually his. So, I bow to the order, and shall leave as directed.

Rama’s teachings – The eternal duty of a son - The Dharma expounded and the Equanimity revealed by Rama aroused Dasaratha’s love even more:

“Mother! I have one little wish, which I hope you will fulfil. When Bharatha is ruling the empire, see that he obeys in every way the orders of Father and that he contributes to the joy and satisfaction of Father by his acts. For me, for Bharatha, indeed, for every son, there is nothing more holy and more fruitful than the vow of filling the heart of the father with contentment and happiness. Service of the father is the *Sanathana Dharma*, the eternal duty, of the son.”

With these words, Rama fell prostrate on the ground and touched the feet of Mother Kaikeyi. Dasaratha, who heard his Son, writhed as if the Dharma that Rama expounded and the equanimity which he revealed aroused his love even more and thus aggravated his sorrow beyond control. Knowing that Rama will not stay in Ayodhya any longer, he lost all sense of propriety and status. He shouted “Rama!” and slumped on the hard floor of the room. Women in the zenana heard the thump, and were stunned into grief and wonder. They lamented loudly among themselves at the turn of events. Rama realised that it was not advisable to delay any longer. He prostrated before his father and touched his feet. Then, he walked out of the apartment.

Lakshmana furious with Kaikeyi and angry with his father:

Lakshmana was standing at the door and listening to the words spoken inside the room. He was in tears. He was furious against Kaikeyi and angry against his father. He found it impossible to give expression to his feelings. So, he followed the footsteps of Rama with arms folded, eyes on the ground, head bent low. Though he had lost a kingdom, and had to exile himself into the forest, Rama's face shone like the moon behind thick dark clouds, unaffected by the black veil. The splendour of his countenance was unaffected; for, he faced honour and dishonour with equal serenity. He behaved like a veteran Yogi, with no trace of agitation in thought, word and deed.

He walked as if nothing had happened to cause him worry. Rama did not speak a word to those around him or to the citizens he met; not that he was sad, no, he knew that others would be hurt if they heard the news. For, if he spoke, he would have to speak out the truth; and he would be spreading sadness through his own words. In spite of this, his style of walking back to the palace announced the sad news to all onlookers. Rama did not proceed direct to the apartments of Sita. He chose to walk to the palace of Kausalya.

Rama informs his Mother, Kausalya of the boons promised by father to Kaikeyi

Rama *told Kausalya*, “Mother! If you promise not to grieve, I shall tell you one thing¹²⁹,” and he held her hands in his, very

¹²⁹ See Chapter, *Kausalya* - **BREAKING OF THE NEWS OF HIS BANISHMENT TO KAUSLAYA**

firmly. “This is something that will endow me and you and our entire family and dynasty with imperishable glory. So, don’t give room for any anxiety, doubt or distress. Agree to it with alacrity and affection. Does it not give you great joy that I obey father’s command? He has resolved to crown my brother, Bharatha! He has resolved to send me, in the habiliments of a hermit into the Dandaka forest for a period of fourteen years. I have bowed to his command and come here to take leave of you.”

She drew Rama on to her lap, and caressing his curly hair she asked, “Son! What is this I hear? This news? Tell me clearly what took place. I cannot bear this suspense any longer.” Rama told her, “Honouring the two boons that father had promised Kaikeyi once upon a time, father granted her those two wishes.” Rama told Kausalya that the first boon she was granted was, “Bharatha is to be crowned” and the second was, “I should be sent to the Forest for fourteen years.”

Seeing his mother doubting the truth of the incidents that actually took place, Rama again held both her hands in his and pleaded, “Mother! Believe my words!. This is the truth. I am not so cruel as to cause such anxiety in you over a light laughable matter, believe me. I have accepted father’s order. I have come to you for your permission.” With these words, Rama fell at the feet of his mother.

He sat near his mother and stroked her forehead, caressing her hair and consoling her. He brushed away the dust with which her clothes were covered. Like a huge well-set rock struck deep in

the sea, Rama¹³⁰ sat unhurt by the lashing of the surging billows around. He was above and beyond the blows of grief and the blandishments of joy. He was filled with as much equanimity now when he had to leave for the forest for fourteen years, as he had a few moments ago, while proceeding to the Durbar Hall to be crowned as the Ruler of a great empire! Kausalya too knew that Rama would never swerve from his path of duty.

Lakshmana was watching the anguish of Kausalya¹³¹ and listening to her words. He could not control his emotions. He was bursting with anger. He held his hands tight over his chest, and said, “Oh! Revered Mother! I shall never accept this. Is Rama to leave the kingdom and betake himself to the forest, yielding to the prattle of a woman? I cannot tolerate it. Father has become too old. His mind is very unsteady as a result. And he is entangled in sensual pursuits, and he has become a slave to the enticements of Kaikeyi.

Rama Chides Lakshmana for crossing the boundaries:

While Lakshmana was holding forth in this strain, Rama looked at him sternly, intercepting the flow of his feelings and admonished him thus: “Lakshmana! Your words are crossing the bounds. No one can deny me what I wish for. None can change the march of my will. My exile in the forest cannot be avoided. You are talking prompted by your love towards me and the desire to prevent your separation from me. Forbear! Forbearance

¹³⁰ See Chapter, *Kausalya* - **Rama’s Equanimity – would never swerve from his path of duty - not stray away from path laid by his father:**

¹³¹ See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **Lakshmana’s Anguish on seeing Kausalya’s plight:**

will save you against all anxiety and fear. Be patient. Don't get agitated. Do not entertain ideas of hatred against either father or brother Bharatha. They are pure, holy persons. Kaikeyi too is highly venerable. She is to be honoured and worshipped. The boons she asked are also blameless. She loved me, caressed me, fondled me, nursed me, played with me, derived joy from me, more than her own son, Bharatha.

When the Mother prays today for such boons from father, boons quite contrary to the ways of the world, surely there must be some hidden significance in the affair. This must be the Divine Plan, not mere human tactics. Be quiet; give up your fears and hatreds. We shall await what happens next." Rama advised him.

At this, Lakshmana fell at the feet of Rama and said, "Rama! On what basis, under what authority is Bharatha to be given the Crown that ought to be yours? Which other son has the right which the eldest has not? You are obeying this absurd, unjust order because of father; but I will not approve of it, whatever you may say in justification."

Rama explains the true facts – No one dedicated to the good life shall break the word plighted to the mother, the father or the esteemed Preceptor:

Rama looked at Lakshmana and said, "Brother! I know the extent of the love you bear towards me. I am not unaware of your heroism, your ability and glory. Mother is suffering great grief, since she is unable to understand the true facts and the value of self-control. Besides, since I am the child born of her loins, grief is natural. But consider; for all values of life, righteous conduct,

Dharma, is the very root. And Dharma is secure only on the foundation of Truth. “Sathya and Dharma are interchangeable. One cannot exist without the other. Truth is Goodness. Goodness is Truth. I am now achieving both Sathya and Dharma, while acting in accordance with the command of Father. No one dedicated to the good life shall break the word plighted to the mother, the father or the esteemed Preceptor. Therefore, I shall not overstep the orders of Father. That is certain. It was not Kaikeyi that ordered me. She only communicated to me the command of father. And she did so, in his very presence; so, one has to bow his head in reverence to it. If it wasn’t father’s command, when Kaikeyi was telling me that it was, he could have declared that it wasn’t, couldn’t he? He didn’t. He was simply bewailing and groaning; for this reason, it is as authentic as his own command. So, I shall not deviate from any resolution. There is no possibility of my going back on it. Do not allow your reason to slide into this terror-creating Kshatriya mentality. Give up violence and cruelty and adopt my stand.” Rama stroked the back of Lakshmana, who was weighed down by anger and sorrow and spoke soft loving words to assuage his grief.

Then, turning to his mother, Kausalya, he said, “Do not obstruct my resolve and cause breach of my vow. Whatever may happen to anyone, my exile to the forest cannot be averted. Send me with your Love. Bless my vow, my resolution.” Then he fell at her feet and prayed for permission to leave. The mother was shaken by the agony that was torturing her. She placed her hands on the back of Rama and wept aloud. Seeing her plight, Rama too was unable to restrain his emotions. He held her feet and said, “Mother! My word is supreme Truth. Listen. No hardship will

happen to me while in the forest. I will spend these fourteen years with the largest measure of happiness and joy. I shall come back and fall at these Feet again. I shall fulfil all your hopes about me. Mother! It is Dasaratha's Command! It is a Command which not only I but you, Lakshmana, Sumitra and Bharatha too have to carry out to the very letter. This is the ancient law, the *Sanathana Dharma*. "Mother! I shall make another appeal, pardon me. The arrangements made by you and others for crowning me must be used by you, with equal joy and enthusiasm, for the Coronation of Bharatha. Father has entrusted the forest region to me. It is best. It is in accordance with the highest Dharma that each should do his duty allotted to him. Trying to avoid one's duty because it is hard to accomplish, is to entertain the idea of difference between me and Bharatha. What you have to do is to bless us both, asking each to carry on successfully the responsibility entrusted to each."

Kausalya listened to these words of Rama. She could not bear the grief that descended on her. She groaned in great pain. "Oh my son! Father brought you up and helped you grow and was happy to see you tall and strong. So, he deserves reverence and obedience. Am I too not worthy of reverence? And obedience¹³²? Without the mother's acceptance, no duty can be binding and nothing deserves the name Dharma. More than the father's command, the mother's is to be followed. That is the more important duty. For, it is the mother who nourished you into

¹³² See chapter, *Kausalya* - **Kausalya says she is Ardhangi and mother's command to be followed:**

childhood and boyhood, not the father! Had the mother not borne it for nine months, there would be no child at all!”

Though Rama felt that there was some validity in her plea, he was forced by the need to obey the wishes of his father and his promise that he would not fail in that duty.

Meanwhile, Lakshmana intervened and said, “Brother! Mother’s words are the highest Truth. The mother deserves even more reverence than the father. The scripture has laid down ‘*Matru Devo bhava, Pitru Devo bhava,*’ thus placing the mother first, and the father in the second position. It says, ‘Let the mother be your God,’ and thereafter ‘Let the father be your God.’ It is not proper for you to stick so firmly to your resolution and cause so much grief to mother.”

Rama expounds the rights and duties of a son:

Rama turned to him and intercepted his words. “Lakshmana, you are supporting the statements of a mother who is suffering from the clouding effect of a strong attachment to progeny. Consider the order of the Father, which concerns the welfare of the empire, the world in its entirety and the human community. You have not understood the inner implication and meaning of that order.

Only Dharma can ensure the other three goals of man— Wealth, Happiness and Liberation. There is no need to doubt this or argue about its correctness. When activity is merely devoted to the earning of riches, the world hates the individual. When it is devoted entirely to the selfish fulfilment of one’s desire, the

world condemns it as contemptible. Therefore activity has to be in conformity with Dharma, Lakshmana! This is not all. Dasaratha is our Father, Preceptor, and Monarch. He might give us a command, either through desire for something, or through anger against somebody or through attachment with and love towards someone, that is not our concern! We have only to obey. There is no justification for discarding it.

“A son who delights in sin might act against the command. I am not such a son. Whatever Father commands, I will bow my head in reverential homage. Regarding this, you might have a bit of doubt. When a father, a fool blinded by lust, devoid of intelligence to discriminate between the momentary and the eternal, intent only on his selfish aggrandisement, and putting his trust on the stratagems of others, inflicts injuries on his own son, you might ask, should the son put his trust in him and obey him? Without fail he ought to! He may be a fool or a cruel tyrant, are you not his son? When that is so, your status is ever lower and his is ever higher. This decides all duties and rights. The son can at best try to clarify to him and explain according to his light what appears to him confused or complicated. He should not refuse to obey, dismissing it as foolish or absurd.

“Consider this aspect also. Dasaratha is a very talented person, a great warrior and heroic fighter, a pillar of righteousness. And he is struggling in agony to keep his plighted word! He wasn't deluded by Kaikeyi, or blinded by lust! No. He was moved by the supreme need to abide by his promise, a promise he had solemnly made. Besides, he had told her that he would grant her the boons, whatever they be, even if the grant involved injury to

his own life! I can never assent to the view that he is overcome by lust. Father is in misery, because he sees no escape from the consequences of that assertion, which his heart does not agree with, to send me into the forest. “Lakshmana! Father is a staunch supporter of Dharma, stauncher than his predecessors on the throne. His fame has echoed and re-echoed from every corner of the three worlds. Will it not be a bad example to humanity if his Queen, the Anointed Queen, leaves him and accompanies her son, deserting the husband? Life is short. Its span is limited. To lose one’s reputation forever by thus resorting to unrighteous acts is not good, either for me or for you.”

Then, turning towards the Mother, he pleaded pathetically, “Mother!”, and before he could continue, Kausalya was numbed into stiffness by sorrow. She realised that her efforts to change the stand that Rama had taken were fruitless. She found that she could not escape the obligation to give him leave to go, with her blessings. She felt that the more she lamented, the more Rama was pained. Meanwhile, Lakshmana was greatly moved. His eyes turned red. He lost all awareness of where he was and amidst whom. His lips became dry. His tongue was tied. He had a fixed stare. He bowed his head and looked on the ground, tears flowed without let or hindrance. Rama watched him, and felt that it would not be proper to leave him in that state. Besides, Lakshmana might do something with himself. If left alone, he might even do injury to others. And those acts would be deemed to have happened on account of me, he thought. So, Rama decided to question Lakshmana. “Brother! The fumes of anger are as incense to the horde of sins.

Suppress them. You might be distressed at the thought that Rama has been so grossly insulted and dishonoured. But Sathya and Dharma, the path of Truth and Righteousness, heed no honour and dishonour. It does not crave for one and shy away from the other. Be brave. Fill your heart with courage. Remain here and serve Father. Use your days thus for the fulfilment of the highest purpose of life.” When his elder brother blessed him thus, Lakshmana was startled into speech. “Brother!” he cried, “When Rama, my very breath, is proceeding to the forest, whom am I to serve here, with this inert material physical object called body? This Lakshmana has no desire to serve anyone except Rama.

You value your Dharma, your sense of duty. I too have my sense of duty, and I value it equally. Therefore, I shall come behind you. I have no need to await anyone’s order. I am not included in the persons bound to the boons claimed by Kaikeyi. Even if I am involved with them, I shall not pay heed to her commands or to the directives of her henchmen. No one other than Rama has the authority to command me or issue directives about my movements or conduct. So, here and now, I too shall don the hermit’s habiliment of bark, tie up my hair into matted locks, and prepare myself to follow you.” With these words, Lakshmana divested himself of the jewels and regal paraphernalia he had burdened himself with, while proceeding to the Coronation Hall; he threw the jewels and silken robes in disgust. The ear ornaments and the necklaces fell in the far corners of the room. He was fretting to accompany his brother. Rama’s heart softened at the sight of the spontaneous devotion and dedicated loyalty of Lakshmana. He went close to him, and placing his hand upon his

shoulder, spoke softly, “Brother! My joy has no bounds, since I have such a brother as you!

This is my great good fortune. By your coming with me, mother Kausalya too will gain some peace of mind. She is very much agitated by fear and doubt about how I shall spend my fourteen years in the forest, and whether I will return after the period of exile is over. So, tell mother to be free from fear. Go and soothe her. While we spend the hours like this, Father must be suffering more and more anxiety. Kaikeyi will suffer from the welling doubt that I may not leave at all! Therefore, I shall now go to Sita and inform her; and thence, I shall go to the Palace of Kaikeyi, to take leave of father. Meanwhile, you will go to your mother Sumitra and receive her consent to join me.”

Rama’s equanimity – Embodiment of Divinity - and Kausalya’s Blessing:

With these words, Rama went round Kausalya full circle, and fell flat at her feet in reverence. At that, the maids and attendants as well as the other inmates of the zenana, set up a loud wail, as if the Deluge had come upon them. But Kausalya bravely drew Rama towards her when he stood up awaiting her blessings. She embraced him, and caressed his hair, and with her hands on his shoulder, she said, “Son! Rama! you are the staunchest adherent of Dharma. You are a resolute hero. You can have no cause to fear life in the forest. Son! How shall I convey to you my blessings? The Goddess of Dharma will surely shelter you during the years of exile, for it is to propitiate Her that you are entering the forest. She is the strongest and most steadfast of Guardians.”

Blessing¹³³ Rama thus, Kausalya... kissed his cheeks. Her lips quivered, when she spoke the parting words, “Rama! Return safe; proceed in joy.” (*RKR V Part I p.274-301*)

Rama was all smiles, though the hour of coronation turned out to be the hour of His departure to the forest. Rama could behave like this because He was no ordinary human but the Embodiment of Divinity. Kausalya could not take the sad news with equanimity like Rama. She said, “Oh Rama! I had never dreamt even in my wildest dreams that You would go to the forest. What is destined to happen will happen. For You, the forest will be Ayodhya, and for me, this Ayodhya will be a forest. Succeed in Your mission and come back home.” (*SSB 1996 p. 38*)

Rama’s Prayer to his mother:

Rama knew the depth of affection that the mother was bestowing on him. He touched the mother’s feet many times in reverential gratitude, and said, “Mother! You should not grieve. You should not reduce sleep or food, do not injure your health. Remember me, at all moments with a joyful heart. Your thoughts will be reflected in my safety and prosperity. When you grieve here, how can I be happy there? When you wish that I should be happy there, you have to be happy here. And with all your heart, you must be blessing me from here.” Praying thus, he moved out of the place, averse to leave her thus; but yet, anxious to do his duty.

¹³³ See chapter, *Kausalya - Kausalya Blesses Rama as he leaves for the forest:*

Rama stepped on the royal road, and started walking along, barefooted, through the concourse of citizens who had filled it. People were petrified at the sight of that resplendent symbol of truth and virtue. The citizens had heard rumours floating over the streets, telling them that Rama was leaving for the forest. They were unable to believe it as true. They prayed it might be false. But when they saw him tramp barefooted, their hearts sank. The exaltation they experienced at the news of the Coronation plunged into the depths of misery. Faces that bloomed in joy suddenly faded and dropped, wan and withered. Rama did not raise his head to look at any of the faces around him. He proceeded to the apartments of Sita. (*RKRV Part I p. 301-302*)

Sita Insists on accompanying Rama to the Forest:

Sita was watching the entrance door, for she was anxious to learn what had happened at the palace of Kaikeyi, and why Rama had not come as yet, though the auspicious hour fixed for the Coronation was fast approaching. Her heart was beating fast in expectancy of Rama's arrival. Suddenly Rama stepped in, unheralded, with bowed head, and on bare feet. She could scarce believe her eyes. Her body shivered like a leaf in the wind. She bit her lips; and swallowed her surprise. "Lord! What is the meaning of all this? Why are you thus?"

Rama entered an inner Hall, and drawing Sita nearer, he said, "Sita! Revered Father has willed and resolved at this very auspicious hour to send me to the forest. Therefore, it has become urgent to honour his command." (*RKRV Part I p. 303-305*)

How Sita convinced Rama

Rama also exemplified the ideal relationship between husband and wife in a family. When Rama decided to leave for the forest, Sita wanted to accompany him to serve him. Rama tried in many ways to dissuade her, telling her about the dangers in living in the forest, infested by wild animals and demons on the prowl. Sita replied: "When I am with the lion among men, what can any animal do to me?" Rama argued with her that the *Rakshasas* were capable of assuming any form and that it would be difficult to safeguard her. Sita retorted: "Can't you, who are the protector of the fourteen worlds, protect a lone Sita!" By these arguments, Sita tried to make Rama agree to her going with him. (*SSS Vol.24 p.61*)

Rama said: "Even if there are no animals that may harm you I will have to leave you at times to go and get something to eat. If at that time, some harm comes to you, it will be very difficult for me or my brother to protect you". At once Sita replied: "Rama, you are a great warrior, a great hero and a very capable person. This fact was proved while you broke the bow of God Shiva. I know your abilities fully. The word you speak to me just now are not befitting of your dignity. If Rama is not able to protect one person, how will he protect the whole world? Even to protect you from such infamy, I should follow you into the forest." (*SSB 1972 p.196-197*)

She replied¹³⁴ Lord! I cannot but follow you. I will lay myself down and sleep at your feet. That will give me the fullest bliss. Rama! I know and recognise none except you. I cannot exist alive for a moment apart from you. (*RKRV Part I p. 303-305*)

Rama alone was given the order to go into exile. But Sita also wanted to accompany him. Rama meanwhile went to his mother Kausalya. “Son I too shall come with you to the forest”, she said. Rama then pacified her, saying, “Mother! Husband is verily your God. There is no other deity beyond him. He is now aged. Added to that, this sad state of affairs has further crushed him. It is not proper for you to abandon him now, at this stage. You must remain here to serve and support him. Comfort him. Give him strength and courage to bear his pain”. In this way, Rama dissuaded his mother from following him to the forests.

Sita heard all these. When Rama returned to the palace to be clothed in tree barks, she too started to wear them, indicating her desire to follow Rama to the forests. Rama strongly dissuaded her. In soft tones, she reminded him, “Lord! Why is there one set of moral codes for your mother and another for me? Is the code of conduct not common to all married women? Is it not the responsibility of a good wife to make her husband happy? She is supposed to look after his welfare. Does it not become my responsibility as well to do the same? I shall hence disobey your order and accompany you to the forest.” (*SSB 2002 p.60*)

¹³⁴ See Chapter, *Sita* - **SITA INSISTS ON FOLLOWING RAMA AND WINS**

JOURNEY TO THE FOREST

As Rama was leaving for the forest Lakshmana joined Him, for it was impossible for him to live without Rama. Separation between Rama and Lakshmana is unthinkable, because Lakshmana¹³⁵ was the incarnation of Adishesha, on whom Lord Narayana reclines. Meanwhile, the people came to know of the departure of Rama. They were plunged into inexpressible grief and cried out heartrendingly, “We cannot live without Rama. It is better to be dead than alive, for we cannot endure the agony of separation from Rama.” Rama consoled them and made His way to the forest. (*SSB 1996 p.38*)

The people, however followed the chariot undaunted by physical exhaustion, urged on by their determination to hold on to their beloved Rama. Some of them who were ready to sacrifice their lives for him and die in their effort to reach him, trudged along, breathless and broken, their feet devotedly stepping on the track left by the chariot in which he sat. Rama saw these subjects of the realm trekking behind him, drawn by the Love they bore towards him. He was filled with compassion. He stopped the chariot, and spoke to them sweet and soft words that touched their hearts. He discoursed on the various moral aspects of the situation, and pleaded with them to return to Ayodhya.

They replied that separation from him was unbearable agony for them that they could not reside even for a moment in an Ayodhya wherein Rama was absent and that they were prepared

¹³⁵ See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **LAKSHMANA TOO WANTS TO ACCOMPANY RAMA**

to die in the forest rather than live in Ayodhya! While many among them asserted thus, the younger among them declared that a City wherefrom the Divinity of Dharma had disappeared was more horrible than the jungle, and that they could not live in such a frightful place. The forest where you reside is the Ayodhya for us, they said. Do not be worried in the least about our exhaustion or our travail. Observe your vow, your duty as you have resolved. We too shall observe our vow. You have decided to honour the wish of your father as a sacred duty. We, too, have a sacred duty, to honour the wish of the Rama in our hearts, the Atma Rama, our Master, the Authority we loyally revere. We will not falter in our resolution. We will not return. Death alone can defeat us,” they announced, amidst sobs and tears of despair.

The compassionate heart of Rama melted at those words of love and loyalty. Sita shed tears in streams. Lakshmana watched the upsurge of devotion rising from the common people of the realm. His eyes turned red with anger, his tongue was tied with emotion, when he thought of Kaikeyi, the stepmother, who did not have even an iota of this sentiment towards Rama. He sat on the ground, his head heavy with sad thoughts.

Rama felt that it was best to persuade them, by whatever means, to return home. He consoled them, sympathised with them, and reminded them of the rites and rituals they had to perform every day and the consequences of non-observance. He described the horrors of forest life and the handicaps they would encounter when trying to live there as hitherto, and advised them to perform the rites and rituals correctly and without break, so that his years of exile may pass off quickly and smoothly. They

would be helping him to spend his exile in peace and joy, and to return to Ayodhya at the proper time, fresh and fine.

The Brahmin youths present before him could not be convinced by these argument! Rama pleaded with them, saying: “Your aged parents will miss your devoted service. It is wrong to leave them unaided and alone.” At this, they said, “Rama! Our aged parents are so weak and dispirited that they cannot follow you to the very forest. They came thus far and turned back, pouring their mental anguish in streams of tears. They have directed us to follow you, and be with you, for, they said, ‘We are too weak. You are strong and young; Go! Serve Rama on our behalf.’ Those aged people are distressed more because you are away from Ayodhya than because we are away from them. They will be happy that their sons are with Rama, a fortune they could not enjoy. Take us with you for this reason at least, to shower joy on those aged people.” Praying thus, they fell at the feet of Rama and wept.

Rama was struck silent at this sincere expression of love and reverence. He was thrilled by the spirit of renunciation of these young men which he felt was grander even than his own renunciation of the throne. His joy was not unmixed with a sense of pride at being surpassed by his subjects in filial piety. Darkness descended on the earth, while the pleadings and rejections were going on. So, Rama asked them to take rest and refreshments for the night, rather than trek back in the darkness.

In order to encourage them to do so Rama bathed in the Thamasa River¹³⁶ this flowed by, partook of a meal of roots, tubers and fruits, and rested awhile. The people who had followed him over long distances were so tired physically that, after the meal, they fell into deep undisturbed sleep.

Rama knew that, on waking, they will all insist on accompanying him. So, he woke Sumantra up and directed him to get the chariot ready without the least noise and drive the vehicle so that its track may not be recognised.

The Agony of the citizens of Ayodhya:

The new day dawned! The citizens of Ayodhya rose and looked around. There were no signs of the Royal Chariot! Nor were Sita, Rama, or Lakshmana in evidence. They were thrust into deep agony. They aroused the sleeping. They sought to trace the wheel marks on the ground. They ran wildly in all directions, seeking to spot the vehicle.

One among them said, “Brothers! Rama saw how tired we were, how we were sleeping out of sheer exhaustion; so, He left this place without taking us with Him.” Then they started blaming each other, for showing signs of exhaustion and inducing Rama to leave them and go alone. Others condemned themselves as inferior to fish; for, they said: “Fish cannot live without water, but we are alive, though Rama has left us stranded.” “Fie, fie, on our lives,” they cursed. “We have brought on ourselves this

¹³⁶ Thamasa (Thamasaa): River that flows into the Ganga; Valmiki's ashram was on it. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

separation from the Person dearest to us. Why are we not bringing upon ourselves Death, which will end sorrow?” they moaned. But soon, they felt that since the *Atma* (Self) in them is Rama, the act of *Atma Hathya* (Self destruction) was unthinkable. It was also not a meritorious act. Suicide can succeed only when one’s destiny is to die by one’s own hand! So, another among them suggested that they could pray to Destiny to sanction that kind of end for them all.

They got involved in these pathetic discussions and doubts. They were anxious to decide soon on the next step they had to take. Before long, someone announced that the tracks left by the wheels were traced. It was good news indeed! For, the tracks showed that the Chariot had proceeded towards Ayodhya! They followed the track for some distance; but soon, they could not be seen any longer. They had faded out. It became impossible to guess what had happened. So, they returned to the City, their thoughts all in a mess.

Many consoled themselves, saying that Rama would certainly return to the Palace, for he had seen their plight and his heart was full of compassion towards the broken-hearted. Rama would return before the lapse of two or three days, they said. The women entered on various vows and types of worship in order to propitiate the gods to persuade Rama to return to his subjects. People lived thereafter like Chakravaka birds which have no lotuses to live on, since the Sun is absent and lotuses would not bloom without its warmth. (*RKR V Part I p.337-342*)

Back in Ayodhya, Dasaratha died of the grief of separation from Rama. At the time Rama went into exile, Bharatha and Satrughna were away in the Kingdom of Kekaya, having been taken there by their uncle. Sage Vashishta, the high priest, sent word to the King of Kekaya that Bharatha and Satrughna should be sent back to Ayodhya immediately. (*SSB 1996 p.38-39*)

Rama Follows the Command of His Father

Bharatha came back to Ayodhya. When he was offered the crown of Ayodhya, he refused to accept it, saying that, it was the right of only the eldest son and hence he would go to the forest and pray to Rama to come back and rule Ayodhya. When he went to the forest to appeal to Rama, Rama told him, “We have to follow the command of our father. Without that, our life itself is a zero.” Rama promised Bharatha that he would surely return to Ayodhya after the period of 14 years of his exile. Then Bharatha¹³⁷ requested Rama to give His sandals which he would place on the throne and worship them. On his return to Ayodhya, Bharatha did not enter the palace. He lived in a small hut and led the life of a renunciant just as Rama was living in the forest. (*SSS Vol.42 p.87*)

Rama in Dandakaranya

Far away in the forest, on the Chitrakoota Peak, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana were... happy in the peaceful, quiet forest home. (*RKR Part II p.1*) The news that Sita, Rama and Lakshmana had taken residence on the Chitrakoota Hill spread among the hermits of the forest and groups of them, bringing their pupils and comrades, approached the sacred cottage, and after taking

¹³⁷ See Chapter, *Bharatha* - **THE BROTHERS MEET**

Darsan, left for their hermitages. Rama asked them about their health and progress and also enquired about the difficulties they encountered. Rama assured them that whenever they required his service, he was ready, with his brother, to go to their rescue.

But they mentioned no difficulties and referred to no troubles. They said, “Rama! The fact that we have been able to see you is enough to make our lives trouble-free. We have no difficulties, nor can any difficulty come into our lives. Your Grace is enough protection for us.” They sat petrified with wonder at the charming personality of Rama. Rama welcomed the ascetics and treated them with affectionate regard. Seeing him and being in his presence cooled the pining hearts of the ascetics and gave them immense consolation and confidence. A deep calm descended on their consciousness.

Rama is predominantly Love. He made every one of the forest dwellers happy. He discoursed with them, and slaked the thirst for Love that was tormenting them. Those who came to him, whether ascetics or hunters, received from him instruction that was appropriate to their aspirations. Rama elevated their occupations into a higher level by his sympathy and counsel. Those who went to him and returned from his presence talked among themselves of his virtues and compassion. They reached their homes extolling him and congratulating themselves. The forest where they had resolved to reside shone with a new glory and thrilled with a new joy, right from the day they entered the cottage. It was charming to the eye and saturated with a coolness that delighted the mind. The ascetic communities that lived in the forest had fear and anxiety removed from their lives. In their

place, ananda grew and flourished. Even the hard-hearted hunter clans started observing the rules of morality. They soon became ornaments of the human race. The Vindhyan Range was sad that the Chitrakoota Mountain had won this fortune. Why? Not the Vindhyan Range alone; all mountain ranges continued to be sad, for they could not attract Rama to select them for his residence. **(RKRV Part I p.377-379)**

Jayantha

One day, a fool named Jayantha sought to measure the valour of Rama, an adventure as foolish and suicidal as the attempt of an ant to discover the depth of the Ocean!

Prompted by sheer mischief, he transformed himself into a crow¹³⁸, and approaching Sita, who was seated by the side of Rama lost in the contemplation of the scenery spread out before them, and with his sharp beak, he pecked at the sole of her tender foot, causing blood to trickle from the wound. Seeing the stream of blood, Rama plucked a blade of dry grass from the ground and threw it at the crow. Rama will never hurt anyone who has not done any injury. But when it is necessary, and when it has to be done, even Rahu will swallow the Moon, isn't it? So too Rama. He will never hurt the innocent. But that blade of grass became a huge flame of fire and flew towards Jayantha. And when he fled,

¹³⁸ Kaakaasura, the crow-demon wounded Sita when Rama was sleeping on her lap *and* when Sita was helpless to ward him off. What happened to him? Rama made him and all his race one-eyed; the one eye-ball rolls from the right to the left and from left to right so that he may see this side and that. The meaning is that if you crave for Sita (*Prakriti, the pleasing, the objective world*) you cannot get a perfect picture, a synoptic vision; you become one-eyed, warped, defective. (*SSS Vol.4 p.134*)

it pursued him relentlessly wherever he went. Helpless and frightened, the crow returned to its original form and Jayantha fell at the feet of Rama praying for succour. Indra came to know that the culprit was his own son and he too repented for his son's audacity and irreverence.

Jayantha prostrated before Rama and pleaded for mercy. He said, "I am a fool. I did not realise the baseness of my deed. Save me from your anger, from this fire."

Rama pitied the poor fellow, who had so humbled himself. He made one of his eyes ineffective and sent him away alive, as a single-eyed individual. The blade of grass that had become a missile of fire was neutralised by him and it resumed its nature. Jayantha was grateful that he was let off with just a token punishment for the heinous crime he had committed. He lived for a long time on the Chitrakoota Peak, where Sita, Rama and Lakshmana had taken residence. One day, the tenth day of the bright half of the month Margasira, Rama ordered Jayantha to proceed southwards from his habitat. (*RKRV Part II p.1-2*)

Journey through various Hermitage:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana too left Chitrakoota and reached the hermitage of the great Sage, Athri¹³⁹. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana spent a very happy time at the Ashram of the Sage Athri. They gave good counsel to the residents and pupils on various problems of right conduct. Then, taking leave of the Sage, they resumed their journey through the jungle.

¹³⁹ See Chapter, *Sage Athri*

The jungle echoed with the roar of ferocious beasts that wandered about in search of prey. Manifold varieties of plumaged birds sang melodiously on the trees. Each had a peculiar beauty and melody. Their coos and cries were balm for the ear. It appeared as if they had entered a new world of thrills. While passing through this region of awesome grandeur, suddenly their eyes fell upon a lovely hermitage, which had at its centre a picturesque temple. Lakshmana moved forward, and cleared the track, pushing back the bushes that stood across. He broke off the thorny creepers that hung overhead and threatened to harm wayfarers. Rama and Sita could walk safely along the track he cleared. When they came to the precincts of the hermitage a charming garden presented itself before them. Well-fostered and affectionately looked after, the fruit trees and flowering trees rose beautifully from the ground, with their charming crowns of beauty. The branches were drooping under the weight of ripe juicy fruits. Sita was filled with delight. She forgot all exhaustion. She was lost in the heavenly peace and joy that she had come into. She walked behind Rama, imbibing the thrill of the Nature that surrounded her. When some residents noticed their approach, they ran in haste to their Preceptor. He hurried forward to the main gate to welcome Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. His eyes were streaming tears of joy. Appropriate hospitality was offered to the guests. They were taken in and given cool refreshing drinks. Tasty fruits and tubers were placed before them. The guests accepted their attention and regard with great pleasure. They partook of the simple repast. In the evening, they took bath and performed due rites. Rama spoke to the residents on ideal modes of conduct and behaviour. He permitted them to ask questions on the doubts that might be puzzling them

and the knotty points of interpretations of the scriptures. They welcomed the opportunity most enthusiastically. Rama, too, offered convincing and clear explanations, in simple and satisfying words. Without doubt, the dwellers of the Ashram experienced a very Heaven on earth. They spoke among themselves with great delight that the Presence of Rama was as elevating an experience as contact with God Himself in Heaven.

When dawn broke, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana bathed and went through the matinal rites. In spite of the plaintive prayers of the Asramites, they started on their journey, expostulating that people should not stand in the way of their vows and resolutions. They had resolved, they said, not to stay in one single hermitage or place for more than one single night. (*RKRV Part II p.2-6*)

Rama's deliberations with Sages and Seers:

During the course of His stay on the Chitrakoota Mountain, Rama had many deliberations with Sages and Seers¹⁴⁰. These aspirants, who had been eagerly awaiting a rendezvous with Divinity, made good use of the opportunity by discussing topics like *pravritti*, *nivritti sreyas*, *preyas*, etc. However, the serene atmosphere of the Chitrakoota Mountain soon gave way to agitation and turbulence. The demons, having got wind of the spiritual activities in progress, intensified their attacks on the

¹⁴⁰ When Rama went to the hermitages at Chitrakoota, the sages, saints and *Vedic* scholars, all gathered round Him and their gratitude at getting His *darshan* was as a garland of flowers on His breast, flowers of many hues but, all strung on a strand of deep devotion. They knew that Rama was both the Seen and the Unseen; that He had come to establish *dharma* and *karma*, for through *dharma*, and *karma* done along the lines of *dharma*, man is certain to attain peace and salvation. (*SSS Vol.4 p.20*)

sages and troubled them. The sages wished to leave the mountain and go to a safer place. (*SSB 1996 p.57*)

An old sage came to Rama and said, “Rama, the nefarious activities of the demons are increasing day by day. They are harassing the aspirants more and more. Hence, they wish to leave the place. It is not advisable for You to live here because You are leading a family life. It may be dangerous to live here, though You are endowed with enormous strength.” The sages and Rama then held consultations and decided to enter Dandakaranya, a dense forest area. (*SSB 1996 p.42-43*)

The ancient poets and the ancient *rishis* were all-knowing and so they were only talking about *Paramatma* in a very modest way and were describing parts of this glory. These great men had great powers, had great strength and were selfless people, and had divine qualities in them. Because of these qualities and because they were all-knowing they tried to picture God in the world, to some limited extent. The poets of today also describe God in their writings and in their poems and thus try to picture Him to the rest of the world. But they should ask themselves the question whether a thousandth of what they say in their descriptions is based on their own belief and on their own faith in God. We read in such writings that Rama is the incarnation of Narayana that Rama is God in human form and so on. But we are not able to get the faith and confidence in the human form of God. Truly, if the statements that are in such writings are put into practice, the world will be a very good one.

There is a great difference that we perceive between the poets of today and the poets of earlier days, the *rishis* of today and the *rishis* of the ancient lore. The *rishis* of those days were picturing God in the usual way in a human form, as a human being, in their speeches and writings. But in their minds and in their faith they were regarding the human form as an incarnation of God Himself. Here we should ponder over one aspect of the *Ramayana* with great care. Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, entered the forest of Dandakaranya. The *rishis* in the Dandakaranya knew very well that Rama was an incarnation of God, and so they came to Rama and placed their difficulties and troubles before Him. Not only this, many *rishis* were killed by the demons. These incidents were brought to the notice of Rama, and he was moved and his heart melted. He could not bear this any longer; and so He took a vow at that very instant of time and gave His word to the *rishis* that from that time, He would undertake the task of exterminating the *rakshasas*.

In this vow of Rama's Sita noticed what is usually referred to as the vow of Bhishma. Sita came and cautioned Rama that He was taking a vow, which was very difficult to fulfil. Then Rama answered by saying that the Himalayas can give up the ice on them, that the moon can give up its brightness and the oceans may flow beyond their boundaries, but Rama will never give up His vow unfulfilled. (*SSB 1977 p.12-13*) From that day onwards, Rama saw to it that the *rakshasas* in the Dandakaranya were removed from their positions of strength, and He has been protecting the *rishis* from the hands of those *rakshasas*. He spent ten years in the forest fulfilling His vow and the task He took

upon Himself. He was tired. He wanted to take some rest and then wanted to move to the *ashram* of *Rishi* Agasthya. He wanted to see *Rishi* Agasthya and ask him where he could put up a hut, and live along with Sita and Lakshmana. In fact, he wanted to live in Agasthya's *ashram*. Agasthya thought for a while, and smilingly told Ramachandra that sixteen miles from his *ashram*, there was a beautiful place on the banks of the river Godavari. He suggested that Rama can have his hut at that beautiful place and live there¹⁴¹. (*SSB 1977 p.12-13*)

¹⁴¹ It is not as if Agasthya did not know that Rama was an incarnation of Narayana Himself. We should recognise the inner meaning of the fact that while Agasthya knew very well that Narayana Himself came in human form and asked for a place in his *ashram*, he suggested that Rama take up a hut sixteen miles away from his *ashram*. The idea that was in the mind of Agasthya was that, if Rama stayed along with Sita and Lakshmana in his *ashram*, then Sita could not possibly (as was to happen later) be stolen. In that context, the killing of Ravana would become even more difficult and would not have taken place at all. Thus, the *rishis* had already made a master plan for the destruction of all the *rakshasas*. It is at the time when Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, was having His sacred hut sixteen miles away from the *Rishi's ashram* that Surpanakha came there and was humiliated. Later, the entire drama unfolds itself. Not only this, while Agasthya was wanting Ramachandra to stay sixteen miles away from his *ashram*, Agasthya took care to see that the bow and arrows which were given to him by Varuna were also handed over to Ramachandra as weapons. There is an important truth here. These *rishis* knew well when the destruction of the *Rakshasas* was coming. They kept these weapons with great care in order to hand them over to Ramachandra when time was ripe for such destruction. (*SSB 1977 p.13-14*)

See also Chapter, *Agasthya*

Panchavati

News that Sri Rama had made the Panchavati his home and that he was residing there in a house of leafy thatch like their own, spread far and wide. So every day, groups of ascetics trekked thither in order to offer their homage. They brought with them their pupils too. They had their fill of Darshan and they had the great good fortune of speaking to Rama and being spoken to, by Him. Thereafter, they left most unwillingly, praising Rama all the way back to their own hermitages.

Many others came, with the intention of solving the doubts that pestered them, while trying to understand the scriptures, and while attempting to define and interpret the Codes of Morality or the texts on Rituals. Others prayed to Rama and sought to clarify from Him whether the ascetic practices they were following were correct and beneficial. Since Rama was master of all Dharmas and since He knew full well all the scriptures, they derived the fullest satisfaction from His answers and directives. Each one was filled with joyous contentment.

While on the subject of questions and answers, it is best that the four grades of questions be clearly understood. Questions are generally classified into four groups: (1) Trivial, (2) Low, (3) Passable and (4) Praiseworthy. Questions that are raised in order to drag another into a controversy and later, to inflict a humiliating defeat on him, are trivial. Questions that are put in order to demonstrate one's own cleverness and skill are "low." Questions which announce the intellectual equipment and reasoning faculty of the questioner are "passable," and belong to the third class. Questions that are asked with the sincere desire to

remove one's doubts are "praiseworthy" and belong to the highest class. It needs no mention that the sages, monks and ascetics came to Rama with the fourth type of questions only.

Rama and Lakshmana were filled with delight when they saw the ascetics. Many among them were overcome with admiration and gratitude when they listened to the ideals propounded by Rama, so simple, so easy to grasp and realise, so truly conforming to the dictates laid down in the Sastras and Scriptures, and so free from complexity. They burst into paeans of praise and adoration. "Oh Master Supreme!" they exclaimed, "Oh, Omniscient One, who knows the past, present and future! Who else can be our Lord and Liberator? You reside in the hearts of Sages. We have secured you in our midst as a result of the austerities we have gone through. Oh, How fortunate are we! How have our wishes been fulfilled!" They departed from the Presence, most unwillingly, with tears of joy mingled with tears of grief streaming down their cheeks.

A few of them laid themselves under the shady trees a little distance from the cottage where Rama was, and were determined not to return to their hermitages. They gathered fruits and tubers from around the spot, and watched out for Rama, eager for additional chances of Darsan. When sometimes Rama came out of the cottage and walked around, they filled their eyes with the unforgettable picture, from behind some tree or bush. Thus they spent the days in full contentment.

Rama stole the hearts of all who came into His Presence. They became mad in their single-pointed devotion to Him. They felt

that contemplation of His Face and repetition of His Name was all the austerity that they had to practise thereafter. He discoursed on Dharma and spiritual disciplines during both day and night, to those who gathered around Him. (*RKRV part II p.22-24*)

Rama tells Lakshmana the purpose of his avatar and gives discourses on spiritual matters:

Often, He called Lakshmana to His side and told him, “Brother, having come for this holy task, how can I stay on at Ayodhya? How can I enact the further chapters of the *Ramayana* from there? This is the purpose for which I have come. The fostering and protection of the good and the godly, the destruction of the wrong and evil that threaten the peace and welfare of the world, the promotion of righteous behaviour and activities—these will proceed from now on.” Thus, He informed his brother about what he had resolved upon and about the intent and meaning of His Incarnation as Man on earth. Off and on, he raised Lakshmana to the role of a vehicle for spreading his teachings, intended for the uplift of humanity and instructed him on the ideals of morality and progress¹⁴².

“Act in accordance with the rules of conduct laid down for the status you have risen to and the call that has come to you (*swadharm*-one’s natural duties). You derive detachment thereby. Practise *Yoga* or the Search for Union with the Supreme. You derive *Jnana* thereby. This *Jnana* is the very last step in spiritual progress. It leads to Consummation. Adoring the

¹⁴² See Endnote No. 5- *Maya*

Supreme with the greatest possible Love is called *Bhakthi*, Devotion. I shower Grace on such a one. Bhakthi will grant him full prosperity. Bhakthi emanates from the heart, spontaneously. It does not depend on extraneous things or persons. Bhakthi can confer Jnana too on the person who has dedicated Himself to the Supreme. The joy that Bhakthi endows on a man is unique and immeasurable. How does a person first decide to walk on the path of Bhakthi? It all begins with the compassion of some one good and godly sage or realised soul. This path leads men quickly to Me.” Listening to such discourses, Sita and Lakshmana forgot where they were and under what conditions. Rama too seemed unaware of all that happened in the enthusiasm with which He dilated on the attractions of the spiritual path. They spent long periods in introspection and exploration of inner delight. (*RKRV Part II p. 24-28*)

Sita’s Advice

The three exiles started living in Panchavati. Sita, however, was not happy in Panchavati, because almost every day Rama and Lakshmana indulged in violence. One day, while Lakshmana was away collecting fruits and tubers, Sita approached Rama and said, “Lord, those who have desires commit three evils: uttering falsehood, eyeing other ladies, and committing violence. Certainly, You are free from the first two evils. I firmly believe that You can never utter falsehood, for You are the Embodiment of Truth.” Rama felt happy at these words of Sita and said, “It is certainly a qualification for a man to be described as a virtuous person by his own wife. Sita, I am happy that you have recognised My affinity to Truth.” Sita continued, “You are also free from the weakness of looking at the wives of others. This is

another great virtue in You. But I cannot appreciate Your committing violence on the beasts and demons. These demons are in no way harming You.” Rama smiled at these words and said, “Sita, though you have spoken the truth, My conduct is in consonance with the promise I gave to the sages and aspirants here. I am bound by My duty and want to stand by My promise. Though these demons are not harming Me personally, they are subjecting My devotees to untold suffering. They ruthlessly disturb the sacrifices performed by the sages. The sages perform sacrifices for the welfare and well-being of mankind. I cannot but resort to violence for the well-being of mankind.”

Sita realised her mistake and sought the forgiveness of Rama by touching His feet. The conduct of Sita is in consonance with the scriptural injunction:

The wife should advise her husband well when he indulges in evil;

She should be like a Minister who advises the King properly. (SSB 1996 p.44-45)

SITA ABDUCTED AND THE PLOT OF RAMAYANA UNFOLDS

Arrival of Surpanakha:

It is at the time when Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, was having His sacred hut sixteen miles away from the *Rishi's ashram* that Surpanakha came there¹⁴³. (*SSB 1977 p.14*)

Surpanakha tried to make friendship with Rama and Lakshmana. She was attracted by their charming personality. She assumed the form of a beautiful lady and approached Rama with a request to marry her. Rama said, “No doubt, you are beautiful. Even my wife Sita is no match for you. But what can I do? I am already married and my wife is with me. So, it is better that you marry Lakshmana whose wife is not here at present.” When she expressed her desire to Lakshmana, he said, “Rama is my master and I am his servant. If you marry me, you will have to spend your entire life in the service of mother Sita. So, it is better that you marry Rama himself.”

In this manner, Rama and Lakshmana were having fun. After some time, Surpanakha became enraged. She thought, “It is because of the presence of Sita that Rama is not interested in me. If she is not there, Rama will certainly yield to my request.” With such a feeling she made an attempt to swallow Sita. Immediately, Rama signalled to Lakshmana. He, being highly intelligent, understood its implication and cut the nose and ears of

¹⁴³ Surpanakha was humiliated. Later, the entire drama unfolds itself. (*SSB 1977 p.14*) – See Chapter, *Surpanakha*

Surpanakha. He spared her life as he did not want to kill a woman. (*SSB 2002 p.95*)

Ravana seeks Maricha's help:

After Surpanakha was disfigured, she went to Ravana and conveyed to him a description of Rama. Then Ravana went to Maricha and sought his help for killing Rama. Maricha knew the power and strength of Rama. So, he described the power and strength of Rama truly to Ravana. Maricha made it quite clear to Ravana that Rama is not an ordinary person and that Rama is God Himself; and with His power and strength, He can achieve anything. As a result of such a description, it is quite natural, however brave and however courageous an individual may be, that some kind of fear will naturally enter his mind. In that context, Ravana turned back and returned to Lanka. While Ravana was in that hesitant mood, Surpanakha went again to Ravana and told him that while he is brave and beautiful, while he had everything in his favour, that he is not able to get Sita for himself is something which is difficult to understand. Thus, she poisoned Ravana's mind. When such words were heard by Ravana, he became rather weak, succumbed to temptation and went again to Maricha for advice. Maricha again told Ravana all that had to be told. But since Ravana was all the time recollecting what his sister Surpanakha had told him, he was not listening nor paying any attention to what Maricha was telling. In that conversation, Ravana became very angry and threatened to kill Maricha if he did not obey his orders. Maricha then thought that anyway he was going to die and decided that he would prefer to die in the hands of Ramachandra, rather than in the hands of Ravana. Accordingly, he accepted the orders of Ravana

and took the form of a deer¹⁴⁴ and went to the hermitage where Rama and Sita were living. (*SSB 1977 p.14-15*)

Rama tells Sita to place herself in Keeping of Agni – time for the divine act to commence for which they have come:

At the hermitage in Panchavati, Sita and Rama suddenly felt that the moment of fulfilment of their task had come. Rama sent Lakshmana to collect tubers and fruits for the day. Noting that the proper hour had come, he told Sita thus: “Companion! You know all. Both of us are aware why we have come on earth, and what our task is. That task is now calling us. We have to enter upon it, in right earnest now. Your nature and characteristics are noble and holy beyond measure. We both have assumed these human bodies through rites associated with the Fire Principle. My body arose from the Offering brought out of the flames of the sacrificial Fire by the God Agni Himself. You rose from the earth that was furrowed by the sacred plough in order to consecrate it for a Fire-Altar, where a *Yajna* (sacrifice) had to be performed. Our bodies are born in fire and are being sustained by the warmth of fire. Therefore Sita, deposit all your Divine attributes and splendour in Fire, and act as an ordinary human being hereafter. I too shall move and act as an ordinary human being, and exhibit sorrow and anxiety on your account, the pangs of separation and the pain of loneliness. The world would keep in

¹⁴⁴ We notice here that if Maricha was killed earlier when Rama killed Subahu, then Maricha would not have fulfilled this part of his in the drama. Here we see that not only did rishis realise the divinity of Rama but also Rama knew that he was God Narayana in human form. In order that He may fulfil the task for which He had come, He spared Maricha earlier, so that Maricha could play his part in Rama’s master plan. (*SSB 1977 p.15*)

mind only these modes of behaviour, and take us as human. They will accept them as worldly conduct and natural reaction. Remember that the smallest act of ours has to be an ideal for the householders of the world. We have to hold forth models in the relationship between the husband and the wife. They have to be quite in consonance with the principles of Truth and Righteousness. Our activities have to be in conformity with the guidelines laid down in the Sastras, the spiritual texts. We have to shape our lives, in an exemplary manner, so that common men can be inspired thereby and prompted to follow the ideals elaborated therein. We have to enact this drama until the final consummation, namely, the destruction of Ravana and the Rakshasas.

“Therefore, place your Divine Splendour in the keeping of the God of Fire, Agni, and move about as an ordinary woman caught in the coils of illusion, Maya. For, there can be no effect without a cause. We must consummate the effect, namely, the destruction of Ravana and the Rakshasa brood. So, we must manipulate a cause to justify it or bring it about. Ravana has a basic fault in his structure, namely, his lustful passion. We have to highlight it before the world. So, we have to so prepare such a situation that it would appear as if he kidnaps you in a fit of passion. The world has to realise that his ‘dedication and devotion to God’ are not of the highest order, for of what use is that sense of surrender if it is tarnished by the craving for sensual pleasure and immoral yearnings? Activities and behaviour emanating from a consciousness that is not pure are tarnished. The devotion to God that is polluted by lust is as foul as dirt—these truths have to be emphasised now, for the benefit of mankind. It is also imperative

to announce for the benefit of mankind that any spiritual *sadhana* or asceticism, or religious rite or ritual undertaken with the intention of gaining superhuman powers are paltry and pernicious. We have to hold forth Ravana as a warning to mankind that however many divine rites and acts one may do, if one does not give up one's demonic passions and impulses, they add up to only one result: rendering them unholy and sterile.”

“Over and above all this, Sita, there is one overwhelming consideration we have to place before ourselves. There is a curse that has been pronounced on Ravana and he has also been assured of a means by which he could end its consequence. We have to see that the means is fulfilled. The beginning of his end has arrived. Today or tomorrow, we have to be separated from each other. Of course, we are inseparable entities and nothing can keep us apart. Yet, we have to pretend that it has happened, in order to render the make-believe effective. Go now, and deposit your Divine Form in the keeping of Agni (Fire). It is time for Lakshmana to return with the fruits and tubers. And Ravana is ready with his perverted intelligence.”

“I have to inform you of another secret, too. You have to perform your part in the destruction of the Rakshasas. Though you might be apparently under the surveillance of Ravana, since your Power is immanent in Fire, you will have to burn Lanka to ashes emerging from the Fire where your Self is dormant from now on. Lanka has to be turned to ashes, not by Fire, but by you as Fire. And Rama has to kill Ravana. That is the Divine Will. This truth has to be proclaimed. This mystery is to be kept from Lakshmana also. He is our instrument in this endeavour. When this task is

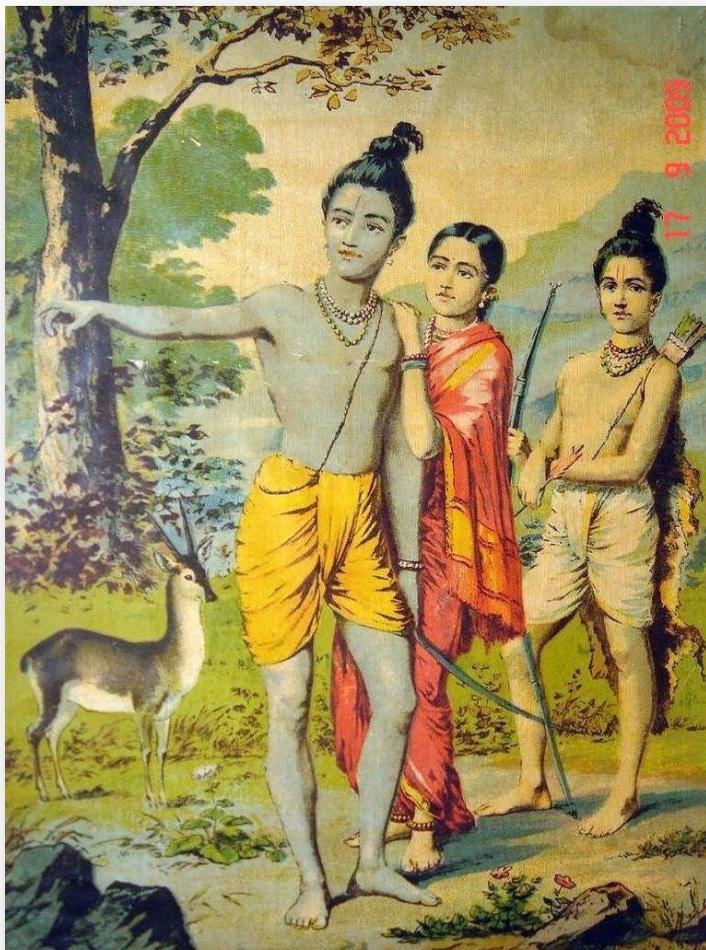


Figure 5: Sita desires the golden deer

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Description **English:** The lord Rama portrayed as exile in the forest, accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana

Date 1920s

Source http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesda/ta/bce_299_200/ramayana/goldendeer/goldendeer.html

Author Raja Ravi Press

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accomplished and we have to re-enter Ayodhya, I shall accept you again from the Fire where you reside. That act too I will transform into a lesson for the world. The drama starts now,” Rama said. Both Sita and Rama decided on their plan of action and awaited the unfoldment of Ravana’s strategy. From that moment, every act and behaviour of Sita and Rama, the pangs of separation, the gasps of anxiety, the sighs of pain, and the groans of grief—were gestures and reactions in the drama decided upon. They were not genuine at all. For, how can Sita and Rama ever be separated? Through their conduct, they only willed to teach mankind some valuable lessons. (*RKR V Part II p.46-49*)

The Golden Deer; and Ravana abducts Sita:

*During the sojourn of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita at Panchavati,*¹⁴⁵ there arrived on the scene a golden deer. Sita, who had never asked Rama for the fulfilment of any desire, pleaded with Him to capture the golden deer for her. Rama agreed. Though Lakshmana volunteered to do the task, Rama did not allow him to do so. Rama then went in pursuit of the golden deer. When He found that the deer was eluding him, He shot an arrow at it. The golden deer was none other than the demon Maricha¹⁴⁶, who had assumed the form of a deer to draw Rama away from Sita. While dying, Maricha, imitating the voice of Rama, cried out aloud, “Oh, Lakshmana, Oh, Sita!” Sita heard these words, became agitated, and asked Lakshmana to go and find out what had happened. She was overcome by the fear that something dangerous had happened to Rama, since the voice

¹⁴⁵ *SSS Vol.42 p.87*

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu* - **MARICHA’S ROLE IN SITA’S ABUDUCTION BY RAVANA:**

sounded like that of Rama. Lakshmana said to Sita, “Mother, the voice you have heard is not the voice of Rama. It is but the trick of the demon, who wants to deceive us. Nothing dangerous can ever happen to Rama, as He is the incarnation of Lord Narayana. Do not worry in the least.” Sita, who knew the master plan of Rama, was determined to send Lakshmana on one pretext or the other. She knew that soft and gentle words would not make Lakshmana leave the place. Hence, she used stern words and said, “Oh Lakshmana! Perhaps, you wish to have me as your wife, when Rama dies.” Unable to bear the words uttered by Sita, Lakshmana decided to go in search of Rama. But before leaving the place he told Sita not to cross the line that he drew around the Ashram. Lakshmana then went in search of Rama. (*SSB 1996 p.45-46*)

Ravana¹⁴⁷ came in the guise of a mendicant and abducted Sita. (*SSS Vol.42 p.87*) He then mortally wounded Jatayu, when the bird obstructed him in the sky to prevent the abduction of Sita. (*SSB 1996 p.52*) When Rama and Lakshmana returned to the hut, they found the hut empty.

Lakshmana realises that the entire drama was the will of Rama:

As Rama had indicated, Sita could not be found therein. In seemingly unbearable anguish, Rama lamented her disappearance. Lakshmana fell even as he stood, unable to bear the grief. Aware that he had caused this catastrophe, he felt like giving up his life; but, he realised soon that Rama, already

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter, *Ravana* - **ABDUCTION OF SITA**

deprived of Sita, would be put to further anxiety and tangles if he departed from this world, taking his own life. He felt that if he dies, Rama would wander alone, in sorrow, through the forest glades. He would have none to give him food and drink. He could not bear the anguish of Rama at the loss of Sita. He could not find his tongue, nor could he frame words to console Rama and pacify him. Lakshmana ruminated in his mind on all that had happened that day. He soon came to the conclusion that it must be the result of Rama's own will. He realised that this brother of his was not an ordinary man. He knew now that what was happening was part of the drama that was destined to bring about progress and prosperity for all mankind. For, he who would gladly wipe the tears from all eyes, he who was the guardian of the world, he who had not evinced an inkling of sorrow so far, was now lamenting and weeping like any ordinary human, at separation from his wife! Watching these happenings, Lakshmana could easily infer that it was all the unrolling of a play directed by Rama! Lakshmana knew very well that Sita was incomparably virtuous. That such a uniquely pure woman should have met with this calamity was inexplicable, except as a scene in a play, or a part of the Divine Plot, devised by Rama. No one anywhere can execute even the slightest deed without orders from Rama! However, Rama had come down as man, and resolved to guide man by his example along the path of justice, integrity, detachment, devotion, virtue, veracity, morality and humility. Lakshmana realised that this was the meaning of the play which Rama and Sita were enacting. He recognised himself as but an actor, whose whole duty was to act the role assigned to him as well as he could.

Lakshmana approaches Rama and tells him that the events happened with Rama’s Will:

Deriving strength from these thoughts, Lakshmana approached Rama and fell at his feet. He said, “Brother, you are, I know, the Director of the Drama which the Cosmos is. There is nothing you cannot do, nothing you do not know. Everything that happens follows your will only. These events could not happen unknown to you. I will not take a denial. I believe so firmly. By these incidents, I believe you are designing to promote the peace of the world and destroy the Rakshasa race. My mind is whispering this to me and asking me to be firm in that faith. This must be the Truth behind this play. Pray tell me the Truth and give me peace of mind.”

Rama explains the purpose of the Divine Drama:

Rama replied with a smile, “Lakshmana, you are a limb of my person, so what can I keep away from you? You have hit the truth. I have incarnated in order to uphold and foster Dharma (righteousness). To do so, I have to enact many scenes of righteous and unrighteous conduct. A baby that wails has to be comforted into quiet joy by means of prattle and play, toys and jingles, songs and swings. The mother has to devise many stratagems on the spot, in order to persuade the baby to drink the milk it needs. The purpose is the giving of the milk feed. But consider how useful these means are—the songs and swings, the toys and talks, the tricks and tickles. These methods help the quenching of hunger and the stoppage of wailing. That is their reason, too. You have to add them all up in order to discover how the hunger was quenched and the grief ended. Similarly, dear brother, I who am the Mother of the Universe, have to act in

these manifold ways to re-establish Righteousness and demolish unrighteousness. These incidents have been designed to secure the twin aims of the removal of grief and the winning of bliss. They are not just meaningless exercises. Ordinary folk base their conduct on the ideals presented to them. So, as Master and Leader, I have to practise what I intend to place before them as ideal conduct. Unless I practise what I hold forth as the ideal, I cannot claim to be Master and Leader. When masters and leaders, who do not deserve the positions, appear and exercise authority, Righteousness declines and unrighteousness runs wild. Therefore, brother, remember that those in authority as masters or leaders must prove their advice right, in actual practice. They must help realise the ideals they preach by their own genuine effort. This is the way for them to earn the Grace of God and the gratitude of men. (*RKR V Part II p.62-65*)

“Sita knows the role she is playing. These two bodies—mine and Sita’s—evinced the joys and pangs of union and separation, only as bodies! The pain and pleasure, the weeping and wailing are all illusory and unreal. They follow the needs and compulsions of the Incarnation I have taken upon myself, along with other limitations. I am taking you into confidence regarding my Reality. Take note that you too will have to act in conformity with time, deed and cause, space, occasion and recipient, as the story unfolds.

This Divine Mystery is beyond the intelligence of others. So, you must also keep mum on this and play¹⁴⁸ according to the rules. We have to concentrate on the mission on which we have come.

THE SEARCH BEGINS:

After this Revelation, they plunged immediately into the task of searching for Sita. In order to discover some clue about how Sita left or why or when or where to, Rama and Lakshmana forsook the hermitage, armed with weapons. They examined every tank and looked over every hill in the region. They could not come across any sign. While proceeding thus, they saw before them

¹⁴⁸ Both acted their roles during this search most sincerely, admirably, and realistically. Not only the brothers, but Sita too exhibited supreme nobility and acted with equal staunchness and sincerity, even though the Rakshasa guards, in the place where she was kept captive, terrorised her and threatened her most cruelly. She did not waver or yield. She stuck bravely to her determination to save herself and to preserve her purity. She maintained her vow undefiled. The drama enacted by the two parties held forth for every householder and every individual the highest ideal of righteous conduct. It placed before the fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, brothers and friends the best lines of behaviour expected of them and how each of them had to keep his promises, and tend his virtues. Why dilate further? The Ramayana lays down ideals for all relationships in life, and for the realisation of the highest aim of human life. Nowhere else can be seen such a variety and quantity of moral dicta and their practical applications. The one text, *Ramayana*, has soaked in its pages directions for correct conduct in all situations and under all conditions. It teaches how to justify human birth, how to carry on the government of a kingdom, how to regulate the reactions of the people and how to design the laws that can control and consummate the wishes of the people. If only the *Ramayana* is studied closely and observed in daily practice, mankind can attain peace and prosperity in all fields. (*RKR V Part II p.65-66*)

branches of trees that had been pulled asunder lying across the track. There were other evidences of a combat that had taken place like broken arrows and patches of blood. Rama drew the attention of his brother to these. He said, “A fight seems to have taken place here,” and looked around for information about who had engaged whom. (*RKRV Part II p.65-67*)

Rama and Lakshmana Meet Jatayu, Sabari and befriend Sugriva:

While searching for Sita, they found the bird Jatayu¹⁴⁹ badly mutilated. While dying, Jatayu told Rama to seek the help of Sugriva, who lived on Mount Matanga. Rama performed the last rites of Jatayu and started toward the Matanga Mountain. (*SSB 1996 p.46*)

The two brothers then travelled north and sighted the hermitage of Sage Matanga. There they saw Sabari¹⁵⁰, a great devotee of Rama. Though extremely old, she held on to life in order to obey the command of Sage Matanga and to receive Rama and Lakshmana in the hermitage. She offered them her humble hospitality, washed their feet with water, and sprinkled the water on her head. Satisfied, she then cast off her body. However, while dying, she directed Rama to move in the northern direction, to meet Sugriva at the mountain Rishyamuka. (*SSB 1996 p.53-54*)

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter, *Jatayu and Sampathi*

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter, *Sabari*

On the Rishyamuka Mountain, Rama and Sugriva set the seal of friendship. Rama promised to help Sugriva in exchange for the help he would render to Him in searching for Sita. Rama assured him that He would stand by him and crown him as king. Rama felt that Sugriva was punished by Vali, for no fault of his. Vali had committed the most heinous act of appropriating the wife of Sugriva, when one should actually consider the wife of one's younger brother as one's own daughter. Hence, Rama decided to punish Vali for his unrighteousness. Rama persuaded Sugriva to challenge Vali once again, assuring him that He would definitely kill Vali this time. While the two brothers were locked in mortal combat, Rama, hiding behind a tree, discharged an arrow at Vali and killed him. (*SSB 1996 p.55*)

Hanuman in Search of Sita

Sugriva sent the soldiers of his army in the four directions, in search of Sita. He selected Hanuman, who merited the titles *Balavantha* (the powerful one) and *Dheemantha* (the intellectual one), for the task of searching for Sita in Lanka. (*SSB 1996 p.56*)

Hanuman¹⁵¹ had been searching for Sita all over Lanka. He was constantly censuring himself at the predicament he was in. To find Sita, he was forced to look amongst and at the ladies. He hence entered the inner apartments of the palace. He could feel the evil vibrations from the cruel demonesses who inhabited the rooms. Hanuman climbed over the walls of the inner chambers and continued his search. Hanuman was on the rooftop of the

¹⁵¹ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - **SEARCH FOR SITA**

inner apartments and from a distance, he espied the tall trees of *Asoka Vana*. He leapt and reached the gardens. And there under a tree, he finally saw the forlorn form of Mother Sita. Her sorrow was obvious. Hanuman climbed the tree under which She sat and started singing the glory of Dasaratha's son from the beginning. Sita was perplexed and looked up in astonishment. She wondered, "Who is this monkey?" Hanuman was a total stranger to her. As an answer to her enquiring look, Hanuman respectfully folded his palms and said, "Mother! I am a servant of Lord Rama. I am here to serve your lotus feet." Hanuman's response did not have any effect on Sita. She did not acknowledge his presence or his explanations. It was her bitter experience that the demons assumed a variety of forms and were masters in creating illusions. She suspected that Hanuman too was a part of such a ploy.

Hanuman jumped down from the tree. Constantly chanting the name of Rama, he addressed Sita, "Mother! Here is proof of my identity." He then handed over to Sita the ring given by Rama to him. Sita respectfully pressed the ring to her eyes. She told Hanuman, "Hanuman, how lucky you are! Did Rama Himself give you this ring? This was a gift to my Lord from King Janaka at the time of my wedding. Where is Rama now? How is he?" She eagerly enquired about the Lord in this way. Hanuman gave her courage by saying, "Mother! Be brave, he is coming shortly. He shall definitely come and take you back with him. You must not worry. If you are anxious, please sit on my back. With a single leap I shall take you to Rama immediately." Sita smiled and said, "Hanuman, if I was to sit on your back and go back to Rama, you would be accused of committing the same sin of

abduction as Ravana. I do not want you to get such a bad name. Rama himself must come. He must kill Ravana and release me from this prison. Till then I shall wait and put up with this torture. Kindly carry this news to my Lord Rama.” With great reluctance and grief, she gave permission for Hanuman to leave. Hanuman could not bear to see the sadness in Sita. He decided to teach the demons a lesson and proceeded to lay to utter waste, the beautiful *Asoka* gardens.

He was finally captured and brought before Ravana. At the time when Hanuman was captured and brought before Ravana, an interesting conversation took place between the two.

Hanuman accused Ravana of being a sinner and a wicked king. He told that it was the misfortune of the citizens of Lanka to have him as their king. If the ruler was so wicked, he wondered, what could be said about the ruled? Hanuman poured scorn on Ravana thus. (*SSB 2002 p.118-119*)

When Hanuman set fire to Lanka and went back, Ravana started worrying that Rama would definitely arrive, anytime from then. We shall now go back to Hanuman’s search for Sita.

Hanuman Returns to Report

Later, when he reached Rama he conveyed the good news to him. Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and all other *Vanaras* were waiting eagerly on the seashore. Hanuman landed in front of them. He was greeted with congratulations and benedictions of victory from the ecstatic battalions of *Vanaras*. Before Hanuman took leave of Sita, She gave him her crown jewel. This was one

among several that were presented to her by Anasuya. Rama was aware of this jewel. The moment Hanuman handed it over to Rama; Rama was both joyful and agonized. He heard the news that Sita was safe. This gladdened his heart. Hanuman explained to Rama everything that had occurred in Lanka. In this way Hanuman described in great detail everything that he had seen in Lanka. Hearing about Sita's plight, Lakshmana immediately grabbed his bow and arrows. He urged his brother to get up and act immediately.

Rama calmly replied, "Peace, peace, peace! One should not act in haste. Without proper enquiry, investigations and planning any action can only produce negative results. Let us therefore proceed cautiously." Sugriva sent instructions to his friends and kinsmen to mobilize a huge army. He instructed that the army enter Lanka, destroy Ravana and return only then. (*SSB 2002 p.120-122*)

Vibhishana joins Rama

While Rama was busy talking to them, He saw a person rushing towards Him, calling out His name. This man was followed by four servants. The Vanara warriors stopped them and asked them many questions.

Vibhishana, who was the person in question, replied: "I come from Lanka and am called Vibhishana. I am the brother of Ravana, the Emperor of Lanka. Since my brother is indulging in nefarious activities against Rama, the incarnation of Lord Narayana, I do not wish to live with him. I am a devotee of Rama and I have come to seek His Grace." Hearing these words of

Vibhishana, Sugriva advised Rama, “Lord! Vibhishana should not be trusted, since he is the brother of our enemy. He has come to spy on our activities and pass on the information to Ravana.”

Different people advised Rama in different ways. Then Hanuman said, “O Rama! A king has two types of enemies, enemies who rise from his own family and clan and enemies who hail from the neighbouring kingdom. This Vibhishana is not of your clan. He does not belong to a neighbouring kingdom of Ayodhya, either. Hence there is no scope for him to harbour any evil against You, like passing on our secrets to Ravana.

Observe his devotion and treat him accordingly.” Rama appreciated the advice of Hanuman. He called Vibhishana to one side and asked him to relate his story. Vibhishana said to Rama, “There is no limit to the atrocities committed by Ravana, though I advised him to mend his actions. I denounced the nefarious activities of Ravana and advised him not to enter into war with you. Ravana and his son Meghanada became furious and commanded me to leave the kingdom. They have branded me a traitor. I prayed for the welfare of Lanka and left the kingdom. I seek none else but God. I wish to sanctify my life at the feet of God. I have been chanting the name of Rama for a long time. It is the name of Rama that brought Hanuman and me close to each other in Lanka. I don’t need anything in my life except Your Feet. I do not want kith and kin. All I desire is Your proximity.” Rama then said, “Vibhishana, do not be frightened. Your brother will be punished for all his misdeeds. You will soon see this with your own eyes.” He then summoned Sugriva and Lakshmana, and commanded them to anoint Vibhishana as the future King of

Lanka. Vibhishana prayed, “Lord, I have not come here with an eye on the Kingdom of Lanka. All that I seek is the Kingdom of God. Make me a citizen in that Kingdom or even a servant there.” But Rama crowned him as the Emperor of the Kingdom of Lanka, even though the war against Ravana had not yet commenced. Despite this, the Vanaras kept a watchful eye on Vibhishana, lest he betray their secrets to Ravana. But Rama trusted Vibhishana to the core since Vibhishana’s heart was immaculately pure. Rama accepted Vibhishana and declared, “You are Mine.” (*SSB 1996 p.61-62*)

The bridge

There was a vast sea to be crossed which was not possible. (*SSS Vol.41 p.79*) Looking at the sea, Rama questioned how it was proposed to cross it. Many among the Vanaras suggested means and methods. At last Vibhishana rose from his place and addressed Rama thus: “Lord, the Ocean owes its origin to your forefathers, Sagara and his sons. It is the family ‘preceptor’ of your line. If only you resolve that it should be crossed, the Vanaras can easily go across.”

Rama directed Lakshmana to bring him the bow and arrow, and when he brought them, Rama said, “Haughty persons deserve no kindness. Mischievously cruel persons deserve no softness. Misers by Nature deserve no moral teaching. Egotistic persons deserve no advice. Greedy persons cannot benefit from insistence on renunciation. Persons stricken with anger deserve no counsel on being at peace. Lust-crazy victims deserve no scriptural readings. Saline fields deserve no seeds of grain. So

too this Ocean that does not yield to soft request deserves no mercy.” So saying, he fitted an arrow to his bow. At this, Lakshmana was afraid what the consequences would be for the Ocean. The Ocean too was rendered hot at the mere preparation to shoot the arrow into its depths. The denizens of the deep suffered extreme agony. As if terror-stricken, the waves began screaming. Wave after wave rolled towards the place where Rama stood and gently lapped his feet, as if praying for mercy. At that time, a Voice was heard as if from the sky, “Lord! There are two generals in the campus, Nala and Nila, who are targets of a curse pronounced by a sage. That curse can now be used as a blessing, listen. The story can now be told.” The Ocean itself communicated the details of that dire incident to Rama.

“There were many hermits living on a river bank in cottages. While young, these two entered these hermitages. While the sages were immersed in deep meditation, seizing the holy icons called saligrams which they worshipped, they used to cast them into the waters of the river. The sages were enraged at this sacrilege and they cast a curse on them, in this manner. ‘Boys! May all things that you throw on water never sink. May they float instead. May they remain just where you have thrown them, even if the waters flow fast in floods.’ Therefore, every rock they throw will float at the very place. Have your Name inscribed on every slab and rock. Your Name is light, not heavy at all. Thus, even huge mountain peaks when thrown would float and form a bridge. I shall also contribute my share of help; for when the search is for Truth, all Nature must serve the seeker.” Rama decided not to let go the arrow he had fitted; but since his arrow,



Figure 6: Rama vanquishing the Ocean

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist [Raja Ravi Varma](#) (1848–1906)

Title **English:** Sri Rama Vanquishing the Sea

Description **English:** [Varuna](#) the Lord of ocean, pacifying [Sri Rama](#), angered at the intransigence of the sea to give way to enter [Lanka](#).

Date Unknown

Dimensions oil on canvas

Current location **English:** Sri Jayachama Rajendra Art Gallery, [Jaganmohan Palace](#), [Mysore](#), [Karnataka](#).

once fixed had to find a target, he aimed it at a forest area in the far distance and as a result, it became a dry desert.

Rama called together the ministers and directed them to construct the bridge¹⁵² across the Ocean. Hanuman said, “Lord! Your Name is the bridge that can safely transport man across the Ocean of Life. Which bridge can be stronger and safer than that?” Jambavan, the aged General, said, “Lord! Your prowess, which is a raging conflagration, can dry up this mass of water. It is sure to be filled to the brim again by the tears of the women widowed in Lanka during the coming battle with Ravana and his armies.” (*RKRK Part I p.71/176-179*)

The monkeys then brought big boulders and parts of mountains from various quarters and started throwing them into the sea, but they all sank in sea water. It could not be made unless the rocks and boulders settled at one place. So, what could be done for that? Perceiving the difficult situation, Lakshmana said to Rama, “Dear elder brother, everything in this world is perishable and bound to sink. But there is one thing that does not perish or sink. And that is Your Name. The bridge should be constructed on the foundation of Your Name.” Rama commended Lakshmana by patting his back.

Now the monkeys started bringing the rocks and Hanuman told them to write the word ‘Rama’ on each boulder. The boulders with the Name ‘Rama’ written on them did not sink in water, but

¹⁵² See Chapter, *Hanuman* - **THE BRIDGE:**

started drifting away. Then Hanuman told them that they should write the letter ‘Ra’ on one boulder and ‘ma’ on the other. The monkeys did as commanded and threw the two boulders together in to the sea with devotion and steadfast faith. The waves of the ocean brought the two boulders together to make the word ‘Rama’. In this way, the bridge was constructed. As soon as the bridge was constructed, Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman and the entire army crossed over and reached Lanka in no time. (SSS Vol.41 p.79-80)

INTERPRETATIONS - DIVINE MASTERPLAN IN EVERY ACT IN RAMAYANA:

For the welfare of this country, you all need to minutely scrutinise how delicately, correctly and righteously Rama handled each situation. He killed all the demons and safeguarded the righteous. All these are actually small parts of a Divine master plan. It was willed that Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna take birth so that they could cause the annihilation of the demons. (SSB 2002 p.71)

Every step taken by Viswamitra was for Loka raksha:

Viswamitra took Rama for the protection of his *yagna* in the normal course. As soon as his *yagna* was over, it was Viswamitra’s duty to take Rama and Lakshmana back to Dasaratha. He did not do that. From his *yagna*, Viswamitra took them to Mithilapura. There, the Bow of Shiva was broken and thereafter the marriage of Rama and Sita took place. Thus every step taken by Viswamitra was indeed planned for the ultimate destruction of Ravana.

The *rishis* of those days worked in a selfless manner, for the prosperity of mankind. In fact, they were using their *thapas* and their strength for helping mankind. A human being, on the day when he can push away his selfishness,

when he can push away his ego, will really acquire his entitlement for *thapas*. (SSB 1997 p.17)

Respect your Parents:

At the time of Rama going to the forest, it was not Dasaratha who gave the orders. When Dasaratha saw Rama, he was simply steeped in sorrow. How could Dasaratha, in that sorrow, tell Rama to go to the forest? How could he speak at all when he was steeped in such sorrow? Recognising the situation, Kaikeyi gave expression to what she thought was in the mind of Dasaratha. Accepting the decision and the orders of Kaikeyi, Rama went to the forest. Here, we should recognise Rama as a person who implicitly obeys the orders of the father, whether they came directly from the father or indirectly, through someone else. The sacredness that is contained in obeying the orders of the parents and the beneficial results that will flow by following the orders of one's parents is something which we should note very carefully. By looking at it in a worldly manner, one may ask the questions, why should I continually go on respecting my parents? I have grown older, I have become an important person and I am strong. Why should I still respect my parents? or every action of yours, there is always a re-action, there is a resound and reflection. If, in future, you want to have a life of peace and of happiness, that will depend upon the kind of action which you take at the present time only. If you respect your parents today, your children will respect you in future. The kind of seed, which you plant today, will determine the kind of tree which will grow. So, if you want to be near God, see good, do good, be good; this is the way, the royal way for you to go near God. To be good, to do good and to see good is the primary duty of every human being. (SSSB 1977 p.18-20)

Silence as good as approval

Dasaratha did not invite the king of the Kekaya for consultation along with the other leaders and princes who were called to give their opinion on the choice of Rama as the heir-apparent, for, in that case, subsequent events in furtherance of the Master Plan would have been rendered difficult. Why, Dasaratha did not command Rama to go into exile in so many words; he only acknowledged to Kaikeyi that he had granted her two boons and that he was now helpless to back out of that grant. It was Kaikeyi who communicated the news to Rama. Silence was as good as approval and Rama had to accept

silence as the command from His father. Kaikeyi had to intervene, so that the purpose of the *Avatar* might be fulfilled. The sense of righteousness in Rama was so strong that when he heard of the dilemma in which Dasaratha was caught, He helped him to come out of it unharmed; he insisted he would go into exile as his father had promised by implication. (*SSS Vol.4 p.31*)

Learn the implication of your word before promising:

Let your speech be always sweet People should ponder over what is their aim in life, whither they are going and what they should achieve before embarking on any activity. In this context, the Ramayana furnishes a lesson for all. Dasaratha, without any concern for the future, granted two unconditional boons to Kaikeyi in return for the help which she rendered to him. Out of thoughtless love for her, he gave two boons saying that she could have what she wanted, whenever she might choose to ask. She chose the time and the boons she wanted. She asked for the exile of Rama and the crowning of Bharatha. The lesson to be learnt from this is that when you give your word, you must be aware of all its implications. Promises made thoughtlessly lead to grievous situations. One has to stand by one's word.

Truth endows one's life with sweetness. Loving words sweeten life. Let your speech be always sweet, whatever be the circumstances. Just as sugarcane has to go through crushing and other processes before you can get candy from it, the body has to go through certain ordeals to manifest its sweet nature. These are termed: *Samskaara*---the good thoughts, good feelings and good actions which bring about refinement. Love is essential for their refinement. Hence, love is the means to realise the nectarine sweetness of life. (*SSS Vol.27 p. 159-160*)

Subtle secrets in Ramayana - Kaikeyi was instrumental in sending Rama to the forest so that He could punish the wicked and protect the good:

She was instrumental¹⁵³ in sending Rama to the forest to punish wicked and protect the good - Rama has prepared the mind of Kaikeyi in sending Rama to the forest for the destruction of the demons - People blame Kaikeyi saying

¹⁵³ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - **KAIKEYI, AN INSTRUMENT IN THE DIVINE PLAY:**

that she was responsible for the suffering of Rama and Sita. She was actually a divine instrument in the mission of Rama. She was not the kind of lady who would be swayed by the words of Manthara. She was instrumental in sending Rama to the forest so that He could punish the wicked and protect the good. These are great subtleties and secrets in the Ramayana¹⁵⁴. (SSB 2002 p.110)

Rama wills his departure to the Forest:

Some people say that the time set for the coronation was not an auspicious one, and it was that which caused the departure of Rama from Ayodhya. Such a contention is wrong. The time for the coronation was set by no less a person than the enlightened Sage Vashishta. All said and done, it was the will of Rama that ultimately caused His departure from Ayodhya. Rama had long ago prepared the mind of Kaikeyi in this regard, for He had been very close to her. One day during the course of His conversation with Kaikeyi he said to her, “Mother, be prepared for My departure to the dense forests. I have to go there to bring about the destruction of the demons. You may earn an evil reputation due to this, but be strong in mind. Ask father the boon that Bharatha should be crowned as King and that I should be sent to the forest.” That was the intimacy and understanding which existed between Queen Kaikeyi and Rama¹⁵⁵. She was an embodiment of virtue. She loved Rama more than her son Bharatha. (SSB 1996 p.37-38)

The outer form donned by *Avatars* misleads everyone. Another example. Scholars determine *mahurtas*, or auspicious moments, for important occasions such as marriages and inaugurations of projects. Vashishta made a *mahurta* for Sri Rama’s coronation. After much study and meditation, Vashishta decided that 7:00 a.m. on a particular day would be most appropriate to install Rama as King. This *mahurta* was meant for coronation but resulted in exile! So what was its efficacy? Remember, this was no ordinary *mahurta* set by some ordinary Brahmin. Vashishta was a *Brahmarishi*.¹⁵⁶ A *mahurta* set by

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - **Kaikeyi passes away contented with her role in the master plan**

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter, Kaikeyi - **Kaikeyi's homage to Lord Rama**

¹⁵⁶ “One established in Brahman (Self)” - A sage of the highest calibre. (SSB 1995 p 48)

him cannot be invalid. Yet, did the coronation take place? No. Not just that, but Rama was exiled to the forest! How did this happen? The reason is that NOTHING CAN STOP DIVINE WILL, not even the will of a *Brahmarishi*. Rama planned these events to show His Divinity to the world. (SSB 1995 p.39)

Rama told Bharatha that even his mother Kaikeyi was not responsible for this situation. In fact, they proposed to install Rama on the throne the very next day. Overnight, due to pressure, this decision had been changed. The change in such a decision overnight must be because of divine will. It was not a human decision. In this manner Rama was giving some explanation or other to Bharatha. (SSB 1977 p.70-71)

Sita convinces Rama

Rama also exemplified the ideal relationship between husband and wife in a family. When Rama decided to leave for the forest, Sita wanted to accompany him to serve him. Rama tried in many ways to dissuade her, telling her about the dangers in living in the forest, infested by wild animals and demons on the prowl. Sita replied: "When I am with the lion among men, what can any animal do to me?" Rama argued with her that the *Rakshasas* were capable of assuming any form and that it would be difficult to safeguard her. Sita retorted: "Can't you, who are the protector of the fourteen worlds, protect a lone Sita!" By these arguments, Sita tried to make Rama agree to her going with him.

Rama then employed a different argument. He told her that she should stay behind to render service to his aged parents. Earlier Sita had listened to the advice Rama had given to his mother Kausalya when she wanted to go with Rama to the forest. Rama had told her about her duties towards her husband and said that in no circumstance should she leave him and follow Rama. He had told Kausalya: "For a wife the husband is the Lord. The son cannot take the husband's place. The husband is primary. Your first duty is to serve my father and not come with me." Sita reminded Rama of the advice he had given to his mother and told him that he could not lay down one rule for his mother and another for herself with regard to a wife's duties towards her husband. She

urged Rama to act upto his own words and take her with him. "You are going to the forest to honour your father's words. I am following you to act up to my husband's words," she said. In this manner the Ramayana demonstrates the proper relationship between husband and wife and their respective duties. (SSS Vol.24 p.61-62)

Surpanakha's role in Ramayana

Every step in the career of the *avatara* is pre-determined. Rama knew that the coming of Surpanakha was the prelude to the coming of Ravana; He had asked Sita to enter the fire and remain in it as just as an outer manifestation. Even before the human manifestation, the Lord had decided that the *Sakthi* (Energy) must also accompany Him, because Ravana's *thapas* (penance) was so strong that only some major sin could make the blessings he had won from the gods null and void. The ordeal of fire through which Sita was asked to prove herself was not an ordeal at all; it was got up only to recover Sita from the fire in which she had taken shelter, in preparation for the Lanka episode. That is the way of the *Avatara*; it will not go about announcing its nature; it will announce itself by deeds. (SSS Vol.4 p.20-21)

Take the example of Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana. She was mutilated by Lakshmana, she was rejected by Rama, and she was ridiculed by Sita, humiliated beyond cure. She fled in terror to her brother and, what did she ask him to do? She described the heavenly charm, the Divine grace of Rama and advised him to fill his heart with the sweetness that Rama exhaled all around Him! Rama came to feed the roots of *Sathya* and *Dharma* and so, Sita joined Him through correct orthodox rites. There was no *Sita-apaharanam* (abduction of Sita). In the *Krishna avatara*, the task was to foster *Shanti* and *Prema* Now, all four are in danger of being dried up. The *dharma* that has fled to the forests has to be led back into the villages and towns. The *adharmas* that has ruined the villages and towns has to be driven to the jungle. You will have no rest until this is done. For it is your problem, the problem in which each of you is vitally involved. (SSS Vol.4 p.21-22)

Maricha was let off to further the Divine Drama:

In the story of the *Ramayana*, every character, including that of the *rakshasas* as well as of the monkey, has been proclaiming suitable ideals to the world. After killing the *rakshasas*, Thataki and Subahu, Maricha was allowed to go free, and we must examine the inner meaning of this situation. If Maricha was also killed and was not allowed to go free, there would not have been the possibility of Ravana taking away Sita. If Ravana did not take away Sita, there would not have been the killing of Ravana himself. Thus, there is always a master plan behind every act in the *Ramayana*. (*SSB 1997 p.141*)

Golden deer

A question may be raised about the golden deer. Did not Rama know that it was decoy, a demon in that form, sent by Ravana to help him in his evil design. Of course, He knew it all. He knew that the episode was but the prologue to the completion of the task on which He had come. He could bring Sita back from Lanka and, in a moment, he could turn it into a heap of ash. But, he got Sugriva as his ally and did various other things to retrieve her and punish Ravana. Why? In order to accomplish the welfare of the world, foster righteousness among men, and cause destruction of the wicked, the Lord can freely choose. Persons who are unaware of the ways of God cannot understand this. God can on His own involve Himself in activities which serve as ideals and guides for mankind. If Rama had not devised the drama of the golden deer and Sita's abduction, how could the devotion of Hanuman be immortalised? (*SSS Vol.11 p.288-289*)

Sita's Desire for the golden deer was a part of the divine Drama:

During the period of Rama's exile in the forest, Maricha, the demon, donned the form of a golden deer to entice Sita. Sita knew very well that a golden deer could not be found in the world. However, keeping with her role in the Divine drama of *Ramayana* she expressed a desire to possess the golden deer and requested Rama to capture it for her. Rama then had to run after the golden deer, in order to make her happy. (*SSS Vol.40 p.183*)

Acts of God are for the world's good

A question may be raised here about the golden deer. Did not Rama know that it was a decoy, a demon in that form, sent by Ravana to help him in his evil

design? Of course, he knew it all. He knew that the episode was but the prologue to the completion of the task on which he had come. He could bring Sita back from Lanka and, in a moment, he could turn it into a heap of ash. But, he got Sugriva as his ally and did various other things to retrieve her and punish Ravana. Why? In order to accomplish the welfare of the world, foster righteousness among men, and cause destruction of the wicked, the Lord can freely choose. Persons who are unaware of the ways of God cannot understand this. God can on His own involve Himself in activities which serve as ideals and guides for mankind. If Rama had not devised the drama of the golden deer and Sita's abduction, how could the devotion of Hanuman be immortalised? (*SSS Vol.15 p.303*)

6.3.4 HEROISM AND HEROIC WARRIOR – WAR BEGINS

HIS STORY

The Vanara Army Invades Lanka

With such enthusiasm and vigour, the *Vanara* army comprising experienced heroes like Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavantha and others soon reached the shores of Lanka. (*SSB 2002 p.122*)

Rama called together the chief leaders and commissioned them to decide how best to lay siege to the four gates of the City. At this, the Ruler of the Monkeys (Sugriva), the Ruler of the Bears (Jambavan) and the Ruler of the Rakshasas (Vibhishana) met together. They decided on the division of their forces into four, under commanders and guides. Then they fell at the feet of Rama and enthused by his blessings, they gave orders for attack.

The War Begins:

*War commenced. It was a fierce pitched battle*¹⁵⁷. With Rama in their hearts, the Vanaras armed with boulders and trees rolled forward in terror-striking floods. Lanka was reputed impregnable, but the blessings of Rama helped them to break into it. The Eastern Gate was stormed by the forces under Nala. The Southern Gate was breached by the millions under the command of Angada. The Western Gate fell before the onslaught of the army led by Hanuman. The Northern Gate was guarded by Ravana himself, and Rama fought with him there. The Vanaras had no war drums or trumpets, but the “Ram—Ram” they voiced forth in devotion rose as one Call from all throats and echoed from the sky. The entire City of Lanka was sunk in confusion and panic. Ravana was blinded by foolish pride. He was exulting at the prospect of victory over the opposing forces, and revelling in the thought that the festive day of victory had dawned for the Rakshasa Sun.

The Rakshasas had taken up positions over walls and turrets and bastions of the fort, just as clouds on the peaks of the Meru Mountain. They were beating drums and blowing trumpets. Their shouts of “Victory for Ravana” confronted the confident shout “Victory for Rama, the Lord.” The boulders that the Rakshasas were hurling on the Vanaras attacking their walls and attempting to scale them, were seized ere they fell, by the Vanaras and hurled back with fatal effect on the very Rakshasas crowding the walls. The advance of the Vanaras gained in momentum as the

¹⁵⁷ *SSB 2002 p.124*

fight progressed. They killed the Rakshasas wherever and whenever they caught them. As a giant storm scatters the clouds into the four directions, the mounting onslaught of the Vanaras so dismayed the Rakshasas that they fled into the distance and the City was shrouded in despair.

Women, old men, and children began blaming Ravana for bringing about the calamity that had descended on their heads. Some Rakshasas gave up the fight, and fled with their wives and children, in order to escape certain death. Noticing such groups, Ravana gnashed his teeth in anger and yelled, “Cowards, backing out of battle! I shall cut you into pieces with my Diamond Sword!” At this, a few of the fleeing Rakshasas stayed in the fray. Meanwhile, the Vanara heroes penetrated the enemy lines and reinforced by their contemplation on Rama they entered the inner fortress of Ravana himself, and succeeded in razing it to the ground. They plucked a pillar of gold and wielding it as a weapon, started their orgy of destruction. Every Rakshasa they encountered was given a terrible beating. Then, his head was severed and cast away, with such force and such aim that it fell right in front of Ravana himself. When darkness fell, the Vanaras, after demonstrating their superior might and heroism before the Rakshasas, presented themselves before Rama.

The Rakshasas are nocturnal beings, so when night fell, their acclamation and fury increased many-folds. Their shouts of “Victory to Ravana” fell on the ears of the Vanaras like the roar of lions. The Vanaras plunged into battle again. The Rakshasa generals, Akampa and Atikaya through their magical skill spread pitch darkness over the four quarters. Under cover of the

blackness, heavy rains of dust, stones and blood were poured on the enemy forces. The Vanaras could not distinguish friend from foe. They were afraid to fight with full fury. They prayed, “Rama! Rama,” in a loud voice, so that they could gain courage and give the enemy a good fight. Rama heard their cries. He called together Angada and Hanuman and told them that the magic skill of the Rakshasas had caused the commotion. They were furious at the shameful tactics of the enemy, but Rama coolly pulled out the Agniastra, the Fire-arrow from his sheath, and shot it into the darkness they had designed. The effulgence of that arrow destroyed the darkness, and filled the area with splendid illumination. The Vanaras and the Bears set about their task of overwhelming and destroying the enemy with redoubled energy and enthusiasm. When the triumphant yell of Angada and Hanuman were heard, the Rakshasas took to their heels and fled. But they could not escape. The Vanaras caught them by their feet and threw them far out into the sea! The Rakshasas retreated into their camp when night advanced. They had no energy left for continuing the fight. The Vanaras came into the Presence of Rama. When the eyes of Rama fell upon them, they were all refreshed and recouped, with no trace of exhaustion. (*RKR V Part II p.203-206*)

Battle with Meghanada:

Meghanada¹⁵⁸, the son of Ravana, who had defeated Indra himself, entered the battle. He was the eldest son of Ravana. It was the second day of the battle. He was geared splendidly in the battle-attire. (*SSB 2002 p.124*)

¹⁵⁸ Also known as Indrajit

When Meghanada and Lakshmana were fighting; Lakshmana fell into a swoon. Meghanada tried his best to carry away Lakshmana to Lanka. Although Meghanada had all the strength, he could not move Lakshmana even a little. Hanuman entered the scene and was uttering the name of Rama. By hearing the name of Rama, Lakshmana¹⁵⁹ became so alive that Lakshmana could be carried on the shoulders of Hanuman to the camp of Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.45*)

Meanwhile, the shades of evening invaded the land. The two opposing forces returned to their camps. Sri Rama saw the returning Vanaras but could not see Lakshmana among them. He asked, “Where is Lakshmana?” Just at that moment, Hanuman entered carrying the body of Lakshmana over his shoulder. Hanuman was praying plaintively, “Rama! Rama!” Rama acted as if he was perturbed and affected by anxiety, but he soon righted himself. He laid the body of Lakshmana on his lap and examined it carefully for a long time. Jambavan, the aged, spoke at that juncture. He said, “Lord. Let us not lose time.

Let us not delay treatment or hesitate. It is best we get Sushena here, the physician, from Lanka. He knows the remedy.” That very minute, Hanuman assumed a microscopic human form and entered the inner city of Lanka. He lifted the house of Sushena with him inside it, and brought it intact over the intervening distance. Sushena fell at the feet of Rama, and disclosed the name of the mountain where the drug, which could save

¹⁵⁹ Lakshmana was one who had such an attachment to the name of Rama that if Rama’s name was mentioned, Lakshmana’s strength would reappear (*SSB 1977 p.45*)

Lakshmana, was growing. While considering whom to send in search of that precious drug, Hanuman himself prostrated before the lotus feet of his Lord, and prayed that he might be enjoined to bring it. Rama entrusted the task to him. (*RKRV Part II p. 211-212*)

Rama pretends to be anxious for Lakshmana’s well-being:

Rama was guarding Lakshmana. The day rolled into evening and night and even into the hour of midnight. The Vanaras were squatting around Rama. Rama, acting as merely human, expressed anxiety at the non-arrival of Hanuman. “It is midnight. There is yet no sign of Hanuman! Has he lost his way by any chance? Brother Lakshmana is still critically unconscious!” He turned the face of Lakshmana tenderly towards him, and fondling it with tearful affection, said, “Brother! Open your eyes and look at me. Never have you spent such long hours without turning your eyes towards me. Without even a wink you watched over me, all these years, with no respite. How can I bear this silence from you¹⁶⁰? Since yesterday, I have none to comfort me with soft speech.” Rama wailed thus, like common mortals. “Brother, for my sake, you forsook both parents and wife. You came into exile and forest life, along with me, though you were under no obligation to do so. You never paid attention to the hardships you encountered. Your nature is simple and sweet. But for my sake you welcomed the hot sun, you got wet in the rain, and you shivered in the cold. You would not take food, at mealtime; for, you had no regular hours. You gave me whatever food you

¹⁶⁰ Rama then started lamenting, “Oh Lakshmana, I considered you as my sixth vital breath. Today, my sixth vital breath is gone.” Rama pretended as though He wept. (*SSB 1996 p.65*)

collected. Lakshmana, I am not unaware of the fact that often you laid yourself on the bare ground on an empty stomach. Brother! For twelve long hours I am deprived of loving care, do you not realise this? Lakshmana! Open your eyes just once and look upon me. That is what I most need now.” Rama held the chin of Lakshmana in his loving hand and prayed most touchingly for one glance from his eye. The Vanaras shed tears of sorrow at the anguish that Rama experienced. Many of them climbed the hilltop trees and peered into the distance to discover signs of the approach of Hanuman. (*RKRV Part II p.218-219*)

Drugs from the Sanjivi Peak revive the Slain Vanaras:

Soon, Hanuman appeared carrying the Sanjivi Peak on his upraised palm. When Rama saw Hanuman with the Peak on which the curative plants were growing, his delight was beyond measure. Sushena immediately secured the drugs he required—the Visalyakarini, the Samdhanakarini, the Souvarnakarini and the Samjivakarini—from the Peak and administered them to Lakshmana. Lakshmana sat up, fully awake. Rama was overcome with joy. He embraced his brother and caressed him very fondly. He exclaimed, “Brother! Brother! Where had you been these hours?” His eyes were streaming with tears of joy and gratitude. He was plunged in high delight, comparable only to Brahmic Bliss. Meanwhile, as a result of contact with the vitalising air that blew from the Sanjivi Peak in their midst, the Vanaras who had fallen dead during the days of bitter battle recovered their lives and were able to sit up and move about as before. This produced great joy among the Vanaras, who danced in glee, embracing their revived companions and kinsfolk. Rama showered his blessings on Sushena. He assured Sushena that he

would guard him against any vengeful steps that Ravana might plan against him. He ordered Hanuman to deposit him back again in Lanka, house and all, and also to deposit the precious Sanjivi Peak near his house, in memory of his service to Lakshmana and the Vanaras. Hanuman praised his services and thanked him for saving the life of his master as well as those of his companions. He carried his house, with him in it, as well as the Peak and placed them safely on the ground in Lanka. (*RKRK Part II p.219-220*)

During the battle against Ravana, the fight between Lakshmana and Meghanada lasted for three full days, after which, finally, Meghanada was killed. Rama came and embraced Lakshmana and said that he was as happy as he would be when he found Sita. In the entire battle, the most difficult thing was to defeat Meghanada. In fact, it was easier to kill Ravana. When Rama saw that Lakshmana was victorious, he was overjoyed¹⁶¹. (*SSB 1977 p.43*)

Vibhishana's Son is killed:

Then came another mighty Rakshasa, whom the *Vanaras* mistook to be Ravana himself. He caused a great deal of havoc and destruction in their ranks. There was none in the army equal to him in might and valour. Vibhishana approached Rama and explained, "Rama! You must kill him somehow. If you kill him, it is as good as striking at Ravana himself. He is a mighty support for Ravana's army. If you hit his thumb, he is sure to

¹⁶¹ He also told Sugriva, "I have been able to achieve the great task only with the help of Lakshmana. Without Lakshmana, it would not have been possible for Me to do so." (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.49*)

fall”. And so it was done as told. The mighty warrior fell. Vibhishana was observed wiping his tears. Lakshmana was surprised. He asked Vibhishana, “So many have died in the battle. But why do you weep for this one alone?” Vibhishana replied, “Lord! He was my only son. It is because of paternal attachment that I weep. But in truth, it was vital that he be removed from the scene. Ravana’s arrogance was primarily based on his might. There are several more such heroes on whom Ravana depends”. In this way, Vibhishana gave Rama a brief account of several warriors in Ravana’s army. Gradually Ravana started losing each one of his celebrated generals. (*SSB 2002 p.124-125*)

Battle with Ravana:

Rama prepared himself to battle with Ravana. Ravana had lost everybody, including his son Meghanada, his brother Kumbhakarna, and a host of others. Now, Ravana alone was left as a relic of Lanka. The battle between Rama and Ravana lasted seven days and seven nights. Indra who felt delighted that his enemy, Meghanada, had been killed, sent his heavenly chariot equipped with the most powerful weapons, to the battlefield for Rama’s use. It was a sight to see the heavenly chariot driven by Mathali, shining splendourously, coming down to the earth. The *vanaras* (monkeys) mistook it to be one more trick of the demons. As the wheels of the chariot touched the earth, Mathali got down and said to Rama with folded hands, “Oh Lord, Indra has sent this chariot and is himself prepared to fight against Ravana.”

Rama displayed great practical sense and alertness while fighting on the battlefield¹⁶². The time had now come for Ravana to face the consequences of his evil deeds. Once, his Queen, Mandodari, tried to din sense into his head. She said, “Oh Ravana, you are indulging in heinous and lowly deeds. You are bringing untold suffering and misery to many pure and noble ladies. The heinous sins in which you are indulging will boomerang on you.” She continued, “You cannot escape the inexorable law of *karma*. I am plagued by all sorts of apprehensions about you and about us, though I am the daughter of a great emperor, my son Meghanada an invincible hero, and you are my master. Be careful, for women are like fire. Do not insult women by evil looks, evil words, and evil deeds, for it is great sin.” Ravana did not take the words of Mandodari seriously. On the other hand, he laughed at her. (*SSB 1996 p.77-78*)

The battle between Rama and Ravana was fierce and terrible. Ravana released *sarpastra* (serpent arrow). The entire space was covered by serpents. Rama replied by discharging the *garudastra* (eagle arrow) which ate all the serpents in an instant. Ravana was surprised how a mere human, prowling in the forest, had such

¹⁶² Some people ask why Rama took recourse to war and why He caused the death of so many. The One who creates has also the right to punish. In fact, it is not God who punishes or protects. Your virtues protect you, and your vices punish you. Man cannot escape the consequences of his actions. Ravana had to face the consequences of his notorious deeds. The punishment may not come upon man immediately but it is bound to come for certain. (*SSB 1996 p.77*)

immense power and prowess. He now remembered the words of Mandodari¹⁶³. (*SSB 1996 p.78*)

The monkeys and bears saw the frightful scenes disappear in a trice, and they were happy. The entire thing melted away as fog before the rays of the sun, as soon as the arrow of Rama entered it. The Vanaras caused a hailstorm of stone to fall on Ravana. They jumped all around him with the missiles. Rama then selected a sharp arrow and shot it straight at Ravana. It sliced off a head. Another grew on the spot in a trice. It happened again and again. Rama watched the fun and seemed to be enjoying it. He remembered the phenomenon of greed coming in place of gain. As soon as something is gained, greed for more is born. He pictured the falling head as gain and the growing head, as greed!

The battle that ensued between Rama and Ravana was fought with incomparable and unexcelled fury. The saying goes that the Ocean is like the Ocean and the Sky is like the Sky. They cannot be compared with any other phenomenon.

So, too, the battle between Rama and Ravana has that battle alone as equal to it. The battle lasted for eighteen days. Rama

¹⁶³ Mandodari had once said to him, “You are underestimating the power and prowess of Sri Rama, Oh Ravana! Rama is no ordinary human. He is verily the incarnation of Lord Narayana. Would it be possible for anyone to build a bridge across the ocean with the help of mere monkeys? You have abducted Sita, the paragon of chastity and virtue. It is not too late. Go to Rama. Return Sita to Him, and seek His forgiveness.” Ravana had retorted at that time, “I may lose my life, but I will not seek Rama’s forgiveness.” (*SSB 1996 p.78*)

was not in the least exhausted by the fighting¹⁶⁴. It was a sport, a pastime for him! There were a few more days left before the fourteen years' exile was to end. So, he could well afford to engage himself in the game of war. If Rama decides on the finale, how can Ravana postpone his end or change the decision? When the allotted days were over, everything conspired to create bad omens for Ravana. Dogs howled, foxes moaned, donkeys brayed. Birds and beast set up piteous wails. Balls of fire dropped from the sky.

Sudden bursts of flame became evident in all directions. The heart of Mandodari, the Queen, beat loud and fast. Every idol in every home and temple in the island shed tears in plenty. Tornadoes spread havoc over hill and dale. Alerted by these calamitous signs, the gods knew that the end of the Rakshasas was near and they gathered overhead to witness the triumph of Righteousness, shouting, Jai! Jai! Welcoming the victory. (*RKRV Part II p.256-257*)

Ravana beheaded

It was Vibhishana who revealed to Rama the secret of Ravana's invincibility and directed where the arrow had to be shot. He said, "Rama! There is no sin in betraying such a wicked person. His death is highly beneficial for the world. I do not aspire for or

¹⁶⁴ The next day, Rama plunged into the battlefield. This time, Ravana could not withstand the attack made by Rama and became exhausted. Rama, the Compassionate One, stopped fighting with Ravana on that day, told him to take rest and come on the following day to resume the fight. Rama had compassion even for his enemy, and the battle He fought was a righteous one. (*SSB 1996 p.66*)

desire to rule the kingdom of Lanka. But this evil Ravana must be killed.” Rama followed Vibhishana’s directions. (*SSB 2002 p.125*)

Then Rama¹⁶⁵ shot a bunch of thirty-one arrows at the same instant on Ravana¹⁶⁶. They darted like deadly cobras. One arrow entered the “nectar jar” that Ravana had underneath his navel. The rest, the thirty, sliced off his heads and hands. When the heads and limbs rolled on the ground, they hopped about and rose and fell in frantic dance, for some little time and then lay quiet. Thus Ravana rid himself of life and reached heaven. The day was the fourteenth of the bright half of the Chaitra month. That instant, a host of heavenly drums resounded from the sky. The splendid spirit of Ravana merged in Rama. Struck by that vision, the Vanara warriors were aghast with wonder. They were amazed at the valour and heroism of Rama in the battle against Ravana which lasted full eighteen days. They exclaimed with one voice: “Victory, Victory to Rama.” Hearing that Ravana had died, his queen Mandodari collapsed on the floor. When she recovered, she hastened with her maids to the corpse of Ravana and wailed aloud. (*RKR Part II p.257-258*)

Mandodari came running and wailed in agony, “Lord! I had warned you several times not to meddle with chaste and pious married women. I told you not to cast lustful eyes on spiritually accomplished women. You are now reaping the consequence of

¹⁶⁵ On the seventh day of the battle, Rama launched the *kantastra* which He had received from Indra, and beheaded all the ten heads of Ravana. *SSB 1996 p.78*)

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter, *Ravana - TEN HEADS ROLL*

your sins. You have accumulated plenty of vices. I tried to dissuade you. But you would never pay me any attention.” Ravana too could not escape this fate and he paid for it with his life. (*SSB 2002 p.125*) After the death of Ravana, Vibhishana’s Coronation was arranged. (*SSS Vol.3 p.174*)

The Fire Ordeal¹⁶⁷

The *Vanaras* rejoiced at Ravana’s fall. They too had lost several of their own members. Sita was being brought to Rama. Strangely, Rama would not raise his head to look at Sita. Sita was highly anxious and eager to catch a glimpse of Rama. She had been away from her husband for 10 months and wanted to see him at once. But, Rama did not seem to show any interest. Instead, he ordered Lakshmana to light a fire for Sita to prove her chastity. It was Rama’s intention that Sita pass through the fire and prove to the world that She was blemish-less, sacred, and pure. It was only after this proof that Rama was willing to accept her. Rama knew about Sita’s purity – but he was concerned that the world may spread rumours about her character. If Sita were to prove herself with a trial by fire, none would dare open his mouth. Sita saluted Rama, circumambulated the fire thrice and hurled herself into it. The Fire God appeared.

He proclaimed, “Rama! Sita is blameless. She is a spiritually enlightened, sacred and virtuous lady. There is no need for you to test her further. I am withdrawing and extinguishing myself.” Thus Sita was brought to Rama. The monkeys were all agog to

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter, *Sita - Fire Ordeal*:

catch a glimpse of mother Sita and fell one over the other in total disarray in their eagerness to see Sita. Rama accepted Sita as his own. (*SSB 2002 p.126-127*)

INTREPRATATIONS:

The entire Ramayana is like a game of chess. The scene in the Ramayana is a kind of battlefield where forces of right and wrong are waging war¹⁶⁸. Rama represents righteousness and Ravana represents unrighteousness. The battle between the two is the war fought on the battlefield. (*SSS Vol.30 p.91*)

Rama figures as the heroic warrior who vanquished powerful persons like Parasurama, Vali and Ravana. Rama excelled not only in physical strength but also in intelligence and character. (*SSS Vol.22 p.66*)

The Purva Ramayana deals with valorous deeds of Rama, his victory over indomitable heroes like Parasurama, Vali and Ravana. These events speak of the dauntless courage, the matchless valour and immense physical and mental prowess of Sri Rama. (*SSS Vol.25 p.180*)

Rama will not hurt anyone who has not done any injury. But when it is necessary, and when it has to be done, even Rahu will swallow the Moon, isn't it? So too Rama. He will never hurt the innocent. (*RKRK Part II p.1-2*)

The meaning is that if you crave for Sita (*prakriti*), the pleasing, the objective world) you cannot get a perfect picture, a synoptic vision, out become one – eyed, warped, defective. (*SSS Vol.4 p.134*)

Six types of Powers in equal measure

Every *Avatar* has six types of powers: all encompassing Prosperity, Righteousness, Fame, Wealth, Wisdom and Renunciation (or non-

¹⁶⁸ See Chapter, *Lakshmana - Encounter With the Rakshasa Hordes*

attachment). God is the possessor of these six attributes. Sri Rama had all these six attributes in equal measure. (*SSS Vol.22 p.66*)

Importance of Truth and Righteousness

In the Ramayana *Sathya* (Truth) and *Dharma* (Righteousness) are the most important concepts. The *Vedas*, which are regarded as their very life-breath by Bharatiyas, have proclaimed: “*Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara*” (“Speak the Truth; Act Righteously”). In order to honour the plighted word of his father, Rama elected to go to the forest leaving Ayodhya. **Truth is the foundation for all righteousness.** There is no greater religion than truth. Rama stood out as an upholder of Truth to fulfil the promise of his father, to maintain the traditions of his *Ikshvaku* dynasty, to protect his country and for the sake of the welfare of the world. Everyone who calls himself a human being should stand up for truth in the same manner. (*SSS Vol.22 p.66*)

Battle between Righteousness and unrighteousness – Truth and untruth-

The battle between Rama and Ravana is the battle between Righteousness and Unrighteousness, Truth and untruth. It is an eternal battle which wages in human heart. *Prema* – which represents Rama, *Atma* –which signifies Sita, *Kama* – which stand for Ravana are seated in the same human heart. We should not confine the scope and significance of the Ramayana only to the physical plane. The inner Ramayana is most beneficent, for it is full of lessons for mankind.

Rama displayed great intellectual acumen and alertness in drawing up plans for defeating the enemy. The Ramayana is a manual of military strategies and astuteness. Rama as a Leader, knew who should be given what responsibility, and how it should be discharged. He had the ability to appoint the right person to the right position. (*SSB 1996 p.59*)

He is a Mahatma

It is said of *Mahatmas* (high-souled men) that what they speak, what they think and what they do are in perfect accord. In the case of the wicked, their thoughts, words and deeds are at a variance with each other. By these definitions Rama was a *Mahatma* (a high-souled one) and Ravana was a *Duraatma* (an evil-souled being). (*SSS Vol.22 p.66*)

Manasyekam vachasyekam, karmanekam mahatmanam (Those whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect harmony are noble ones). Rama achieved unity of thought, word and deed. In contrast, Ravana's thoughts, words and deeds were in variance with each other. *Manasyanyath vachasyanyath, karmanyanyath duratmanam* (Those who lack harmony of thoughts, words and deeds are wicked). (SSS Vol.39 p.72-73)

Rama's dilemma in destroying Rakshasas

Rama had to pacify the demand of the mother and the wife in the softest manner. After pacifying them, Rama set out to the forest. In his wanderings in the forest, seeing the demonic atrocities of the Rakshasas, Rama felt that he had been ostensibly sent in exile really to deal with these evil forces. "The Rakshasas are hindering the sacred activities of the ascetics. I must destroy the Rakshasas so that these sages will be left in peace to practise their austerities," thought Rama. (SSS Vol.31 p.77)

Meaning of Slaying Ravana's head

The ten heads of Ravana symbolised four *Vedas* and six *Sastras*. In the decisive battle, Rama severed Ravana's heads since he did not put into practice the knowledge he had acquired. (SSS Vol. 37 p.214)

Ravana was killed by Rama and His army of *Vanaras*. Rama then explained to Lakshmana thus: "Lakshmana! People behave in a particular way and reap the consequences of their actions, depending upon their *prarabdha* (destiny) and their qualities. We need not be too much concerned with that. As long as one is attached to worldly objects and thinks in terms of mine and thine, one will be afflicted by sorrow. Hence, one has to treat the worldly objects with the attitude, "these are not mine; all these are the property of the Divine,"

All acts should be performed to please God. If one develops ego with thoughts of 'I' and 'mine', one is sure to perish. You say 'this is mine' and 'that is mine'. In fact, what really belongs to you - the body, the mind, the intellect or the senses? You say 'this is my body', 'this is my mind', 'this is my intellect', etc. But, none of these belongs to you truly. The body which you consider as belonging to you will leave you in a moment, even without your knowledge. Similarly, the mind roams about like a monkey. Is it possible to restrain this

mad monkey? Do not say, 'I am this or that'. Say, 'I am I'. This is your correct description. The correct answer to the question 'Who are you?' is 'I am I'. Rama did not criticise or harm anyone. Then, who will have hatred towards Him? Good acts of Rama brought good results to Him. Thus, when we do good to others, there is no possibility for us to undergo sorrows and difficulties. If we still feel we are put to difficulties, the fault lies with us. God is not responsible for our sorrows and difficulties; it is the waywardness of our senses that is responsible for them. So, we should control our senses. If we are able to control our senses, everything else will come under our control. That is the essence of the teachings of Rama. The Ramayana is not merely the story of Rama. In fact, it is the story of every human being. (*SSS Vol.39 p.81-82*)

Battle between Rama and Ravana

The battle between Rama and Ravana is the battle between righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and untruth. It is an eternal battle, which wages in the human heart. *Prema*, which represents Rama, *Atma*, which signifies Sita, *kama*, which stands for Ravana, are seated in the same human heart.

We should not confine the scope and significance of the *Ramayana* only to the physical plane. The inner *Ramayana* is most beneficent, for it is full of lessons for mankind. Rama displayed great intellectual acumen and alertness in drawing up plans for defeating the enemy. The *Ramayana* is a manual of military strategies and astuteness. Rama, as the Leader, knew who should be given what responsibility and how it should be discharged.

He had the ability to appoint the right person to the right position. While fighting the battle against Ravana, Rama observed the principles of *dharma*. He never took advantage of the weakness of his adversary, but gave ample opportunity for the enemy to prove his strength. The example of Rama shines as an eternal star, even in the realms of the battlefield. Hence, the story of Rama is sacred, ideal, nectarine and blissful. Love Rama, and through Love, realise Him. Be one with Him. That is true Liberation. (*SSB 1996 p.59*)

Selfish desire is the root cause of Ravana's ruin

Ravana taught a great lesson to the world. He exclaimed: "Oh men! Do not live as I have lived and ruin your lives." What is the root cause of Ravana's ruin? Unable to conquer his desires, unwilling to get rid of his impulses, he ruined his entire clan. His sons were killed. His brother and other kinsmen were killed and ultimately his country itself was reduced to ashes. Ravana confessed- "In the end I ruined myself." This was the message Ravana gave to his countrymen in his last moments. Only by suppressing desires does a man manifest his humanness. A man who is unable to put an end to his desires, puts an end to himself. A good man by his good conduct achieves greatness. Ravana sought to achieve greatness but did not strive to lead a good life. Rama's career is different. He aspired only to be a good man and did not seek greatness. (*SSS Vol.30 p.90*)

What is Rama Raajya.? It is the reign of morality, of truth and virtues. Rama Raajya means that which engenders happiness (Ramayathi). There should be no ill-will towards anybody. No one should be harmed. That is Rama Raajya. When such feelings arise among the people, Rama Raajya will come into existence of its own accord.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6.4 RAMA’S REIGN - THE REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – RAMA RAJYAM

HIS STORY

BACK TO AYODHYA

Meanwhile Vibhishana brought the aerial vehicle – *Pushpaka Vimana* and put it at Rama’s disposal. This vehicle belonged to Kubera, the stepbrother of Ravana. Ravana had vanquished him in battle and usurped it. Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Vibhishana, Sugriva and all others boarded the vehicle and proceeded to fly towards Ayodhya. (*SSB 2002 p.127*)

Rama asked that the chariot be taken high up in the sky and the valuables be showered from there on the people below. Vibhishana did as directed. The Vanaras grabbed whatever fell on them or near them. They mistook the gems to be fruits that were red and ripe. When they found from the taste that they were stones, they cast them away in disgust. Rama and Sita enjoyed this fun and laughed in sympathy. Many Vanaras and Bears wore the clothes they secured and approached Rama in gratitude. Dressed in multi-coloured costumes, they danced about in ecstasy. Rama appreciated them and addressed them most

graciously; “Oh Vanaras! Through your prowess and valour, I was able to destroy Ravana and place Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. Now, you can all return to your own homes. I shall always be with you. You need have no fear hereafter.” Rama consoled and comforted them all by the gracious gesture, promising his eternal protection and assuring them that there will be no occasion for them to fear anyone or any calamity. The Vanaras and others were overwhelmed by gratitude for the love He showered on them. They lost all moorings of their minds. They stood folding their palms in reverential homage and said, “Lord, Your words are in consonance with Your majesty. They confuse us and render us dumb. We are weaklings. You are our Protector, our Guardian. You rule over the three Worlds. Can a fly ever claim to have given help to the eagle? Can a tiny lamp claim to reveal by its light the Sun?” The Vanaras fell at Rama’s feet and stood with tear-streaming eyes.

The Vanaras and Bears felt they had to obey the orders of Rama, however unwilling they were to depart from his Presence. They turned towards their homes with mixed feelings of joy and grief, praying to Rama for His continued blessing and with the Form of Rama imprinted on their minds. Nala, Sugriva, Hanuman, Vibhishana and other leaders and warriors could not give utterance to their feelings. They stood silent with looks fixed on the face of Rama, trying to subdue their anguish. Observing the depth of their love and attachment, Rama had them seated in the aerial chariot named Pushpaka which he was ascending. (*RKR V Part II p.266-267*)

The Pushpaka took off and turned north. When it rose, there was great commotion on the ground. Vanara hordes raised thunderous shouts of “Jai”—“Victory to Rama, Victory to Sita, Rama and Lakshmana.” Inside the Pushpaka, there was a high throne charmingly carved and designed. Sita and Rama took their seats on it. They then appeared to all as cloud with a lightning flash resting on the Sumeru Peak. Rama drew the attention of Sita to the battlefield below, and said, “Here is where Lakshmana overpowered and killed Meghanada.” He also showed her other spots associated with similar exploits and victories. He showed her the bridge that the Vanaras constructed across the sea, and described to her the heroism, devotion and faith of the Vanaras. Very soon, the aerial chariot reached the Dandaka Forest. Rama had the vehicle land before the hermitages of Agasthya and other sages. With Sita and Lakshmana, and other members of his entourage Rama visited the holy sages, paid reverential homage to them, and after taking leave of them, he ascended the Pushpaka again, and reached the Chitrakoota Hill. There too, he offered prostrations to the sages, and soaring to the sky again, he showed Sita the City of Kishkindha from the chariot itself. Even while the Pushpaka was speeding fast, Rama indicated to her the sacred rivers, Yamuna and Ganga. Sita offered worship to the holy streams in her mind. Soon, they could see the thrice-holy Prayag, where the Yamuna flows into the Ganga. They could get a far glimpse from that position of the splendourous City of Ayodhya itself. (*RKRV Part II p.269-270*)

En route, they stopped at the hermitage of Sage Bharadwaja. They had halted there on their onward journey too. Sage Bharadwaja was very happy. He gave away all the weapons he

had to Rama, and blessed that the coronation may take place soon. (*SSB 1996 p.95*)

Rama asks Hanuman to communicate the news of his arrival to Bharatha:

One more day remained to be spent, outside Cities, in exile. Therefore, Rama commissioned Hanuman to change himself into a Brahmin and proceed to Ayodhya. He was to inform Bharatha the news about Rama and others, and bring back from Ayodhya news of Bharatha. Hanuman left immediately. Rama, with Sita and Lakshmana, and all who had come with him, moved into the hermitage of Bharadwaja and accepted the hospitality and gratitude of that sage. Hanuman found the residents of Ayodhya lean and famished, despondent and depressed. They had not relished food or drink during the absence of Rama. All over the town, one could hear their grievous groans and wailing. No one could move towards another to console or nurse, for everyone was too weak to take a few steps nor had anyone the desire or the capacity to nurse or console. But rays of hope had already been cast by the news he was bringing. Bharatha had some welcome premonitions of the happy event. His right eye twitched and his right arm too.

Interaction between Bharatha and Hanuman:

When Hanuman reached Nandigram and told Bharatha that Rama was coming, Bharatha was overjoyed and was in ecstasy, and he quickly made all arrangements in Ayodhya for the reception of Rama. He called Sumantra and asked for his chariot to be brought. This chariot was placed on the outskirts of

Ayodhya and Bharatha was waiting anxiously for Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.54*)

Bharatha goes to meet Rama with the Queen Mothers and the Armed Forces:

Bharatha collected the sages, the scholars, the preceptors, the leading citizens and the four Sections of the Armed Forces, and with the three Queens and Ministers led by Sumantra, he walked forward with Satrugna by his side to meet Rama. Rama, while nearing Ayodhya, was describing to the Vanaras and others around him the beauty of the City: “Oh Sugriva, Angada, Vibhishana! Ayodhya is a holy City. It is a beautiful City.” In the midst of Rama’s enthusiastic description of the City’s charms, Bharatha appeared at the head of the Armed Forces and with his brother and the Queens. As the ocean heaves up in joy at the sight of the autumn moon the vast populace heaved a breath of joy at the sight of Ramachandra, Rama the Moon. Their excitement reached the sky. The Mothers embraced Rama with ecstatic delight and forgot themselves, caught in the flood of happiness. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at the feet of the Mothers. The joy of both parties knew no bounds. Rama drew Bharatha near him, and pained at his weakened frame, he consoled and counselled him lovingly. He praised aloud his brother for his steadfast devotion and affection towards the people. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana prostrated before Vashishta, Jabali, Vamadeva and other sages, as soon as they were sighted. Even the most ascetic among the sages could not restrain his tears at the happy reunion with Rama. The Vedic scholars raised their voices to the sky and showered their blessing in traditional formulae: “Live victoriously for hundreds of years,” “Live

prosperously for hundreds of years.” Bharatha and Satrugna fell flat on the ground before Rama in reverential homage. Though Rama pleaded with them again and again to rise up, they found themselves unable to rise and leave hold of the Lotus Feet. Lakshmana and Rama had to exert jointly to lift them. The brothers embraced each other in fervent affection, and shed tears of joy and relief at sight of each other’s faces. The delight with which their minds were filled gave their innate beauty a rare splendour. They shone like embodiments of physical charm. The sadness of separation gave place to the joy of togetherness. They were now deep in the ocean of bliss.

Bharatha welcomes the Vanaras accompanying Rama:

Sugriva, Nala, Nila, Angada, Hanuman and others assumed beautiful bodies for the festive occasion. The citizens were overjoyed at the sight of the entourage of Rama. They extolled in various ways the austerities that Bharatha went through and welcomed the result thereof. They appreciated his sterling virtues. Rama admired the faith and devotion of the people of the City. He gathered around him the Vanaras and Vibhishana. He introduced them to his brothers and his preceptors. When he took them near the Queens and told them, “These are my mothers,” all of them fell at the feet of the women, saying, “Oh, how fortunate we are. We see the mothers who gave birth to God Himself. You are indeed most worthy of worship. Bless us most graciously.”

Kausalya addressed them thus, “Oh Vanaras! You are all as dear to me as my son Rama himself. May Rama never forget you. May he ever protect you.” Then, deliberating among themselves, they ascended the chariots brought for them and entered the City.

In front of every home were placed golden pots filled with auspiciously coloured water. Flags were tied across the streets and on houses. The faces of the people, which were faded and shrunken with sorrow, like lotuses in moonlight, blossomed into freshness and beauty, like the same lotuses at sunrise, when Rama came before them. Their countenances shone with attractive effulgence. The sky resounded with their cheers and shouts of Victory. The chariot which bore Rama entered the city streets, the streets were bursting with excitement and delight. The auspicious flames of the lamps that were held by devoted hands and waved as he passed shone like stars and gave the impression that the firmament had fallen on the earth. The roads were soaked with fragrant rosewater.

As the chariot passed, showers of flowers were rained on it by the citizens from the windows and the terraces. The ecstasy of the citizens broke all bounds. With his three brothers and three mothers, Rama with Sita by his side, gave immense joy to the thousands packed on the sides of the roads. People congratulated one another on their good fortune in being alive and present on such a happy occasion. When they reached the Palace, the women of the inner apartments and the aides and servants of the household came forward and received them with customary rituals, like washing the feet. *RKRV Part II p.270-277*)

Jubilant Ayodhya

At Ayodhya, there was gaiety and happiness all around. Functions were organized every day. The populace was extremely happy to get Rama back after fourteen years. This was all due to the power of his Mother's blessings. Kausalya blessed

Rama, “Son! May you pass the fourteen long years like you spent just fourteen minutes? No obstacle will come in your way because you are the incarnation of Lord Narayana. None can trouble You. You will definitely reach Ayodhya safe and sound.” She lovingly embraced Rama on his return. It was now Sumitra’s turn. She is a good friend to all. Her virtues cannot be easily described. She too was thrilled at the victorious return of Rama. She was confident all through that none could harm Rama or cause Him an iota of trouble for the simple reason that no such person could be born. She brought her daughter-in-law Urmila to Lakshmana. It was fourteen years since Lakshmana and Urmila had seen each other. She fell at her husband’s feet and said, “Lord! It was your total dedication to Rama that has saved and protected you so far. You would always think of Rama. It was that sacred name that guarded and guided you.” She was overjoyed and applied vermilion to Lakshmana’s feet, as was the custom in those days. Sumitra praised her that it was her good wishes and blessings that had kept her son Lakshmana safe and secure. Kaikeyi too arrived on the scene. She was not wicked, as is commonly depicted. She was fully aware of the purpose of Rama’s incarnation. The house of Dasaratha was indeed fortunate to have four gems of sons and four equally virtuous daughters-in-law. Ayodhya was decked in all frenzy and rejoiced at the return of Lord Rama. *(SSB 2002 p.128-130)*

Mahapattabhisheka of Rama

As soon as they entered the Palace, Vashishta, the Royal Preceptor, announced the date when the Coronation of Rama as the Emperor of Ayodhya would be celebrated, giving details of the auspicious attributes of the Day which had persuaded him to

choose it for the great event. He invited also all the Pundits and Priests to take part in the ceremonies that the Vedas had enjoined, to consummate the Coronation. They appreciated the decision of Vashishta, for, they said, “a Coronation so celebrated would confer peace and prosperity on all mankind.”

Vashishta called Sumantra into his presence and addressed him thus, “Assemble the armed forces—cavalry, elephantry, chariotry and infantry—at the City, for the Coronation of Rama is to be celebrated.” Those words filled Sumantra with extreme delight. He arranged for the presence of the Army with all its components. The elephants, horses and chariots were decorated grandly for the occasion. They were posted in serried ranks outside the City Gate. The horsemen and the foot soldiers wore colourful uniforms and they stood at attention, ready to march into the City for the festival. Messengers were sent in all directions to gather, in time, the various auspicious articles necessary for the rituals that formed part of the celebrations. The entire City was agog with joy. Citizens vied with each other in decorating their houses and streets. People felt their two eyes were not enough to imbibe the charm of the City.

Rama attends personally to Bharatha:

Rama was especially considerate towards the persons who had accompanied him from beyond Ayodhya—Sugriva, Vibhishana, Angada, Nala, Nila and others. He ordered that proper arrangements be made for accommodating them and for looking after their needs. Accordingly, servants from the Palace rushed to perfect the arrangements designed for the comfort of the guests. Rama called Bharatha and with his own hands, he combed his

hair that had become matted, since he had not paid any attention to it, for years. The three brothers personally poured holy water and attended on Bharatha while he bathed. Then, Rama received the assent of Vashishta to disentangle his own matted hair and had his auspicious bath.

The queen mothers meanwhile had Sita go through her bath also. The mothers carefully combed her matted hair too, and dressed her in yellow silk. They made her wear jewels in plenty. She shone like Goddess Lakshmi. She moved to where Rama was and took her seat to the left of her Lord. The three mothers experienced the highest bliss, looking on, while Rama and Sita were seated together. “Is not this day the luckiest day for us? This day, our lives have achieved fulfilment. This day, our dearest wish has come true. This day, our eyes have had their purpose realised,” they said to themselves. They lost all consciousness of their bodies or surroundings, watching Rama and Sita, and taking them to be the God Narayana and the Divine Consort of Narayana, Lakshmi. Vashishta the great Sage was moved by the splendour that shone in the face of Rama. He was delighted beyond measure at the divine effulgence of the Rama Form. “I achieved today the goal for which I have been waiting so long, he felt, and he ruminated on that joy and remained blissful and silent. He called the servitors and instructed them to bring the Great Throne and install it in the Coronation Hall. It was a Throne set with multifarious gemstone which shone like the sun, with dazzling brilliance. Rama prostrated before Vashishta and other sages, and fell at the feet of the queen mothers. Then, he prostrated before the entire assembly of elders and citizens and ascended the Throne, with Sita following him

close. The vast gathering rejoiced at the unique sight, so full of majesty and glory. The Rishis, the elders, the leading citizens and the saintly well-wishers were filled with gratefulness and joy. The Brahmins recited appropriate Vedic hymns. The populace shouted Jai Jai, so loud and so often that the sky threatened to fall. It was the seventh day of the dark half of the moon in the month of Vaisakh. Taking the permission of the assembly and the assent of the Brahmins, Vashishta wound round the brow of Rama the insignia of Imperial Authority¹⁶⁹.

Kausalya, the mother of Rama, turned her eyes on Rama every now and then, and felt supremely happy. What can be said of the joy of the brothers Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna! It was beyond words. They were holding whisks and the umbrella, and standing behind the throne, as attendants on Rama. In fact, they were all through the years doing penance for the culmination they were enjoying that day! The gods beat drums of victory in the sky. The celestial musicians sang hallelujahs, the celestial dancers danced in joy. Vibhishana, Sugriva, Angada, Hanuman, Jambavan, Nala, Nila, Dadhimukha, Divida, Mainda—these heroes bore bows and arrows, scimitars, spears and stood on both sides of the throne, in reverential humility.

With Sita sitting on his left, Rama manifested the beauty of a billion *Manmathas* (*Manmatha*—the God of Love) rolled into one. The gods were fascinated by the divine charm of the Lord of

¹⁶⁹ Sri Rama's coronation was performed on Vijayadasami day. (*SSS Vol.25 p.341*)



Figure 7: Sri Rama's Coronation

Summary of the Photo

Painting by Sri K V Bhima Rao exclusively for this book

the Raghu line. Rama wore silk, interwoven with gold, and he had pendants on his ears brilliant with precious gems. He wore ornaments on his ankles and wrists, which derived beauty from his entrancing charm. The three worlds exulted at the sublimity of the event and the personal grandeur of Rama. Really those who witnessed that scene were the fortunate ones among the living.

Vibhishana came forward with a dazzling necklace of gems, which the Lord of the Sea had offered to Ravana. Sita accepted it. Its brilliance shone all over the vast Hall and struck everyone as a unique string of gems. But with the necklace in her hand, she cast a questioning glance at the face of Rama. Rama knew what was passing in her mind.

He said, “Sita! You can grant it as a gift to anyone among those here who deserves your grace.” Sita thought just for a second and looked at Hanuman. Becoming aware of the compassion in the look, Hanuman approached her in great humility and stood before Sita with bowed head. The necklace was given by Sita to Hanuman. Hanuman turned it around many times in his hand, its dazzle enrapturing everyone in that vast assembly. He was struggling to discover its specialness, with unslaked curiosity. He plucked every gem, put it between his teeth, and placed it adjacent to his ear, and with a face indicating disappointment, he threw the gem away in disgust! All eyes were watching with increasing amazement this peculiar behaviour. They were stunned into silence and inactivity. Until he treated the last gem in the same cavalier manner, no one dared interrupt or condemn. They could only protest in whispers among themselves! “Who is

this monkey that treats the diamond necklace so lovingly and so compassionately presented to him by Sita?” was the question on most lips.

Even Vibhishana was sad that Hanuman had so brazenly insulted the priceless jewel that he had brought. “He has pulled it to pieces and cast the gems aside,” he told himself. Everyone in the Hall surmised the reason for this strange behaviour in his own way. At last, one vassal Ruler could not restrain himself. He rose and gave vent to his resentment: “Peerless Hero! Why did you break that necklace of gems into so many bits? Was it right to do so? Tell us the reason why? Give us some explanation and remove our doubts.”

Hanuman listened to him patiently and replied. “Oh King! I examined each gem in order to discover whether each had in it the sacred Name of Rama. I could not find it in any gem. Without that Name of Rama, they are but stones and pebbles. So, I cast them on the ground.” The ruler was not silenced by this. He asked, “Hanuman! If it is your desire that in every article and particle there should be the Name of Rama, are you not asking for something impossible?”

Hanuman replied. “Of what good, of what profit, is anything which has not in it the Name of Rama? I have no need of such.” The valiant hero, Hanuman, dismissed the argument of the ruler thus. The ruler, however continued his objections. He said, “You would not wear anything that has not got in it the Name of Rama. Well, you are wearing your body. You are carrying it about with you. Prove to us that you have the Name in it.” Hanuman

laughed aloud. He said, “I shall prove, see!” He pulled a single hair from off his forearm and held it very near the ear of the Ruler. He could hear the Name, Rama, Rama, Rama uttered by the single hair! At this, he was overcome with a sense of wonder. He fell at the feet of Hanuman and prayed for pardon.

Rama called Hanuman near himself and warmly embraced him. He asked him, “Hanuman! What can I offer you on this occasion? I have no gift worthy to be given to you. I am giving you myself as my gift to you.” Then, he offered his body to be clasped by Hanuman’s hands. The assembly was moved into shouts of Jai at this unique act of Grace. They praised Hanuman and declared that there was no one to equal him in all the worlds. They praised the devotion and dedication of Hanuman. Then, Rama rose from the Throne and moved out into the open, where vast congregations were awaiting His appearance. He gave them the Divine Darsan of His charming majestic Form. They were all thrilled as never before in the bliss the Darsan conferred. All who were in the City were provided festive reception and given lavish food and luxurious shelter. Rama arranged for the distribution, as charity, of gold and money, of vehicles, household utensils and clothing, of houses and other amenities in plenty. Vibhishana and the Vanara heroes were wonder struck at the magnificent elaborateness of these events. They stayed on for six months in the Capital, serving Rama both day and night, in full exultation. The six months sped away as a single day for them. They had no memory of their homes, their families or their kingdoms during all that period of time.

At last, Rama called all the companions and comrades, who had accompanied him, into the Audience Hall and seated them in appropriate places. Then, he addressed them in soft, sweet accents, thus: “Friends, you have all toiled hard on my behalf. Of course, it is not proper to praise you to your face. You confronted various difficulties for my sake, giving up your homes, not worrying about your wives and children and unconcerned about your properties and possessions. I have no friends other than you all. Therefore, I have special love and compassion towards you. More than my parents, more than my brothers, more than my kingdom, more than my subjects, and more than even my Sita, you are my loved ones. This is my firm assertion. So, I now require you to proceed to your homes. Serve me after installing me in your hearts, with faith and devotion. I shall grant you the fortune of seeing me, beside you, behind you, before you and in your homes. I shall grant you Grace.” They listened to these words so full of Grace and Love, and they were so overcome by gratefulness and joy that they forgot themselves and their surroundings. They did not allow their eyes to stray away from the face of Rama. They shed tears of delight abounding. They could not utter a single word in reply. The tongue was unable to pronounce any. Then, under orders from Rama, the servitors brought large quantities of clothing and jewels. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna were requested to offer them to the members of the party and to personally help them in wearing them. The Vanaras and Vibhishana were then assisted by them in putting them on and they shone with added charm and brightness. But the Vanaras were unaffected by what was done. They stood unmoved and stiff, looking only at the Feet of Rama, their adored Lord. All bowed their heads and fell at those lovely

feet. Rama lifted them gently and embraced them with great affection.

Rama told the departing groups of Vanaras and others, “Children and friends! I am awarding you the *Sarupya*¹⁷⁰ stage of liberation, by which you are endowed with powers and attainments approximating to mine own. Go back and carry out the duties devolving upon you with success and fulfil the responsibilities with which you are involved. Rule over the lands and peoples entrusted to your care and enjoy peace and prosperity.” Rama provided them valuable counsel of various kinds and gave them leave to depart. Bharatha and Satrughna were struck with admiration by the devotion that shone in the hearts of the Vanaras and others. As Rama commanded, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna accompanied the party for some distance until they reached the outskirts of the City. Even as they sat in the chariots provided for them, the Vanaras turned back wistfully and shed tears at the thought of leaving Rama. The brothers saw the anguish in their faces and could not bear the sight.

They knew the meaning of those streams of tears and those sad looks and praised the spirit of dedication which filled their hearts. They gave them company until the river bank and they supervised arrangements for ferrying them across. Then the brothers returned to Ayodhya. Hanuman also returned with them. He prayed and pleaded with Sugriva, his ruler, and promised to

¹⁷⁰ Sarupya-mukthi (saaruupya-mukthi): Having the same form of Divinity. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

return after about ten days for, as he said, “I cannot bear the pang of separation.” Though Sugriva was not very happy, and in spite of his protests, Hanuman came back along with Lakshmana and others to where Rama was. (*RKRV Part II p.279-288*)

Rama’s reign – Rama Rajya

In the City of Ayodhya, every house had a flower garden attached to it. The residents tended the garden with love and care. It was perpetual spring in Ayodhya, for, the plants were heavy with fruits and fragrant with blooms throughout the year. Clusters of bees hovered over the blooms and their murmur could be heard all over. A cool breeze, heavy with the scent of flowers, greeted everyone. Children of the City had many species of birds as pets. Their songs, twitters and chirps mingled to make charming music to the ear. The wealth and prosperity of the citizens under the benign reign of Rama cannot be adequately described by even a thousand thousand-tongued Seshas. This was the result of the righteousness (Dharma) which Rama fostered and guarded. Rama celebrated many an Aswamedha Sacrifice. Millions and millions of Brahmins were granted generous gifts and they were made happy and contented. Rama, the Promoter of Vedic Rites and Ceremonials and the Guardian of the Codes of Dharma, (but yet, above and beyond all obligations and attributes—*Gunaatheetha*), as well as Sita, replete with all auspicious attributes and intent on helping all who craved to fulfil their beneficial obligations—were both vigilant in their task of keeping themselves and their subjects on the Path of Dharma.

Physical illness, mental anxiety and moral downfall were totally absent, when Rama ruled. People had deep love and affection for each other. Everyone struck gladly to the duties and rights sanctioned by the Vedas to the community and the profession. Austerity, charity, sacrifices; spiritual ritual and studies continued unabated and even enthusiastically all over the land. Sinful thoughts dared not peep into minds of people, even in their dreams. Women, men, old persons, children—all were at all times revelling in thoughts of Rama. There was no calamity or natural catastrophe evident anywhere. During the Rama age, there were no poor, no grief-stricken, no one humbled or crestfallen, no one cruel or hateful, no one ugly or ghastly to behold. Everyone had all the marks of charm. No one hurt another with his pride and pomp. No one envied another. All were versed in Atmic wisdom. All were eager to practise and protect Dharma. All were compassionate and intent on serving others. Each one was eager to extol the good qualities of another. No one gave room for egoism in his heart.

The entire Globe, with its seven Dwipas bordered by the Oceans, was under the shade of the single Umbrella of Rama's sovereignty. Over this entire region, Rama was the sole undisputed Lord. In this imperial domain, people enjoyed mutual love and mutual help. There was no trace of faction or fight; apartness and the big stick were not evident at all. Of course, distinction came to the fore in dance and the arts. The stick was evident in the hands of ascetics and monks. Fighting was to be seen only when used against the senses by Sadhakas. Attachment (*raga*, also meaning, tunes) could be noticed as raga only in

music. When no one had any enemy, how could “killing” be done?

But people killed the vagaries of the mind instead and won victories over their own lower natures. The City and environs shone with incomparably attractive wells, lakes and tanks. Oh the pure waters! Oh the beautiful landing places! Their sublime charm drew admiration from sages and seers. They blamed themselves for being so attracted. The lakes and tanks had lotuses of many colours blossoming on their surface. Many birds were singing on the trees growing thick on their banks. Parrots, peacocks, and others clustered on the branches and made merry. The City was more splendid than even Heaven and people were wonder struck at its uniqueness.

The subjects of the kingdom spent their time singing the thrice-holy captivating story of their Ruler, Rama. One might have achieved success in Yoga or performed many ritual vows but, if one has no love in his heart, he could not get Darsan of Rama. The wise man, the ascetic, the hero, the poet, the scholar, the accomplished, no one of these were afflicted, in Rama’s empire, with greed. No one strayed into wrong, urged by pride of wealth. The intoxication of authority did not render anyone deaf. Where was the young man who suffered from the fever of Youth? Or, where could be found the man who lost his fame through yielding to the pull of selfishness? Where was the man tainted by enmity? Where was the man suffering from the paralysis of grief? Where was the man bitten by the serpent, anxiety? There was none such—Rama himself standing above and beyond these,

as an example for all to emulate. He is the *Atmaswarupa*, God Himself.

In the City of Ayodhya, every day was a new Festival; every Festival was marked out with some novel features of entertainment. Each day, Rama gave away riches as charity. It was laid down that no one should blame another or scorns another. No bad word should be uttered. In every home, there were daily readings of the Vedas and the Puranas. No community of people looked on another or considered another as inferior. Each carried on its traditional occupation and respected the norms laid down. Therefore, compassion and affection towards the subjects grew quick and large in Rama's heart. Observing the devotion and dedication with which wives in Rama's kingdom served their husbands, even the Gods grew envious of men¹⁷¹. The husbands too shone as persons deserving

¹⁷¹ Even today people in every village, every house and every hut of Bharat worship Rama. It is a common practice among the people of Bharat to name their children as Rama and Sita. There is no change in the name of Rama and Sita even after the passage of thousands of years. The glory of these names is eternal and immutable. There have been wars in many countries, but not in Bharat. People may fight with each other due to their personal differences, but no war was fought in this country. Not only that, there will never be any war in Bharat. It is *Rama Rajya*. It is the land of peace. It is the land of love. (*SSS Vol.40 p.112-113*)

This land of Bharat has given birth to many noble women like Savitri who brought her dead husband back to life; Chandramati who extinguished wild fire with the power of truth; Sita who proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed and Damayanti who reduced an evil-minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity. This land of piety and nobility attained plenty and prosperity and became the teacher of all the nations of the world because of such women of chastity. (Telugu poem)

such service. No one brought a single tear from the eyes of those wedded to them. Husband and wife had the feeling that each was half the body of the other and so, they got on as one, desiring each other's best interests and devoted to their realisation. In Rama's time, no one attempted to have recourse to falsehood under any circumstance. Boys and girls honoured the commands and directions of parents and preceptors. Everyone was as happy as the Lord of Gods in Heaven, Indra. Grain and riches were as plentiful in every home as in the place of the God of Wealth, Kubera. The Chakora birds were glad as if they were looking on at the Moon in autumn, *Sarathkala*.

Women watched Rama from behind the doors of their enclosed apartments and were delighted. Bharatha, Lakshmana and Satrugna were thrilled continuously in mind, filling their eyes with the Divine Charm of Sri Rama. The entire world was filled with full splendour while it was being ruled by Rama. There was no trace or mention of "sin." The monks and ascetics wandered about fearless in the wildest woods. The mutual affection between the King and his subjects grew more and more from day to day. The earth shone with Love and Light. The forests were shimmering in perpetual green. Birds and beasts had lost their instinctive hatred for one another. Not even an iota of hatred was

Such great women took birth in the land of Bharat. Therefore, every day in Bharat is a festival and an occasion for celebration. You know, when a man's wife dies he immediately makes efforts to marry again. But the women of Bharat are not like that. Bharat is befittingly called the teacher of the world. In this sacred land, Lord Narayana incarnated and redeemed the life of the people by showing them His divine play and divine glory. (*SSS Vol. 40 p.112-113*)

to be found anywhere, nor was there even a whisper indicating its existence. All were bound by the thickest of comradeships. Every individual evinced great enthusiasm in describing the excellences and achievements of Rama. (*RKRV Part II p.296-303*)

The ministers strictly adhered to Truth and Righteousness. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna were assigned the duty of enforcing Shree Rama's orders in all parts of the Kingdom. They kept a close watch over what was happening in every nook and corner of the realm, how far the people were adhering to truth and righteousness and how they were getting on in daily life. For this purpose a large body of officials were employed to go round the country. These messengers gathered all information everyday about the difficulties experienced by the people and their conduct. This system prevailed as long as Rama reigned over the Kingdom. (*SSS Vol. 29 p.149-150*)

One day, Rama was on his throne, in the Audience Hall, along with his brothers. A Brahmin entered the Hall in great distress. He spoke many harsh words and pleaded angrily for redress. "Alas," he cried, "the fame of the Solar Dynasty has ended today. I remember the glory of the great kings of the past, Sibi, Raghu, Dilipa, Sagara; for, such iniquities would not have happened when those Kings were ruling. Will a son ever die during the lifetime of the father? Can such a disaster happen if the ruler is good? But this day, I saw this thing happen." Rama, who is omnipresent, was able to know what had taken place. He was affected by the words spoken by the Brahmin. He probed within himself the reason for the death and assured his mind that

it had not occurred as a result of any administrative fault. He was aware that it was the consequence of evil thoughts, and so he set about prescribing limits and regulations which would prevent such thoughts from arising in people's minds. Rama paid great attention even to such small matters and designed measures to prevent their recurrence. He laid aside all concern about himself and sought to realise the goal he had set before himself, viz., the happiness of his people. He cared for his subjects as if they were as dear to him as his own body. The people too valued the affection and happiness of the King. He was to them as dear as his heart. The Ruler never worked against the wishes of the people. They, too, did not overstep even by a hair's breadth the orders given by Rama. The *Ramarajya* of those days was resplendent thus for many years. Rama was Narayana Himself. So, his reign rebounded to the glory of the earth and its history. For, Truth and Righteousness are the real guardians of mankind. (*RKRV Part II p.303-304*)

EXILE FOR SITA:

Messengers bring communication about a washerman admonishing his wife:

It was the practice for messengers from the Court to travel about through cities and villages, all over the empire, and report personally to the Ruler the information they had gathered during their secret wanderings. Rama listened to these communications, as his predecessors used to do. One day, a messenger who had come on this duty approached Rama with a hesitation that was

strange. He prostrated before him, and rising up, stood mute and trembling on one side. Soon, he recovered confidence and courage and addressed Rama thus: “Maharaja! Listen to my words! Pardon me for bringing these words to you. A washerman was quarrelling with his wife. He was heard admonishing her. “Fie on you,” he shouted. “Do you take me to be Rama? Get out of my house. How can I accept you? You were living long in another person’s house. Get out of here!” These words struck the heart of Rama like an arrow.

Sita departs to Vaikuntha in her subtle body:

He could not sleep that night. Towards midnight, he sat up on his bed and thought within himself. “It is now one full Yuga since I started ruling this land. I have to continue for a few years more.” Then, sunk in a sad reverie, that Ocean of Compassion thought, “Alas! I have to forsake Sita. I have to uphold the Vedic Path.” He went near Sita and spoke to her pleasantly. He had a smile on his face when he told her, “Janaki! You have not asked any boon from me so far, yet, I shall grant you a boon. Go to your holy Home.” That very moment, Sita fell at the Feet of Rama and went to Vaikuntha (Heaven) in her subtle body. No being, anywhere, nothing, was aware of this fact. Sita in her gross physical frame only was standing before Rama on Earth.

Maya Sita leaves to spend her days in Hermitages:

Rama asked the Earth-Sita (Maya Sita) “Pray for a boon” and Sita replied, “Lord! I have a desire to spend some happy days in the hermitages of *Munis* (ascetics).” Rama said, “Be it so” and told her, “Start on your journey tomorrow morning.” She collected and packed many articles of clothing and utensils for

the daughters and wives of ascetics of the hermitages. Rama woke up early. Servitors and favour-seekers were singing praises of his virtues and excellences. His lotus-like face bloomed. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna paid homage to him prostrating at his feet. But Rama did not converse with his brothers. He kept silent. His face was flushed with emotion. His body showed signs of tension. Every limb was shivering with excitement. The three brothers were lost in fear and anxiety, not knowing the reason for his grief. They shuddered at the sight of Rama's sadness. They could not fathom the feelings that agitated him.

Rama asks his brothers to leave Sita in the forest:

At last, Rama found words to express his wish. Between sighs, he said, "Brothers! Don't say no. Take Sita into the forest, leave her there and return." On hearing this, they were stunned. They were caught in the flames of despair. Their hearts were scorched. They doubted whether Rama was serious or was only joking. Satrughna sobbed aloud. Lakshmana and Bharatha stood motionless, tears streaming from their eyes. They were speechless. Their lips were quivering. Their hands were shivering. At last, with folded hands, Satrughna prayed thus: "Your words have pierced our hearts. Janaki is *Lokamata*, the Mother of all beings. You live in the hearts of all living beings. You are the Embodiment of Sat-chit-ananda. For what reason has Sita to be discarded now? She is eternally pure, in thought, word and deed, isn't she? Oh, Destroyer of the Rakshasa Race! She is now pregnant and, at this time, in this condition, is it right to forsake her?" Satrughna could not say more. The sorrow surging within him flowed in tears and loud wails.

Rama said, “Brothers, Listen! If you disregard my word, breath cannot survive in this body. May it be well with you. Brothers, as I have ordered, take Janaki into the forest this very morning.” He continued sitting with his head bent, silent, as if he was sad at the turn of events.

Bharatha could not restrain his feelings, when he heard the words, so shocking to the ear. He said, “Lord! I am very low in intelligence. Yet, please give heed to my prayer. Our Solar Dynasty has earned fame and renown in the world. Our father, Dasaratha, your mother Kausalya and you yourself—Master of the Three Worlds—have won great fame. Your glory is sung by the Vedas and by the thousand-tongued Sessa. Janaki is the repository of all that is beneficent. Her name will destroy all traces of inauspiciousness. It will confer all things beneficent. She is the soul of holiness. By her blessings, women can attain the supreme Goal. How can this Janaki live separate from you and exist happily in the forest? Can she live even for a moment apart from you? How can a fish live without water? She is the embodiment of Wisdom and the personification of all the virtues. She cannot lead a solitary life.”

Rama listened to his words calmly and then replied thus: “Oh Bharatha! You have given utterance to words that are consonant with ordinary ideas of morality. But the Ruler has to foster Dharma and welfare according to the dictates of morality. In carrying out his duties of guarding and guiding his people, he should not cause any crisis or revolution. He has to protect them with great affection.” Then he disclosed the information that the messenger had gathered and communicated to him. He said:

“Brothers, our dynasty has suffered great infamy. Its name has been tarnished. This dynasty had a series of Kings and Emperors each one more famous than the others. Their might and majesty are known all over the world. There is none who won greater renown than they. They were ready to give up their lives, but they never acted contrary to their plighted word. Our dynasty has no taint attached to it. And when there was a likelihood of its being tainted, he who hesitated to give up his life was certainly vile. Understand this well.”

At this, the brothers cried, “Lord! Janaki surely has no trace of taint. She has come out of the blazing fire. Gods or saints will not impute even in dreams the slightest fault in her. Not knowing this, if anyone calls her a sinner, he will suffer the torture of hell for billions and billions of years.” Bharatha could not control his resentment at the very mention of this possibility. At this, Rama became visibly angry and his eyes reddened. Lakshmana noticed it, and unable to withstand it, he hid himself behind Bharatha.

But Rama addressed Lakshmana himself directly, “Lakshmana!” he began, “Grasp the implications of what the people are saying. Give up the foolish pose of sadness. If you disobey my command and begin arguing with me, you will have to rue it until death. Take Janaki in a chariot and leave her to herself in a deserted place with no human habitation on the bank of the Ganga and then return.”

Lakshmana¹⁷² heard the command of the Lord... Stocking the chariot with provisions and clothing, he made Janaki sit in it and then, drove off. They reached the bank of the Ganga. *Leaving Sita there*, Lakshmana... remembering his duty to follow the commands of Rama, made his heart as hard as rock and drove fast until he reached the City. (*RKR Part II p.305-311*)

Lakshmana reached the City, with his eyes swollen with sorrow, and heart heavy with grief. He related the sad tale to the three mothers. They broke into inconsolable sorrow and sobbed at the calamity that had overtaken Sita.

Rama heard the wailing and weeping. He retreated into the shrine with Lakshmana as his sole companion and spent the day away from the sight of others. Later, he went to the women's apartments, and consoling the Queens, he counselled them along the path of Jnana. He also explained to the people that the true Ruler considers his people alone as his kith and kin, and treats them alone as his friends. This, he said, is the code of Rama. He said that the Ruler should give up his own kith and kin when need arises, since his real kith and kin are the subjects over which he is placed.

The Three Mothers pass away at the separation from Sita:

The three mothers were so affected by separation from Sita that they became weaker and weaker with every passing day. It resulted in their death too, finally. They manifested through Yoga the fire latent in them and allowed the fire to reduce their

¹⁷² See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **EXILE FOR SITA**

bodies into ashes. Thus they attained the Highest State of Bliss. The brothers grieved over the loss and performed the funeral rites as laid down in the scriptures. They gave away the sixteen great charities as prescribed therein. Thereafter, the four brothers—Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna engaged themselves in the administrative problems and assignments set apart for them, in conformity with the wishes of the people and to their full satisfaction. (*RKR V Part II p.313-314*)

ASWAMEDHA SACRIFICE

Meanwhile, Rama announced that he desired to celebrate the Aswamedha Yaga¹⁷³, (the Horse-Sacrifice) mentioned in the Vedas since the Yaga would ensure the destruction of all varieties of grief. He sent information to Angada and others. He proceeded to the residence of the Royal Preceptor accompanied by his brothers and the ministers of the realm. They fell at the feet of the Guru, and the Guru also received them with respect. He inquired about their health and the welfare of the empire, in sweet soft words. He gave them valuable counsel, quoting stories from the Puranas and incidents from the epics.

Then, Rama addressed him thus: “Master! I have one wish in my mind. You have to help me realise it.” Then, he fell at the feet of the Guru. Vashishta, the Guru, asked him what that wish was, and Rama replied, “I have decided on a Yaga. The people of Ayodhya will be happy, filled with joy when it takes place. What I desire to perform is the Aswamedha Yaga. The City can be rendered calm if it is done. The people also wish that it should be

¹⁷³ See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **ASWAMEDHA YAGA**

performed. Bharatha hesitated to inform you of this, since he is afraid of your reaction. So, I felt I must myself approach you when you can meet us and we can communicate to you this wish. We shall abide by your decision and gladly act accordingly.”

Vashishta listened to these words uttered with reverence and humility. He rejoiced at the idea. “Rama! Your wish shall be fulfilled. Bharatha! Rise and busy yourself with the preparations for the Yaga,” he said. This made the brothers and the ministers very happy. They extolled the Preceptor and fell at his feet. Many Brahmins well versed in the lore about Yagas followed Bharatha into the City and Palace.

Sumantra invited leading citizens and called the officials and asked them to decorate the royal roads inside the City as well as the bazaars and shopping centres. He wanted them to erect Mantaps in many places. No sooner said than done. They executed the orders very quickly and the City was made ready for the big event. The City was excited and enthused into joyful activity. The elders of the City and officers reported to Rama that, as he had directed, information had been sent to the chiefs among sages and ascetics, and Vashishta had also been informed of what was being done.

Meanwhile, Vashishta arrived in the presence of Rama, accompanied by his disciples, ten thousand in number. He said, “Ramachandra! Listen to my words: The Vedas, Sastras, the Puranas all of them without exception proclaim that a Yaga, performed without the duly wedded wife by the side of the celebrant, will be barren of results. Great sages also declare the

same. Therefore, arrange to bring Janaki back. She is very necessary during the Yaga.” Rama was surprised at these words spoken by the Chief among Sages. He kept silent, without explaining the truth or untruth of that belief. He said, “Chief among Sages! You have to carry out my wish without causing breach of my vow, and without bringing down the reputation of my dynasty. If Janaki is brought back, the reputation is bound to suffer. And I shall not marry to have a wife for the yaga.”

At this, Vashishta consulted many famed Sages for a solution. They all held fast to the rule that Janaki must be brought. They said, it was an unavoidable prerequisite. But Rama, who was himself the master of all codes of morality, the embodiment of all the forms of God, and the essence of all the Sastras, thought it over for a while and announced that a golden idol set with gems be made of Sita and kept in place of Sita. He said that all the Sastras support this view and that there can be no objection to this procedure on any score. The ascetics, sages and scholars versed in all fields of knowledge could not contradict this opinion. They were all surprised at the validity of the solution offered. They admired his omniscience and acknowledged that he was himself the core of all codes.

The golden Sita was got ready in one single day. It was made more charming and realistic through jewels and garments. Everyone who saw it mistook it for the live Sita. It was so realistic. If Sita had seen it, she too would have been struck with wonder. Many believed that Sita had returned, when they saw the idol. They praised the makers with a thousand tongues. Rama sat on the Lion throne over a tiger skin spread over it. The Golden

Sita was placed by his side, where the wife had to take her position. The assembly was led to believe that Sita herself was there. All present prostrated in gratitude and joy.

Vashishta addressed the courtiers and asked them to extend hospitality to the assembled guests according to the rules in practice. “Give everyone what he wishes for and make everyone happy and contented.” They seated them in proper lines and in appropriate places, with the help of Bharatha who supervised the arrangements. Each one of them congratulated himself on the grandeur of the reception accorded to him and praised the organisers for the care and consideration they showed.

The Yaga Hall was guarded on the outside by 500 warriors and inside the Hall by 500 masters of the Vedas. The Yaga began on the second day of the bright half of the *Magha* month, after Rama had initiated himself with the necessary rites. Vashishta directed that the Horse, chosen for the Yaga, be brought so that it might be examined by experts, whether it had the auspicious marks prescribed.

When the cavalcade entered the Hall, Viswamitra instructed Rama to worship the sacred sacrificial Horse, which was to be sent out on its mission of conquest. He gave away the sixteen articles in charity. He performed the ritual purificatory bath. Then, he tied on its brow the gold plate with the inscriptional message to all rulers of the land.

This was the writing it carried: “In the City of Ayodhya, there is a Hero. He is the destroyer of enemies. Even the Lord of Gods

trembles at the sight of him. This horse is his sacrificial animal. The strong may lay hold of it; or, they have to pay him tax and tribute; or if you cannot do either, flee into the jungles.” Rama inscribed thus on that gold plate and tied it on the brow of that horse. (*RKRV Part II p.314-321*)

Rama performed a hundred *Aswamedha Yagas* (horse sacrifices) and many other sacrifices. Together with these sacrifices Rama propagated among the people the qualities of truth and right conduct. (*SSS Vol.29 p.150*)

ENDING THE PLAY

Rama advises his sons on methods of administration

Calling the sons to his side, Rama advised them about the means and methods of administration of the empire. Then he formally invested them with the insignia of imperium. He placed the son of Bharatha, Thaksha, over the Southern Kingdom. His second son, Pushkara, was given the Pushkara Kingdom. They destroyed the remnants of Rakshasas that were there and established themselves in those kingdoms. The sons of Lakshmana, Chitrakethu and Chitrangada, were mighty warriors, heroic fighters, veterans of wars. They were deputed to the Western Region and destroying the Rakshasas there, they ruled over that area. Rama invested those two with regal authority over Cities with different names which became their capital cities. He also gave all the sons valuable advice on political and administrative matters. Kusa was installed in Ayodhya and so Lava was

awarded the Northern Region, the treasure chest of riches. The City of Lavapura (modern Lahore) was fixed as his capital City. Rama gave away cows, lands, clothes and money to the fullest to each. The news that Rama was contemplating return to his own place came to be known by the people of Ayodhya. They came in immense numbers to his presence and prayed that their requests be listened to. Their request was that they too be taken by him to his divine Home. The Lord said that it was a right request and he agreed to do so. He was glad at their affection and the devotion and dedication they had towards their Lord. Lakshmana led them all.

The Kishkindha Kingdom was allotted to Angada, Sugriva, Jambavantha, Vibhishana, Nala, Nila and other individuals embodying parts of Divinity, and billions of Vanaras come to fulfil the Divine Mission, came to the Presence of Rama at that time. Rama accosted them and said, “Vibhishana! You have to rule over Lanka. You will attain my Presence in the end.” He blessed him thus. Then he turned to Jambavan, and told him, “Jambavan, be on the earth till the end of the Dwapara age. Then, incarnated as Krishna, a fight with you will happen to me. You will then recognise me as now.” He blessed him in that manner.

End of Divine Avatar:

Then he proceeded to the bank of the Sarayu River. Bharatha walked on the right side of Rama and Satrughna on his left. Behind him walked the ministers and the people of the City. As they entered the waters, Bharatha merged in the Lord. Satrughna touched the water and shone in the Lotus and merged in the

Lord. The Lord uttered a Blessing that all who come to the Holy Land of Ayodhya and all who bathe in the sacred Sarayu can reach Him. (*RKRV Part II p.335-336*)

INTERPRETATIONS:

Rama had to act by public opinion also. Since some people may raise doubts about the chastity of Sita, He had to make Sita undergo the ordeal by fire. Sita was unhurt by the fire god who said to Rama, “Sita is pure and faultless”.

Rama acted justly at every step. We have discussed about it earlier. *Ramayana* was a drama in which Sri Rama was the *sutradhari* (director). He was also a *patradhari* (actor). The people also had their parts to play in the drama. Rama performed his role excellently. *Ramayana* has survived the test of time. It has survived even though thousands of years have passed. Sri Rama was dear to everybody. He was an ideal that mankind needs to emulate. (*SSB 2002 p.108*)

Rama is described as tender than the petal of a rose, but, at the same time, harder than diamond. He pined for Sita with extreme tenderness; he sent Sita to the forest as an exile, with a hardness of heart that shocked even Lakshmana. The nature of every Avatara is such. (*SSS Vol.5 p.73-74*)

IDEAL RULER

Rama has no equals as a ruler

The *Ramayana* exemplifies the amity and harmony which should prevail among the members of a family. It extols the glory of ideal brotherhood, noble friendship and the greatness of love and affection. Rama was an ideal ruler who ruled his people with due regard to their likes and dislikes, having their welfare as his primary concern. As a ruler Rama has no equals. He was a veritable mine of strength, virtue and love. Rama was an ideal to be emulated and derive happiness by practising the ideal of Sri Rama. (*SSS Vol.25 p.180-181*)

Rama stands out as an ideal ruler intensely responsive to the wishes of the people. Today persons who are incompetent and unworthy are aspiring for positions of power. This is utterly wrong. This is the reason for the nation finding itself in the doldrums today. The disastrous decline of Bharat is entirely due to the incompetence of those in power. Men of character, who are totally free from self-interest, should occupy the seats of power. Rama demonstrated the ideal relations that should exist between the ruler and the ruled¹⁷⁴. Rama was ever active in fulfilling the wishes and responding to the opinions of the people. Highly sensitive even to the remarks of a petty washerman, Rama sent away Sita to the forest out of a feeling that washerman's comment might be an indication of the unspoken feelings of many others among his subjects. (*SSS Vol.24 p.60*)

Sita was in an advanced family-way. At that time Rama was the ruler and in Rama Rajya, people's words were given great importance by the ruler. There is a conflict here between one's duty as a husband and one's duty as a king. When Rama contemplated and discussed within himself, "Is my duty a husband more important or my duty as a king more important?" He came to the conclusion that His duty as a king was more important. The duty as a husband is an individual's duty. The duty as a king is something which has to do with the community as a whole. After coming to the decision that His duty as a king was more important, He decided to send Sita to the forest. Although the people thought that this was a harsh action, Rama never deviated from the path of *dharma* even under the most trying circumstances. (*SSB 1977 p.31*)

AYODHYA IN RAMA'S REIGN-

The City and environs shone with incomparably attractive wells, lakes and tanks. Oh the pure waters! Oh the beautiful landing places! Their sublime charm drew admiration from sages and seers. They blamed themselves for being so attracted. The lakes and tanks had lotuses of many colours blossoming on their surface. Many birds were singing on the trees growing thick on their banks. Parrots, peacocks, and others clustered on the branches

¹⁷⁴ Under Section *Rama*, See Chapter, Swayamvara- *Winning Sita - Prakriti Marries Paramatma - Promise to be made by bridegroom - If I find that she displeases My subjects, I will renounce her.*"

and made merry. The City was more splendid than even Heaven and people were wonder struck at its uniqueness. (*RKRV Part II p.298*)

BENIGN REIGN OF RAMA

The rein of Rama was marked by concern for justice and morality. (*SSS Vol.24 p.64*)

Lord Rama devoted Himself to the task of spreading of Truth and Righteousness. In His reign, the enlightened or the unenlightened, were steadfast in their adherence to Truth and Righteousness. As was the King, so were the subjects (*yatha raja thatha praja*). As was the King, so were the ministers; as were the ministers, so were the administrators, as were administrators; so were the people. The three brothers Bharatha, Lakshmana and Shatrughna exercised great care and attention in the practice of Dharma throughout the kingdom. Reports regularly reached the King about the people who transgressed Dharma. The reign of Rama was called *Rama Raajya*, the reign of Righteousness and Truth. (*SSB 1996 p.101*)

Rama ruled His kingdom in peace recognising that the people's happiness is His happiness and recognising that people's prosperity is primary concern of the king. Rama never thought that He was the king and the people are under the king. Rama never had any jealousy or ego in His mind. He regarded Himself as a driver who had to lead the people. Rama, by His own conduct, would make people go along the right path and demonstrate to them the ideal path. All that He had said or done was only for giving happiness to the people. For setting an example to the people and protecting truth, Rama sent His own wife to the forest. If it was for sticking to truth and dharma, to Rama it did not matter whether the person involved was His wife He married or the son who was born to Him. (*SSB 1977 p.91*)

At the outset, understand what Rama Raajya is? It is the reign of morality, of truth and virtues. Rama Raajya means that which engenders happiness (*Ramayathi*). There should be no ill will towards anybody. No one should be harmed. That is *Rama Raajya*. When such feelings arise among the people *Rama Raajya* will come into existence of its own accord. (*SSS Vol.28 p.95*)

In Rama's reign, all married women were *Sumangalis* (who husbands were alive). Widowhood was unknown. It is natural for parents to die before their children. But it is unnatural for children to die earlier than their parents. In *Rama-Rajya* there was not a single case of premature death. Death of young people was not known. There were none suffering from disease. There was no sign of poverty. The rains came in the right seasons. The harvests were bountiful. There was no shortage of food. Unrest was unknown. All people were happy and peaceful.

Comparing those days with the present times, we realise what apathetic plight is ours. Bharat will enjoy *Rama-Rajya* only when it has rulers like Rama, ministers like Sumantra, saintly advisers like Vashishta and Vamadeva and brothers like Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna. During Rama's reign there was no conflict anywhere. People did not indulge in mutual recrimination. Everyone in the Kingdom was grateful for any act of help and was eager to repay the act of kindness. (*SSS Vol.29 p.150-151*)

The Value of Gratitude

The people in the Kingdom of Rama were always full of gratitude and thankfulness. Any good turn done to them never went unacknowledged. Even Rama, on the day of coronation, expressed His deep gratitude to all those who rendered help to Him. First and foremost, Rama expressed his gratitude to the great Vanara hero Hanuman, who traced whereabouts of Sita and rendered invaluable help. Secondly, Rama expressed His deep debt of gratitude to the bird Jatayu, who gave up his life while trying to rescue Sita. Thirdly, Rama thanked the Vanara King Sugriva, who had placed his army and himself at the service of Rama during the search for Sita and in the battle against Ravana. Next, Rama thanked Vibhishana, who had helped Rama in wading through the webs of illusions created by the demons, and who had done great service to Rama. The Vanaras belonged to another kingdom. They had nothing in common with either Rama or Sita. Yet, they willingly sacrificed their lives in the battle. To these Vanaras, Rama did not fail in expressing His gratitude. In this way, Rama extended His heartfelt acknowledgement to each and every one who had helped Him in the battle.

Herein lies an important lesson that the Ramayana teaches. One must be grateful throughout life to one's benefactor. He alone is qualified to be called a man, who extends this kind of thankfulness. An ungrateful person is a demon. Demons and humans do not differ in physical forms. They are categorized based upon their behaviour. Demons are those who possess evil feelings and do bad actions. Those perverted people who disregard the kind deed done to them and indulge in only harming others are demons. Those foolish ones who consider falsehood to their very life breath have been called as demons. In the world today, man finds untruth to be very dear to him. He is behaving most unrighteously. Yet, our Vedas have declared: "*Sathyam Vada Dharmam Chara*". Hey call us to speak the Truth and practise Righteousness. But today, the words Truth and Righteousness hardly feature in daily conversation. (SSB 1996 p.101-102)

Significance of Truth and Righteousness

The Ramayana brought home to one and all this significance of Truth and Righteousness. The glorious story of Rama spread the name and fame of Bharat to all countries. In the *Rama-Raajya* (reign of Rama) the two words, Sathya and Dharma, (Truth and Righteousness) reverberated everywhere in the Kingdom. Dharma prevailed everywhere and young and old, men and women, scholars and illiterates, one and all adhered to these two principles.

As is the ruler, so are the ministers. As are the ministers, so are the administrators. As are the administrators, so are the common people. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna were assigned the duty of enforcing Shree Rama's orders in all parts of the Kingdom. They kept a close watch over what was happening in every nook and corner of the realm, how far the people were adhering to truth and righteousness and how they were getting on in daily life. For this purpose a large body of officials were employed to go round the country. These messengers gathered all information everyday about the difficulties experienced by the people and their conduct. This system prevailed as long as Rama reigned over the Kingdom. (SSS Vol.29 p.149-150)

Everyone's heart should be converted into a temple for Rama. The land of Bharat should be cherished as the *Ramarajya* (Kingdom of Rama). What does *Rama Raajya* mean? It does not refer to any particular state. Unity in thought,

word and deed constitutes *Ramarajya*. Today, there is no unity, no purity, no awareness of Divinity. People are wallowing in the mire of “Community”. This is not the primary duty of man. When there is discord between thought, word and deed, humanness is undermined. Unity has to be promoted to foster humanness. (*SSS Vol.25 p.392-393*)

Rama transformed the world into a realm of righteousness, through his varied activities and example. During the great Horse Sacrifice that He performed, all sages and scholars who had assembled, honoured Him as the as a upholder of tradition and culture. His compassion and softness of heart are beyond description; no words can convey their depth and extent. He placed the dying eagle – Jatayu – a bird, which no one will ordinarily honour – on His lap he wiped with His own flowing hair the dust that had enveloped it when it breathed its last, he performed the obsequies, even as a son does when his father dies!

Rama was the full manifestation of Righteousness or Dharma. The sages extolled him, saying that Dharma Itself had taken that human form! There is no need to dilate and speak of a thousand details. For all householders, Rama is the Ideal. His advent was for restoring spiritual values and saving the world from moral disaster. (*Bhagavata Vahini Chapter 33 p.221-222*)

Sathyam Vada – Dharmam Chara

From ancient times, the rulers in Bharat never resorted to violence or unrighteous means to ascend the throne. They were dedicated to the practice of *Dharma*. “*Sathyam Vada Dharmam Chara*” (Speak the truth, follow righteousness). These were the two basic tenets of the ancient Bharatiyas. They esteemed them as their two eyes. Today the rule has been reversed - *Sathyam Vada* (Kill truth) and *Dharmam Chara* (imprison Righteousness) is the prevailing moral code. It is because of these tendencies, Bharat today is a prey to disaster.

Every individual should try to practise and protect truth and righteousness. This is the bounden duty of every citizen of Bharat, This is to service they have to do to the nation. The nation will not be protected by an army or by

modern weapons. If the people safeguard truth and righteousness, the latter will protect the nation and the world. (SSS Vol. 27 p.273-274)

Three Qualities for establishing Rama Rajya:

When we speak of establishing *Rama Raajya*, let not Bharatiyas imagine that it is relevant only to Bharat. The whole world needs the advent of *Rama Raajya*. What this means is that the rulers should have three qualities. They are: *Sathpravarthana* (righteous conduct), *Sadhaalochana* (good counsel), *Sadhguna* (good qualities). There should be a combination of all the three. Today good counsel is a rarity. As for good qualities, the less said the better. High souled persons, who represent harmony in thought, word and deed, should fill the seats of power. There should be no place for the wicked who think one thing, speak another thing and act in a different way.

Devotees should fill their minds with sacred thoughts. At least from now on, banish all bad thoughts, Turn your minds towards God. At least install *Rama Raajya* in your hearts. When this happens, the world will experience *Rama Raajya*.

Fill your minds with the ideals of Sri Rama and try to put them into practice as much as possible. This will cost you nothing. You do not have to perform any *asanas* or go to the forest for practice. Staying in your homes, attending to your duties, purify your hearts. (SSS Vol. 28 p.97-98)

Know, Oh man, Grama Seva is Rama Seva!
When love overflows it is Rama Rajya
There is no progress without Love
Without Service there is no hope for man.
(SSS Vol. 23 p.134)

Uphold the dignity and honour of Bharat Mata (Mother India):

Sage Vashishta shed tears of joy, listening to the words of Lord Rama. He said, “Rama, you are forced to live in the forest for no fault of yours. But, you have forgotten the injustice done to you. You are seeing only the good of others. We are really moved by your magnanimity. However, we request you

to establish Ramarajya (kingdom of Rama) in Ayodhya and give joy to all.” Rama smilingly replied, “now it Bharat-Rajya, not Ramarajya. Hence forth, it shall be called Bharatdesha (the land of Bharatha).

It is because of such noble men of sacrifice that Bharat has progressed and attained exalted position. No other country can match Bharat in terms of dignity, honour and reputation. People of ancient Bharat led a life of sacrifice for the welfare of the country. There is no greater sacrifice than sacrificing for one's own nation. Greatness does not lie in performing acts of charity by spending crores of rupees. Your thoughts and deeds should be suffused with love. You should make efforts to alleviate the suffering of your fellowmen. Love all as you love yourself. This is your Dharma.

Dharma does not mean performing acts of charity alone. You should fill your heart with righteous feelings and give up selfishness and greed. Always keep the welfare of society in mind. Do not consider your fellowmen as 'others'. Share your love with all. Live in amity and develop unity. Only through love can you win the hearts of others and transform them. Hence, the need of the hour is to cultivate love and share it with others. Develop love for God and compassion towards those less fortunate than you. This is the essence of education. Serve your parents and make them happy. What is the use of sharing your love with others when you are not concerned about the suffering of your mother at home? Your foremost duty is to love your parents and serve them. Then you can share your love with others. This was the teaching of Lord Rama to Bharatha. He told him, "Bharatha, there is no point in filling the treasury with money. You will earn a good name and win the heart of your subjects only when you utilise the money for the welfare of people."

Rama exhorted Bharatha to give up hatred towards his mother and love her wholeheartedly. He told him that it was all destined to happen and she was not to be blamed. Since Rama did not relent his resolve not to return to Ayodhya. Bharatha prayed to him to give at least his *padukas* (sandals) to be enthroned to represent him.

Students! Never belittle others. Develop broadmindedness and treat everyone with respect. Consider others as your own brothers. If a hungry person comes

to you, welcome him with open arms and give him a sumptuous meal. Never consider someone a beggar or a poor person. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, one cannot be a beggar or a poor person. All are rich. When you consider someone a beggar, it is only the defect in your feeling that is reflected outside.

The four brothers and their wives always had a common mind. That is why the fame of *Ramarajya* spread far and wide. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, you should live like a true *Bharatiya*. Your heart should be filled with sweetness. Do not avoid those who need your help; on the contrary, you should always wait for an opportunity to serve. This Thyaga bhava (spirit of sacrifice) can alone confer on you true *bhoga* (happiness). (*Dasara Discourses 2004 p 73-78*)

Rama lived Dharma and taught Dharma through his every act. He established Dharma by practice and precept. He fostered and guarded good men (*Sadhus*). He removed the sufferings of the godly. He drew them near himself. Their lives were fulfilled through his grace. He recognised no distinctions of high and low. He was a master of all the Sastras. He knew the meaning of all the Vedas.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

6.5 THE RAMA PRINCIPLE (RAMA THATHWA) - RAMA AVATARA - EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE

Avatars are based on different aspects of the Divine

In the world, God has descended as human incarnation in five different forms. These forms are based on the different aspects of the Divine. One is *Nityaavatar*. Second is *Viseshaavatar*. Third, *Aveshaavatar*. Fourth, *Leelaavatar*, Fifth, *Poornaavatar*. *Leelaavatar* is also known as *Amsaavatar*. *Nityaavatara*, *Viseshaavatar* and *Aveshaavatar* have only five to nine *kalaas* (aspects) of the Lord. Only in the *Poornaavatar* are all the sixteen aspects of the Divine present.

The ancients regarded only the *Poornaavatars* as the full manifestation of God. In this context, every human being must be deemed as *Avatar* as he has some aspect of the Divine in him. It is because he has descended from the Divine, he is entitled to be called an *Avatar*. Except as *Avatar*, God does not give a separate vision of the Divine to man in any other form. (*SSS Vol.21 p.266*)

Man should possess Divine Consciousness

Man's life is based upon his qualities and character. A true man is one who acts according to his *Atma-Dharma* (the integrity of the Spirit) and not according to the impulses of his senses. *Atma-Dharma* is the true *Dharma* of man. Acting *according* to the dictates of the senses is the code of the animals. Man should elevate from the animal to the Overlord of the animal nature (Pasupathi or Siva). What man should have is *Iswara-bhava* (the Divine Consciousness) and not the *Prakriti-bhava* (instinctive nature).

It should also be recognised that all Nature is an embodiment of the Divine. Creation is the primary symbol of the Divine Consciousness. It is called *Prakriti* (Nature). Every man who is a product of Nature should have the consciousness of his divinity and proclaim the Divine basis of creation. Human existence is supremely sacred. It is precious, divine and should be lived befittingly. The divinity in man, who is part of creation, is not something distinct. To demonstrate the inherent divinity of man, *Avatars* (Divine incarnations) appear from time to time.

God does not exist as something apart. All are embodiments of the Divine. "*Iswara sarvabhoothaanaam*", "*Isaavaasyam idam sarvam*" "*Vaasudevassarvam*" (The Divine dwells in all beings, All this is dwelt in by the Lord, Everything is Divine). Men are forgetting these profound, sacred declarations and are wasting their lives in the pursuit of petty mundane pleasures. (*SSS Vol.24 p.305-306*)

All Avatars Are Embodiments of Pure Consciousness:

*The creation emerges from truth and merges into truth,
Is there a place in the cosmos where truth does not
exist?*

Visualise this pure and unsullied truth. (Telugu poem)

One has to realise what is meant by *Suddha Satwa* (pure consciousness). You have witnessed the creation of *Hiranyagarbha Lingas* several times by Me. That *Hiranyagarbha Linga* is a symbol of pure consciousness. It is omnipresent. (Swami created a *Hiranyagarbha Linga* and showed it to all present.) Look, this is verily *Suddha Satwa* (pure consciousness). There is no human being in this world, who is free from desires. Every human being has some desire or the other. There is no place in this universe where this pure consciousness is not present. It is therefore a mistake to limit that omnipresent pure consciousness to a particular form. All are embodiments of pure consciousness. It is present in all human beings in a miniscule form like an atom. The pure consciousness assumes different forms in different ages as *avatars*. It manifested as Narasimha, Vamana, etc., in the *Krita Yuga*. The same pure consciousness assumed the form of Sri Rama in *Treta Yuga* and Sri Krishna in *Dwapara yuga*. Sri Rama was accompanied by Sita in *Treta Yuga*, who led the life of an ideal wife and set an example to mankind in chastity. Sita, in spite of the great difficulties she encountered while living in exile and spending ten long months in captivity in Lanka never lost her poise. She steadfastly held on to *Ramanama* with single-minded devotion. She never wavered even for a moment. She gave up

food and sleep totally and constantly contemplated on *Ramanama*. She could not visualise any other form except that of Sri Rama, who was *Ekatma sarva bhutantaratma* (one *atma* that dwells in all beings). Even in birds and beasts, she was seeing only the form of Sri Rama. That one *atmic* principle is referred to as *Hiranyagarbha*, which is pure gold. Pure gold is always referred to as 24 carat gold.

God is always said to manifest 16 facets. Hence, He is referred to as *Purna Tatwa* (Embodiment of fullness).

*Poornamadah poornamidam,
Poornat poornamudachyate,
Poornasyapoornamadaya,
Poornamevavashishyate.*

(That is full, this is full. When the full is taken out of the full, what remains is again the full.)

(Sanskrit shloka) – (*SSS Vol.40 p.183*)

The manifestation of Divine Powers

The attributes and powers of the Divine remain unaltered in their pristine amplitude. The Divine manifests His powers according to the needs, the circumstances and the conditions prevailing at a particular time or place. (*SSS Vol.24 p.58*)

The *Avatar* does not forgo any of His supreme powers merely because He lives and moves among human beings as a man. Narrow-minded persons view these things differently. This phenomenon could be noticed in several instances in the case of

the *Rama-Avatar*. In the Ramayana, Rama is depicted as one who, like other ordinary human beings, experienced the pangs of separation from Sita. For what reason did Rama exhibit such feelings? Rama behaved in this manner to serve as an example to the common people how individuals should behave in similar circumstances. (*SSS Vol.24 p.58-59*)

Even before the advent of the Avatar, the stage is set to the minutest detail; Kaikeyi is ready with her two indefinite boons. Dasaratha is ready with the curse of the ascetic on his head, entailing upon him a death due to anguish at the separation of his son; the Vanaras are ready to help the divine purpose. Sita is ready risen from the earth, to provide the cause for the downfall of Evil. Just as a garland is made of flowers gathered from many plants, flowers of many hues and fragrances, so too the Garland of the divine story is made up of a variety of incidents, a boon, a blessing, a curse to provide the wonderful plot of His story. (*SSS Vol.2 p.2-3*)

The Ramayana is a work which holds out ideals for every home and every family. What should be the relations between a father and a son, how should a husband and wife conduct themselves, how should brothers behave towards each other, what should be the relations between the rulers and the citizens, how should sisters-in-law conduct themselves--all these are exemplified in the story of the *Rama-Avatar*. (*SSS Vol.24 p.59*)

Aim of religion is to unite man with God

By all kinds of misinterpretations and wrong meanings, the great religion of the *Bharatiyas* has been rendered meaningless and

valueless by sectarians and perverse exponents. The basic meaning and purpose of religion is to lead man to his source. Students should grasp the root meaning of the word Religion. It consists of two parts' *'Re,'* meaning 'again,' and *'ligio'* meaning 'come together' or 'unite.' That is to say, "Reuniting with God" is Religion. People consider religion as a bundle of doctrines and of rigorous do's and don'ts prescribed for people. This is totally wrong. The sacred aim of Religion is to remind man of his divine origin and help to lead him back to God.

This profound truth is contained in the *Upanishadic* dictum: "*Tat Twam Asi*" (That Thou Art). "Uniting That with This" is the meaning of this declaration. "*Prajnanam Brahma*" (*Brahmam* is Cosmic Knowledge) is another declaration which is designed to remind man of his divine essence and enable him to merge in the Divine. "*Ayam Atma Brahma*" (This *Atma* is *Brahmam*) is another declaration expounding the same basic purpose of Religion, namely, to make the individual realise his oneness with the Supreme. The dictum "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (*I am Brahmam*, the absolute), is the final declaration by the Self-realised person, that in reality, there is no difference between him and the Absolute.

The essence of the religion of *Bharatiyas* as proclaimed in the *Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana Vedas*, is the attainment of the unity of the individual with the Divine by the recognition of his inherent divinity. The *Avatars* come to teach humanity this principle of oneness so that they may get rid of the idea of diversity and manifest their inherent divinity, realizing their basic spiritual nature. (*SSS Vol.24 p.56-57*)

The purpose of *Avatar*

When the Divine comes down as *Avatar*--whether it be as Rama or as Krishna, *Matsya* (fish), *Varaha* (boar) or *Vamana* (dwarf)-- it is only for one purpose. You recognise only the momentary results of the advent. But you should note that the Divine comes as *Avatar* only to teach mankind the truth about love. "Oh man, it is because you lack love and are filled with selfishness that the world is plunging in so much conflict and chaos. It is only when you develop love and the spirit of sacrifice that you will realise the divinity that is in the human." The man who has no spirit of *thyaga* (sacrifice) will be a prey to all ills. A man without love is a living corpse. It is love and sacrifice which make man divine.

Love alone is the fruit of love. Love is its own witness. There is no trace of self-interest in it. Because love exists, for its own sake, it has no fear. It is to teach humanity the way of love that *Avatars* come in the world. The world displays the diversity that has emanated from the One. The Divine demonstrates the unity that subsumes the diversity. Recognition of this "Unity in Diversity" can be learnt only from the Divine.

The Divine comes as *Avatar* to proclaim the pure, unsullied and disinterested love of devotees towards God. People may consider that the *Avatar's* activities include punishment of the wicked, protection of the good, weeding out of unrighteousness and restoration of righteousness. This is how they may look at the *Avatar's* doings. But that is not the way the Lord sees things. There is nothing bad in God's view. Hence there should be no hatred or ill-will towards any being. It is only when you love all, that you can be said to love God. (*SSS Vol.21 p.200-201*)

Avatars come to teach principle of oneness

The descent of the *Avatar* means the Divine coming down to the level of the human. No blemish attaches to the Divine as a result of this descent. There is no diminution in His puissance. Here is the example of a child playing on the ground. If the mother feels it is beneath her dignity to bend and calls upon the child to leap into her arms, the child cannot do so. But out of her love for the child, the mother herself stoops and picks up the baby. By bending down to take the child, does the mother bow to the child? Likewise, the *Avatar* descends to the level of the human to bless and rescue those who cannot rise to the level of the Divine. The ignorant assumes that because the Divine has descended with a human form God has lowered Himself to the human level. This is a case of bending and not kneeling down. It is an act of benediction and not of submission. (*SSS Vol.24 p.57-58*)

Six attributes of an Avatar:

Every Avatar has six types of powers: all-encompassing Prosperity, Righteousness, Fame, Wealth, Wisdom and Renunciation (or non-attachment). God is the possessor of those six attributes. Sri Rama had all these six attributes in equal measure. Every Avatar of God in every age and every place has these six attributes. (*SS May 1989 p.122*)

Think of the Divine at all times

The devotee's feelings determine his concept of God. When a devotee prays, "Oh Lord! Don't you see my sufferings? Don't you hear my lamentations? Can't you see the troubles I am going through?" the Lord appears to him only as a pair of eyes. The full form of the Lord will not appear to him. (*SSS Vol.21 p.201*)

Human birth is the result of *Karma*

God is not a separate entity. Man is the image of God. "*Daivam manusha rupena,*" (God appears in human form) declare the scriptures. God has no separate form. It is to show to humanity how human lives can be divinised that *Avatars* come from time to time. God does not come down as *Avatar* to relieve individuals of their troubles and sorrow and to confer joy and happiness on them. Difficulties, troubles and worries come in the natural course as a consequence of past actions. The *Gita* says: "*Karmaanubandheeni manushya loke*" (Human beings are bound by *Karma* in the world). As human birth is the result of *Karma*, there can be no escape from the consequences of *Karma*. As is your action, so is the reaction to it. When you stand before a mirror and offer salutation before the mirror, the salutation is reflected by the image. If you address harsh words to the mirror, the harshness is reflected by the image in the same manner. It will be evident from this example that the fruits of our actions are determined by the nature of those actions.

Bharatiyas have held fast to three beliefs: The law of *Karma*, the concept of *Avatars*, and the doctrine of rebirth. The law of *Karma* means that there is no escape from the consequences of your actions. The *Karma* doctrine lays down that one has to experience the results of his actions. The concept of *Avatar* implies faith in God and in the divinity inherent in man. Man does not merely mean the human form. Man is distinguished from other animals and creatures by his capacity to judge what is permanent and what is transient, and his ability to recognise the past, the present and the future. Man alone has the capacity to comprehend this threefold nature of time. Man can ruminate over

the past and speculate about the future. He can experience the present. However, man should not worry about what is past. The present is the product of the past. What has happened is beyond recall. It is futile to worry about the future because it is uncertain. Concern yourself only with the present. By "present" we may be thinking only of this moment. But this is not the present as Divinity sees it. For the Divine, "present" is what is "omnipresent." (*SSS Vol.21 p.198-199*)

In the *Tretha Yuga*, the Divine elements were on one side and the demonical elements on the other. At the time of the Rama *avatar* the divine elements were in Ayodhya and Kishkindha and the demonic forces were in the forest of Dandakaranya. The two elements were in separate regions. Rama waged a war against the *Rakshasas* in Dandakaranya and protected the *rishis*. This is the inner meaning of the Rama *avatar* in the *Tretha Yuga*. (*SSS Vol.20 p.123*)

Rama Avatar - Consequences of Karma:

In this world, for all the good and bad, our own actions are responsible. The cause for your birth is your own *karma*. Whether you do good or bad, all that makes you take birth again and again and experience the consequences of your own *karma*. Our *dharma*, the Hindu *dharma*, is one which has faith in the doctrines of *karma*, of rebirth, and of the characteristics of an *Avatar*. Of all the faiths in the world, Hindu *dharma* alone accepts all these three doctrines.

In this context of believing that one's *karma* is responsible for one's rebirth, you might get a doubt as to what *karma* God

should have performed to be born as a human being. Just as for man's birth, his good and bad *karma* is responsible; so also for God to take birth as a human being, there have to be good and bad circumstances. There is an important distinction that is to be noted here. If man has done good or bad, the consequences will apply only to him. The aspect of *Avatar* is not exactly like that. The bad work done by bad people and the good work done by good people are both causes for an *Avatar*, God coming in the human form. This will become very evident to us in the story of Narasimha *Avatar*. The good *karma*¹⁷⁵ of Prahlada and the bad *karma*¹⁷⁶ of Hiranyakasipu are both responsible for Narayana's appearing in the form of Narasimha. In the same manner, for every *Avatar*, there is some reason. The Lord takes a human form for the *karma* done by others. He takes such a form out of His own free will.

For the *Avatar* of Rama, there are several reasons. When the war between the *Devas* and *rakshasas* was going on, the *rakshasas* sought refuge from the wife of Maharishi Bhrigu. Then she was of some help to the *rakshasas*. Because she willingly helped them to some extent, the *rakshasas* were saved. When Narayana came to know of this situation, Narayana went to the wife of the maharishi in anger and killed her by cutting her head off. Then Bhrigu was suffering because of separation from his wife, who was killed. *Bhrigu cursed Lord Narayan "May you suffer the pangs of separation from your wife when you come down on the*

¹⁷⁵ *Satkarmas* (good deeds) - (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom p.8*)

¹⁷⁶ *dushkarmas* (evil deeds) - *Ibid*

*earth as a human being.*¹⁷⁷” The significant inner meaning of this situation is that every action will have a reaction, *resound*¹⁷⁸ and a reflection. Even though He is Narayana, the all-powerful God, results of His own *karma* will inevitably follow when He comes in human form. This is, of course, to illustrate this truth to all humanity. (*SSB 1977 p.26-27*)

RAMA PRINCIPLE

God, when appearing with Form for the sake of upholding Dharma, behaves in a human way. He needs must! For, He has to hold forth the ideal life before man and confer the experience of joy and peace on men. His movements and activities (*Leelas*) might appear ordinary and commonplace to some eyes. But each of these will be an expression of beauty, truth, goodness, joy and exaltation. It will captivate the world with its charm; it will purify the heart that contemplates it. It will overcome and overwhelm all the agitations of the mind. It will tear the veil of Illusion (*Maya*). It will fill the consciousness with Sweetness. There can be no “ordinary” and “commonplace” in the careers of Avatars. Whatever is seen and taken as of that nature is really “superhuman,” “supernatural,” deserving high reverence!

No ant can bite, without Rama’s Will! No leaf can drop from its branch, without Rama’s prompting! Sky, wind, fire, water and earth—the Five Elements that compose the Universe—behave as they do for fear of Him, and in tune with His Orders! Rama is the

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

Principle which attracts— and endears through that attraction—the disparate elements in Nature. The attraction that one exerts over another is what makes the Universe exist and function. That is the Rama principle, without which the cosmos will become chaos. Hence, the axiom: If there is no Rama, there will be no Panorama (Universe). (*RKRV Part I p.9-10*)

There are in the world many such devotees who have achieved God-realisation without profound scholarship or elaborate austerities. Hence the Divine Rama Principle is not something to be remembered once a year but every moment of our life.

Ramanavami falls in a period of the year when Nature puts on her new vesture after shedding the old. Rama thus represents all that is beautiful in Nature.

The *Ramayana* has been divided into two sections: the *Purva Ramayana* and the *Uttar Ramayana*. The *Purva Ramayana* deals with the valorous deeds of Rama¹⁷⁹, his victory over indomitable heroes like Parasurama, Vali and Ravana. These events speak of the dauntless courage, the matchless valour and the immense physical and mental prowess of Sri Rama. The *Uttar Ramayana* (the latter half is suffused with *Karuna* (compassion) and seeks to install the Rama *Thathwa* (The Rama Principle) in the hearts of the people. (*SSS Vol.25 p.46-47*)

The Rama Principle embodies numerous powers and potencies. The *Ramayana* is not a sacred text to be used only for ritualistic

¹⁷⁹ the prowess of Rama as a *Dheera* (hero) - (*SSS Vol.23p.46*)

reading (*parayanam*). The Rama Principle is all-pervading like the Cosmic Spirit. In olden times people used to say that their inner secrets are known only to the Indwelling Rama Spirit (*Atma-Rama*). The Self is called "Rama". Rama means "one who pleases". How can you give a specific form to one who pleases or delights? (*SSS Vol.31 p.71*)

Many people are ignorant of the inner significance of the Rama story - the subtleties contained in the *Ramayana* and the deep significance of words like Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Bharatha, Satrugna, etc. The principle of Rama is most sacred, sublime and glorious. There is nothing in the world that cannot be achieved by cultivating the *Rama Thathwa*. Though thousands of years have elapsed since the story of Rama took place, the Rama Principle is deeply imprinted in the hearts of the people. The Rama Principle is ever fresh, ever new and embraces infinitude itself. (*SSB 1996 p.17*)

The Rama Principle is contained in the smallest of the small and the largest of the large. The Principle of Rama is not confined to name and form. It is a transcendental principle, which transcends time itself. The Rama Principle lives as eternally blooming, blossoming and bursting forth. Students will understand the true nature of humanity by realising the Rama Principle. (*SSB 1996 p.17-18*)

When God descends in human form as an *Avatar*, we should not delude ourselves into thinking that the *Avatar* is a simple human form like ourselves. His form may be human; but His majesty and magnificence are Infinite.

*We should not mistake a white stone for sugar candy
and munch it,
We should not mistake a cotton fruit for a mango and
eat it. (SSB1996 p.18)*

The *Rama Thathwa* is *Prema Thathwa* (Principle of Love). We have to emulate Rama and transform ourselves by following the path of Love. However deep and great our scholastic eminence may be, we cannot achieve anything without undergoing the transformation of the mind. (*SSB 1996 p.18*)

The Rama principle attracts everybody. Such a principle can be explained for days together and still cannot be expounded fully. If you keep hearing the song of the cuckoo it may tire you after sometime. If you keep drinking, even divine nectar may taste sour at some point of time. But the story of Rama can be read or heard any number of times and one would never feel satiated. He who sings, or reads or hears or gets to read this sacred story of Rama will find it highly nectarous. No one knows the origin of *Ramayana* or from when it was being sung in public. (*SSB 2002 p.111*)

That is the Rama principle, without which the cosmos will become chaos. Hence, the axiom: If there is no Rama, there will be no Panorama (Universe). (*RKR Part I p.10*)

In the Divine epic of the *Ramayana*, there is a special profound message. That message is: man must lead the life of a human being; men must seek oneness with the Divine. Man should harmonize the three qualities in him (*Satwa, rajas, Tamas*). In

every human being, all the three natures –human, divine, and demonic– are present. But most men today ignore their humanness and divinity and foster only their demonic nature.

Man, in fact, should strive to manifest his divinity, and not display his weakness or his demonic qualities. Rama chose to go to the forest to fulfil the pledge of his father, and thereby subjected himself to many difficulties. It may be asked: Did he go to the forest under any compulsion or out of his own resolve, or with a sense of dissatisfaction, or merely to comply with his father's pledge? No. Rama set out for the forest with the same sense of serenity and joy with which he looked forward to his coronation. Rama demonstrated the spirit of equanimity. He showed that pain or pleasure, profit or loss, victory or defeat, were the same to him. In human life, pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow alternate all the time. It is not a good quality to welcome pleasure and turn away pain. You must welcome sorrow in the same joyous spirit in which you greet happiness. Happiness has no value unless there is also sorrow. That is why it is said, "Pleasure is not secured by pleasant measure." Pain is needed to secure pleasure. Rama demonstrated to the world the truth of this concept. (*SSS Vol.31 p.71-72*)

In every act, Rama set the example. In individual conduct, in the discharge of duties to the family, and in fulfilling the obligations to society Rama demonstrated the ideals to be followed. All should begin with fulfilling the obligations of the individual. The duty of the individual is to manifest the divinity within him. As an individual, Rama revealed the divinity in him by his ideal conduct. (*SSS Vol.31 p.72*)

The Rama Principle is infinitely potent. The powers of the Divine are immeasurable. God comes down in human form to redeem mankind. Birds and beasts act according to their natural instincts. Man alone tends to violate the laws of nature and act against the laws of *dharma* (right conduct). It is to teach and punish man who goes astray that the Divine comes in human form. He teaches the highest ideals and leads an ideal life to set an example. (*SSS Vol.31 p.77-78*)

It is not possible to describe the boundless attributes of the Rama Principle. The name of Rama has been adored for aeons. Humanity has been in existence for many lakhs of years. Unfortunately, humanity is yet to realize its true nature. What is this nature? It is the Principle of Love. Human life should be suffused with love and rounded off with love. Life should be given up with tears of joy and not tears of sorrow. (*SSS Vol.31 p.78-79*)

Rama is the friend of the universe. He is its protector. He is its patron saint. To comprehend the nature of such a unique ideal personality is not quite easy. It is easier to count the waves of the ocean than to describe the qualities of Rama. Ramachandra is the Indweller in all beings. The cosmos is one vast mansion. Humanity is one family (or community). Only the person who recognizes this relationship between the cosmos and mankind can understand the Rama Principle. The earth lies at the feet of every human being. It is the same firmament that is above every person. All breathe the same air. The water that people drink is the same for all. Only those who recognize this unifying

principle will seek to understand the Rama Principle. (*SSS Vol.31 p.67-68*)

The Rama Principle destroys all sins and redeems life. Everyone should seek to realize the Rama Principle (*SSS Vol.31 p.69*)

The word "Rama" consists of the two letters "Ra" and "Ma." "Ra" means "*Atma*" and "Ma" means "jiva" (the individual soul). The Rama principle signifies the unity of the *Atma* and the *jiva* (the Universal Spirit: and the individual spirit). The oneness of the Supreme Omni Self and the *Jiva-Atma* (individual Self) is indicated by the term "Rama." This inner truth is not understood by many. (*SSS Vol.22 p.203*)

The world is based on three entities: Fire, the Sun and the Moon. No one can deny the existence of these three. "*Hethu Krisanu Bhanu Himakarathe.*" *Krisanu* means the Fire principle. *Bhanu* refers to the Sun and *Himakara* refers to the Moon. The combination of these three attracts and sustains all beings in the world. They give pleasure, provoke wonder and also delude men. Because they give pleasure, the three are called "Rama."

In the word "Rama" there is three sounds: Ra, Aa, Ma. "Ra" refers to *Agni* (Fire). "Aa" refers to the Sun and "Ma" refers to the Moon. The combination of these three entities represents the "Rama Principle." (*SSS Vol.25 p.64-65*)

Rama is embodiment of the three *gunas*

The Rama Principle is manifested in the *Gayatri mantra*. Rama is the embodiment of the three aspects of Time. He is the Lord of

the three worlds and is the embodiment of the three *gunas*. Hence Sri Rama is the indwelling spirit in every human being. To realise this truth, it is not necessary to be a great scholar or scientist. However great a scholar may be, if he has no eyes, he cannot see the world. However great a scientist may be, when he is fast asleep he cannot see anything. But a man with open eyes if he is no scholar or scientist can see the world when he is awake. The power of sight is not derived from scholarship or science but is a gift of the Divine. Moreover, scholarship does not enable a *pundit* to understand his own true nature, though he can teach others. True scholarship consists in cultivating a pure heart. (SSS Vol.23 p.45-46)

Only when we shape ourselves into a strong personality can we conduct ourselves ideally in the family and in society. Rama enshrined in Himself all these ideal qualities and shone as an ideal being. He also enshrined in Himself the principle of equanimity, unity and Bliss. This principle of Bliss is latent in every human heart. Every human has a right to realise and enjoy this principle of Bliss, which is the *Rama Thathwa*. Rama was the Embodiment of four cardinal principles: truth, righteousness, love, and peace.

Rama was an Embodiment of *Dharma*, which is the basis for the entire Universe. A true human being is one who follows and practices the principle of *dharma*. Burning is the *dharma* of fire. Coolness is the *dharma* of ice. Fire is no fire without burning. Ice is no ice without coolness. Similarly, the *dharma* of man lies in performing actions with the body and following the commands of the heart. Every act performed with thought, word, and deed

in harmony is an act of *dharma*. Thus, a *dharmic* life is a divine life. (*SSB1996 p.16-17*)

Seeing the Lord within is *Ekantha Bhakti*

Ekantha Bhakti is the form of devotion in which the devotee believes that the Lord, who pervades the external and the internal, is residing within him. He individualises the Divine that is imminent in everything. The distinction between the particular and the collective should be properly understood. One tree does not make a forest. There can be no forest without trees. This is the relationship between the *vyakti* (particular) and the *samashti* (collective). The same relationship may be seen between the *vyakti* (individual) and *samajam* (society). The Divine in its universal cosmic form is *Paramatma* (the Omni-Self). The *Ekantha Bhaktha* individualises the Divine and worships him in a particular form. The Divine is present in myriad forms with myriad names. (*SSS Vol.22 p.203*)

There is nothing sweeter in the world than the Divine name. The Name and the Form go together. The inextricable connection between name and form has to be rightly understood. The name is a form of wealth. The form is an object to be purchased. Once you have money you can buy whatever you want. Likewise with wealth of the Lord's Name in your hands, you can obtain whatever you desire. Therefore every devotee has to acquire the wealth of the Name. This can be through *bhajans* and meditation on the Name of the Lord. In this context, devotees have to develop four types of spiritual discipline *Maitri* (*friendliness*), *Karuna* (*compassion*), *Muditha* (*rejoicing*) and *Upeksha* (*freedom from attachment and aversion*). These appear to be

simple terms, but they embody all human values. Each quality has to be cultivated in a spirit of devotion and dedication to the Divine. (*SSS Vol.22 p.203-204*)

Proper interpretations of various acts of Rama

Some of Rama's actions have been criticised by scholars on various grounds. Seen, however, in the right perspective, it will be found that Rama acted in each case according to the nature of the person. In killing an ogress, Rama is accused of committing *Strihathya* (the sin of killing a woman). But it is not so. He was destroying the *Tamo guna* which she symbolised. He gave liberation to Sabari, who represented the *Rajo guna*. He purified Ahalya, who represented the *Satwa guna*, absolving her of all her lapses, and restored her to Gautama. In the case of the *Rakshasa* brothers, he destroyed Kumbhakarna and Ravana, who represented the *Tamo* and *Rajo gunas*, and made Vibhishana, who symbolised the *Satwa guna*, the ruler of Lanka. It is only when we destroy the *Tamo* and *Rajo gunas* within us that we can make the *Satwa guna* reign in our hearts. This is the primary duty of every human being. This should be our ideal. It is by imbibing these great qualities of Rama and regulating our lives in this way, we shall be able to divinise ourselves. (*SSS Vol.23 p.47-48*)

Develop faith in the ideals of Rama. Faith in these ideals has been responsible for their survival after aeons. What you must aspire after is a life governed by ideals. Everyone must aim at becoming an ideal person. Ideals, not ostentation, should be the watchword. The Rama-Era will come into existence from the moment we give up ostentation, develop faith in the Self, and

lead a godly life. Then everyone will be a lover of Rama. Rama does not mean the son of Dasaratha. The *Atma* is Rama and hence Rama is referred to as *Atma-Rama*. (*SSS Vol.24 p.66-67*)

Significant connection between the Rama principle and the *Vasanta Ritu*

We must learn to chant the sweet name of Rama with a pure, unsullied heart, in a spirit of selfless devotion. In the mind of man dwell the deities representing the moon and the sun. Intelligence is endowed by the sun. However two kinds of birds have got into the mind. One bird fosters the sense of "I" and "Mine" and fills the mind with ego. This is a destructive force. The second bird fosters the feeling of *freedom from attachment and hatred*. It signifies the power of the sun in the mind. Rama, who belongs to the solar race, adhered to the latter path.

There is a significant connection between the Rama principle and the *Vasanta Ritu* (season of spring). In the spring, the trees put forth new leaves and flowers and fill the world with gladness. When the sun's rays fall on the fresh leaves, they acquire a golden hue. The whole world puts on a glorious new look in spring. The beginning of the New Year is celebrated in various regions by preparation of special edibles from a mixture of flowers and fruits of the neem and mango trees. In consuming these edibles, people are reminded that life is a mixture of pleasure and pain, profit and loss and both are to be treated with equal-mindedness.

In the spring season, the air is redolent with the fragrance of the mango blossoms and the song of the *kokila* (cuckoo). There is joy in the air you breathe. The cuckoo calls are never so sweet as

in the *Vasanta* (Spring). The *kokila's* song is sweet to the ears. If a crow sits on our roof, we wish to drive it away, but we welcome the *kokila's* song. Why this difference? The crow seeks nothing from us. The *kokila* has not given us a crown. The difference lies in their voice. The crow's cawing jars on the ears. The *kokila's* song is music to the ears. When the speech is sweet, the speaker becomes endearing.

Hence men should learn to speak sweetly and pleasingly. Sweet speech confers peace. It is the means to Self-realisation. It is in the heart of the man who is sweet-spoken that Sri Rama loves to dwell. (*SSS Vol.22 p.69-70*)

EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE

Every *Avatar* is an amazing phenomenon. Not to recognise the *Avatar* is equally a matter for amazement. Even more astonishing is the incapacity to experience the presence of the *Avatar*.

Most astonishing of all is to be in the presence of the Lord and feel miserable. To be in the proximity of the *Avatar*, to move about with the *Avatar*, to sing and sport with the *Avatar* and yet fail to understand the truth of the *Avatar* is indeed a remarkable phenomenon. When the *Avatar* principle is understood, you experience real bliss. When you have faith in the Divine, life becomes a victorious journey. (*SSS Vol.23 p.217*)

The Rama-Avatar appeared in human form to enable humanity to experience the Formless in a form which is accessible to them and helpful to them. An *Avatar* assumes the form that is

beneficial to and within the reach of human beings. Men cannot comprehend the Formless and the Attributeless Absolute. Unfortunately, even when the Formless Absolute assumes a form, there are persons, who impelled by their own attitudes, attribute their own human foibles to the *Avatar*. "When he has the same form as ours, the same physical features, and eats, talks and moves about like any of us, what is the difference between the *Avatar* and ourselves?" they ask. Because of this narrow-minded approach, these persons are distancing themselves from the Divine.

An effort must be made to understand the nature of divinity. "*Daivam manushya rupena,*" declares the scripture (God in human form). It is only when God comes in human form can human beings have the full opportunity to experience and enjoy the Divine. When human life is sublimated, it gets divinised. All religions have come into existence to make man realise the source from which he has come and to which he should return. *(SSS Vol.24 p.65-66)*

When truth, justice, compassion and peace flee from man, the world degenerates into a snake-pit. God then comes down as an *Avatar* to rescue mankind from its doom. He comes to reveal to man his Reality, to restore to him his birth right of Atmic bliss. He does not come to found a new creed or religion, to breed a new faction or install a new God. *(SSS Vol.19 p.71)*

Every person who has a purified heart experiences the Divine some time or other. We have any number of examples of such realised souls. Valmiki was originally a highway robber. By the

grace of sages he became the author of the Ramayana. Nanda experienced the Divine though he was an outcaste. Kuchela, steeped in poverty, secured the grace of the Lord. Gajendra, the Lord of the elephants, and Dhruva, a mere stripling, could get the grace of the Lord by their devotion. Sabari, an illiterate denizen of the forest, became a great devotee by the constant remembrance of Rama's name. Through her devotion she could get the blissful experience of welcoming Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in the sage's *ashram*. (*SSS Vol.23 p.48*)

We say the word *dharma* without knowing its true nature and majesty. *Dharma* is of various kinds: *dharma* of a householder, a celibate, a recluse, and a renunciate. But the *dharma* of the heart is the supreme *dharma*. This *dharma* of the heart is verily the *dharma* of life as well. The unity of thought, word, and deed has to be achieved at any cost. The *Ramayana* stands as a supreme testimony to it. The synthesis of humanity in divinity, and divinity in humanity, leads to totality (*poornathva*). This totality is present fully in human beings. (*SSB 1996 p.17*)

Persons who were aware of Rama principle

There were three persons who were aware of the Rama principle. They were Hanuman, Sumitra and Viswamitra.

Hanuman¹⁸⁰ was no ordinary person. He was a high-minded, powerful figure endowed with immense knowledge and wisdom.

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - **HANUMAN MEETS RAMA AND LAKSHMANA:**

He was well aware of the divinity of Rama. Kausalya¹⁸¹ despite her *Satwic* (serene) nature was not aware of Rama's divine power as much as Sumitra. Kausalya shed copious tears on hearing about Rama's exile to the forest. Sumitra, on the contrary, enjoined her son Lakshmana to accompany Rama and told him: "Wherever Rama is, there is Ayodhya, where Rama is not, that is the real jungle. Rama is verily Lord Narayana Himself. Go and serve Rama and Sita with my blessings." Sumitra explained to Lakshmana how he was an aspect of Rama from the circumstances of his birth. (*SSS Vol.20 p.53-54*)

Sumitra¹⁸² came and said to her, "Sister, Rama is not an ordinary boy. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna also are not ordinary mortals (*SSB 2002 p.82*)

The boatman¹⁸³ heard how Rama had liberated Ahalya from the terrible curse - He would not yield to Rama boarding the boat until he was allowed to sprinkle on his head the water sanctified by washing Rama's feet and row him across - Refused to accept the fees and gift (*RKR Part I p 356-362*)

Maharishis, rishis knew that Ramachandra was Narayana came in human being to teach Ideals to people – some excerpts

The sages gathered in front of Rama and extolled Him, "Oh Rama! You are verily the incarnation of Lord Narayana. You are

¹⁸¹ See Chapter, *Kausalya - Divine sport of the child Rama*

¹⁸² See Chapter, *Sumitra - When Rama was engaged in battle with Ravana*
See also - **Great Virtue**

¹⁸³ See Chapter, *Guha – RAMA DESIRES TO CROSS THE RIVER:*

the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, and the all-pervasive One. In Your youth itself, You have achieved what no one could achieve before.” (*SSB 1996 p.25*)

Sage Agasthya

Agasthya¹⁸⁴ said, “Lord! I am convinced that there is no one more blessed than I am. The Lord Narayana has Himself come to me. He is staying in my hermitage! Is this true? Is it a dream? No. It is clearly a fact of experience.” (*RKR V Part II p.13*)

Sage Athri

Athri¹⁸⁵ was overpowered with joy at the sign of Grace, that he shed profuse tears in his ecstasy. He described to all present the sacredness of the occasion, the powers of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, and the Divine Forces that had incarnated as those three. (*RKR V Part II p.3*)

Anasuya

Anasuya¹⁸⁶ also praised the virtues of Sita, and gave her holy counsel on the duties of women and the ideals they should ever hold dear. Sita spoke to the fact that every individual, every being, and every creature had the feminine principle inherent in its composition. She said that though there are masculine and feminine roles, acting on the world stage, all are basically feminine, when their strength, emotions and attitudes are considered. She said that her Lord, Rama, is the incarnation of

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter, *Agasthya - Agasthya serves Rama and his companions with devotion and ecstasy:*

¹⁸⁵ See Chapter, *Athri*

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

the One and only Masculine principle in the Universe. In him, she said, there is no trace of duality, of mine and thine, of grief or joy. He is the embodiment of fearlessness. He is strength personified. *Purusha* or the Eternal Masculine has wedded Nature or *Prakriti*, the Eternal Feminine. Though Nature appears manifold and variegated, it is really one undifferentiated Unity. Thus Sita¹⁸⁷ revealed the truth of the Rama principle to Anasuya, the consort of the Sage Athri. (*RKRV Part II p.3-4*)

Maharishi Bharadwaja

Sage Bharadwaja¹⁸⁸ said: “Listen, Oh Lord! I chose this holy spot for my hermitage and austerities, since I knew I could get here the darshan for which I longed for many years. To get thrill of your Darshan, I undertook vows performed Vedic Yajnas and Yagas. I immersed myself in the chanting of Divine Names and in Meditation on the Divine Form, so that I might be rewarded with the chance to converse with you. I was awarded darshan of all three of you. I have no more wants; I am no more concerned with bath or with food. I do not want to be reckoned as a fool who continued consuming drugs, even after he was cured of illness. I am free now from the fell disease of birth-and-death. I have seen God.” (*RKRV Part I p.364*)

Sage Sarabhanga

When Sharabhanga saw Rama he became ecstatic. He said; “O Rama! Today I have found fulfilment and I need not live any

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter, *Sita - Revelation of Divinity - Her hesitation to wash Rama's feet*

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter, *Bharadwaja Maharshi - Rama in Bharadwaja's Hermitage:*

longer. I was about to leave my body many a time; but then I remembered that Narayana would one day come into the forest. Thus, I wished to live to see God in human form. Today I have seen God, Please wait a little¹⁸⁹.” (*SSB 1996 p.43*)

Swayamprabha

Swayamprabha¹⁹⁰ said: “Rama, who is God come in human form.”

Sutheekshna

Sutheekshna¹⁹¹ was the pupil of Agasthya. He was an incomparable devotee and his mind was saturated with love for Rama. He could not picture any form of God other than Rama. He gazed upon Rama without winking an eyelid, lest even that fraction of time should go waste. His heart melted into adoration at the sight of Rama. (*RKR Part II p.9*)

Brahmarishi Viswamitra

Viswamitra was also like that. He had very many potent weapons with him. He never cared for the great weapons he possessed in his house. He knew that Narayana Himself came as a young boy and was born in Dasaratha household. So, all that Viswamitra¹⁹² did was based on that knowledge. (*SSB 1977 p.128*)

¹⁸⁹ See Chapter, *Sage Sarabhanga*

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter, *Hanuman - Swayamprabha informs the Vanaras about Sita*

¹⁹¹ See Chapter, *Sage Sutheekshna*

¹⁹² See Chapter, *Viswamitra - Divine Incarnations*
See also - **Taught Bala and Athibala Manthras – Maya is inescapable for anyone however great – was shackled by Maya**

Rama’s divinity as perceived by Valmiki¹⁹³

He said, “Oh Rama! I am indeed blessed. You are the Flag that proclaims the glory of the Raghu dynasty. For what reason are you voicing thus? You are the force that fosters the path laid down in the Vedas. You are the power that safeguards it from harm. Sita is the deluding half of your personality, your Maya. She creates, maintains and destroys (as you ‘will’) worlds. And Lakshmana is the very basis of the movable and the immovable, the ‘thousand – hooded serpent,” the Primal Sesha Nag, which upholds the Universe. You have assumed forms, in order to carry out the wishes of the Gods, that you re-establish righteousness in the world. You will, I am sure destroy all demonic hearts, pretty soon. (*RKRV Part I p.371-372*)

Preceptor Vashishta

Vashishta¹⁹⁴ remained as a purohit in that household not because of the wealth of Dasaratha but because he was fully aware of the fact that Narayana Himself came in human form of Ramachandra. (*SSB 1977 p.128*)

Some Rakshasas Understood the Divine Reality of Rama

Maricha¹⁹⁵ was one of those who realised the omnipresence, the omnipotence and the Divine greatness of Rama. The sage

¹⁹³ See Chapter, *Valmiki - Valmiki Ashram – Rama’s divinity as perceived by Valmiki and other sages*

¹⁹⁴ See Chapter, *Vashishta - Vashishta realised that Rama was the personification of Dharma:*
See also - **Accepted the profession of Family Preceptor on the advice of Brahma**

¹⁹⁵ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu - Maricha advises Ravana to desist from such acts:*

Viswamitra took Rama and Lakshmana for the protection of his Yaga from the depredations of Thataki and her sons. Maricha was one of the sons. After Rama had killed Thataki, Maricha appeared to disturb the Yaga. Rama aimed an arrow at him which threw him off miles away. That experience made Maricha realise the Divine puissance of Rama. He declared that he had not seen anyone who could equal Rama in power. Going to Ravana, he explained to him the unique powers of Rama even as a young lad. He told Ravana: “Oh Ravana!. His form fascinates even men. I have beheld his divine beauteous form.” Ravana kept in mind all that Maricha had told him. (*SSS Vol.23 p.43-44*)

Lankini

Lankini¹⁹⁶ remembered the prophecy of Brahma, “It would be the beginning of the doom of Lanka, when a monkey would hit you.” (*SSB 2002 p.81*) That monkey will enter Lanka at the command of God for fulfilling His Mission. His arrival heralds the destruction of the Rakshasas. (*RKRV Part II p.124*)

¹⁹⁶ See also - **Maricha witnessed the prowess and sanctity of Rama**
See Chapter, *Hanuman* - Hanuman’s encounter with Lankini, the Guardian of the gate of Lanka

6.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF RAMA - STANDARDS SET FOR EVERYONE

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Dasaratha describes Rama:

His body is soft and tender, like the petal of a freshly blossomed flower. He is most charming to behold. Rama is so enticingly beautiful¹⁹⁷.

Maricha's description of Rama- Pumsaam Mohana Roopaya
Maricha¹⁹⁸ told Ravana, "*Rama's* unexcelled beauty is beyond words. His form fascinates even men. I have beheld his divine beauteous form."

Sita describes Rama:

Dark-blue person... with the Lotus-petal-eyes that enrapture the worlds, with the long, strong bow arms¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter, *Dasaratha* - Dasaratha describes Rama's beauty, His consideration for the welfare of the people:

¹⁹⁸ See Chapter, *Maricha and Subahu* - Maricha describes Rama's power and beauty

Surpanakha:

Their handsome and regal bearing enraptured me²⁰⁰.

What incomparable beauty is standing before us! I have never seen till now such charm, such grace, such pure harmony, such melodious physique²⁰¹.

What others thought of Rama:

The ogres who surrounded Rama were so overcome by his beauty and charm that they did nothing but stare at the glory and the splendour²⁰².

Rama and Lakshmana... moved like lion cubs²⁰³

Tulasidas:

Tulasidas in one of his famous songs described the beauty of Sri Rama thus:

*“Sri Ramachandra kripalu Bhajamana Harana
Bhavabhaya Darunam
Navakanjalochana Kanjamukha Karakanja
Padapankajaarunam”*

¹⁹⁹ See Chapter, *Sita - Sita in the city of Nagas*

²⁰⁰ See Chapter, *Surpanakha - Surpanakha's description of Rama*

²⁰¹ See Chapter, *Khara and Dushana - Surpanakha tells Khara and Dushana not to kill Rama after praising his beauty:*

²⁰² *Ibid - None of the ogres raise their weapon against Rama:*

And also – Rama stands like a lion

²⁰³ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Swayamvara – Winning Sita - Prakriti Marries Paramatma - Rama and Lakshmana in Mithila*

It means “Oh! Ramachandra! Your eyes are like the fully ripened buds of the lotus flowers. Your face is like the petals of a lotus flower. If only we have the good fortune of witnessing your beautiful divine form, we do not at all crave for worldly objects. Oh! Rama! A thousand Manmadhas (Gof love) are no match to your nail even²⁰⁴.” (*Beacons of Divine Vision Part I p.174*)

THE STORY OF RAMA TEACHES THE WAY OF LIFE:

The Rama story is of exemplary excellence ethically, spiritually and materially as well. The story of Rama teaches us how a man should live in the World and conduct himself in the family as well as in Society. It also teaches us how one should retain one’s individuality and shape one’s personality. (*SSS 1996 p.16*)

Rama strove to uphold *Sathya* as the main plank of *dharmam*. Whatever the trial, however hard the travail, He did not give up Truth. *Sathyam* is *Dharmam*. *Dharmam* is *Sathyam*---the two are irrevocably intertwined. *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara*²⁰⁵,

²⁰⁴ This song has become so famous that people sing it as a prayer song before commencement of the proceedings in any conference or auspicious occasion in Utter Pradesh, even today. (*Beacons of Divine Vision Part I p.174*)

²⁰⁵ From ancient times, the rulers in Bharat never resorted to violence or unrighteous means or ascend the throne. They were dedicated to the practice of *Dharma*. “*Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara*” (Speak the truth, follow Righteousness) These two basic tenets of the ancient Bharatiyas. They esteemed them as their two eyes. Today the rule has been reversed –*Sathyam Vada* (Kill truth) *Dharmam Chara* (Imprison Righteousness). Today is the reign of falsehood. Unrighteousness is the

says the *Upanishads*. Rama will be remembered so long as mountains raise their heads and the oceans exist, because of this strict adherence to *Sathyam* and *Dharmam*. If he had argued, "Why should I be bound by the word of my father?" he would not have earned this Immortality. The Immortal had come in the form of Rama to show the way to Immortality. (*SSS Vol.4 p.293*)

One word, one arrow and one wife

You must not become like serpent with forked tongue. You must be like Rama, who always followed the principle of a single word. Rama is characterised by one word, one arrow and one wife. Hence one must strive to attain this principle of Rama (*Atma Rama*). It is not needed to follow the Rama who is Emperor Dasaratha's son. Follow your conscience. If you are unable to satisfy your own conscience, whom else can you satisfy? Satisfying God means satisfy your own conscience. Every man, who is the follower of Truth and Righteousness, must foster them, spread them in the world, experience them and derive the joy. (*SSB 1996 p.112-113*)

Rama has set the standard for everyone

Rama enlightens every seeker in the spiritual field, since he put into daily practice all that he deemed right. So, He sets the standard for every member of the household, of the society, of the nation and of the human race. He went into exile to maintain the highest ideal of a ruler responsive to the reaction of his subjects. The former holds forth the duty of

prevailing moral code. It is because of these tendencies. Bharat today is prey to disorder. (*SSS Vol.27 p.274*)

Pitruvaakyaparipaalana (respecting the command of the father) and the latter, the regal duty of *Janavaakya paripaalana* (respecting the wishes of the ruled). The root is: the 'word', of the parent, of the people. The fruit is *moksha*, liberation. For liberation is the ultimate goal, the inevitable destiny. The bud has as its inevitable goal, through the emerging fruit and the mature fruit to become the sweet ripe fruit. These three stages do follow each other. That is the reason why the *Vedas* lay down karma (the bud), which becomes *upasana* (the flower) and *jnana* (the fruit) in *kandas---sections*. Rama illustrated in His own life this process of the onward evolution of the soul into its Awareness.

Rama was the embodiment of steady adherence to *sathya* and *dharma*. Only those who are saturated in *Rama-bhakthi* can dive into that glory. He is the grand ideal, upon whom you can contemplate. By doing so, you can imbibe and develop his virtues, slowly and silently. A tree grows silently for years before it yields fruits. It does not produce them on the spot or in an instant. The coconut palm, the mango tree, the jack tree are of this type. Their gifts are plenty and full of nourishment. There are plants that yield few fruits pretty quickly and die soon after.

The fame of divine personalities grows with every word they speak and every deed they condescend to enact. Rama's glory shines brilliantly even after all these centuries. It will shine as resplendently for ages to come. Rama means He who pleases. Nothing pleases man more than *his Atma*, which is an eternal unfailling source of joy. One must prefer the awareness of the *Atma* and the bliss that the awareness confers, to all other minor momentary joys. The *Upanishad* says, "*Thyaagenike*

Amruthathvam Aanasuh"---"By renunciation alone can the Bliss of Immortality be won". (*SSS Vol.15 p.31-32*)

Rama taught the world how to remain unruffled in the presence of difficulties and joys, in pain or pleasure. He responded with a smile to any criticism. He did not exult over praise. Thus he displayed total equanimity in weal or woe, success or defeat, gain or loss. This is the attitude which everyone should cultivate. (*SSS Vol.30 p.94*)

Follow the ideal set by Rama The remedy for all the ills lies in following the ideal set by Rama. (*SSB 1996 p.41*)

An Ideal Life

Rama moved about in the world as an ordinary human being. He exemplified the ideal life, yet all considered him as an ordinary human being. But, do ordinary people live like Rama? Rama was one, while appearing to lead the life of an ordinary man, lead the life of Divine. He demonstrated the ideal life of a spiritually realised person. (*SSS Vol.31 p.69*)

Ideal Qualities

Rama is the supreme exemplar of how people should conduct themselves in the world, how a country should be governed, how the integrity and morality of human beings should be protected, High –minded actions, ideal qualities and sacred thoughts are basic foundations of character. Rama is the very embodiment of these three attributes. This means that every human being should cultivate sacred thought, right actions and good qualities. Rama demonstrated by his words, thoughts and actions how such a life

can be lived. Rama acted up to the ancient injunction: “Speak the truth, Practise Righteousness.” Eschewing harsh words, Rama pleased everyone by his sweet speech. He countered harsh speech by others with his composure, patience, sweetness and smile. He never pried into affairs of others, never took notice of their faults, never indulged in ridicule, and never caused any pain to others by the way he spoke to them. It is essential everyone to follow his many noble qualities and do righteous actions. People should entertain sacred thoughts (*SSS Vol.28 p.86-87*)

An Ideal Son

Rama is the closest to mankind. Wherever they may be, to whatever land or clime they may belong, people everywhere have to understand the Rama Principle. Rama was an ideal son. On the eve of the coronation he chose to go to the forest as an exile in accordance with the command of his royal father. In carrying out the injunctions of the father, Rama stands out as supreme exemplar.

Rama was, first of all, an ideal son. In any country, anywhere in the world, every family needs an ideal son. Hence Rama’s story does not have a message for the Bharatiyas alone. It has a lesson for all countries and for all mankind. (*SSS Vol.27 p.109-111*)

One’s debt of Gratitude towards parents – who are responsible for one’s birth

During the conversation, Bharatha told Rama that their father was dead. Although Rama was the incarnation of Narayana, because he was in human form and in order to proclaim how one in human form he should conduct himself in that situation, Rama

also appeared as if he suffered very much at news of the death of their father. Rama and Bharatha consoled each other.

A potter cannot make a pot with hard clay. The clay must be wet and used as soft paste. In the same manner, after creating the body, God has to put life into it. For putting life into the body, the parents are made responsible. For the birth of a human being, the father and mother are responsible. God functions only as a witness to that. To such parents, to such father and mother, one should repay one's debt of gratitude. This is the reason why we are taught that mother should be regarded as God and the father should be regarded as God and the guest should be regarded as God

Immediately thereafter, Rama and Bharatha went to the river and performed the traditional rites which they do at the death of the father. (*SSB 1977 p.70*)

An Ideal for Students

If one follows Dharma, he is protected by the same Dharma. Rama sacrificed all his comforts and enjoyments of royal life and endured the privations of forest life. Rama is to be taken as the ideal for the students. They should respect and obey their parents' words. The Guru, teacher comes only after the parents. (*SSS Vol.27 p.134*)

An Ideal Brother

He exemplified harmony and love among brothers. He treated his brothers as his own life – breath and showered his love equally

on all of them. Thus Rama is an example of fraternal love for every family.

The significance of Rama's example of an ideal brother should be realised. Today brothers fight among themselves, go right up to Supreme Court and even lose their lives to their bitter quarrels. Out of love for petty money and possessions, today people are prepared to sacrifice all fraternal feelings. Rama's way was different. He regarded his brothers as part of his own being and would not cause the slightest pain to them. Thereby he took his brothers to supreme state. Today brothers take their litigation to Supreme Court! This is not right at all. (*SSS Vol.27 p.109-111*)

An Ideal Husband

Rama was an ideal husband. Rama's adherence to the principle of monogamy has to be properly understood. Valmiki understood it very well. One word, one arrow, one wife was the rule for Rama. What is the reason? In the body there are many organs. But all of them are animated, nourished and sustained by the heart alone. In the same manner the wife, for the husband is only one and the husband for the wife is only one. To demonstrate to the world this ideal monogamy, Rama set an example. (*SSS Vol.27 p.111*)

Rama told *Sita* that she should stay behind to render service to his aged parents. Earlier *Sita* had listened to the advice *Rama* had given to his mother *Kausalya* when she wanted to go with *Rama* to the forest. *Rama* had told her about her duties towards her husband and said that in no circumstance should she leave him and follow *Rama*. He had told *Kausalya*: "For a wife the husband

is the Lord. The son cannot take the husband's place. The husband is primary. Your first duty is to serve my father and not come with me." Sita reminded Rama of the advice he had given to his mother and told him that he could not lay down one rule for his mother and another for herself with regard to a wife's duties towards her husband. She urged Rama to act up to his own words and take her with him. "You are going to the forest to honour your father's words. I am following you to act up to my husband's words," she said. In this manner the Ramayana demonstrates the proper relationship between husband and wife and their respective duties. (*SSS Vol.24 p.61-62*)

When Sita was abducted, Rama felt the loss as if he had lost half his body. He looked upon his wife as *Ardhangi*, one half of himself. When Rama appeared grief – stricken over the absence of Sita he wanted to merely show to the world what the loss of a wife means. He never thought of a second wife. Rama felt, "it is my duty to protect my wife." Every husband in the world should have a similar conviction. (*SSS Vol. 27 p.111*)

An ideal friend

Rama was an ideal friend. There cannot be a greater friend than Rama. There are in the world fair-weather friends who display their friendship when one is wealthy or wielding power. But if wealth and position are gone not a single friend will show his face. Rama, however, was not such a friend. He was loving, considerate and affectionate equally in weal and woe, in times of joy or sorrow. Guha was an ordinary boatman. Rama hailed him as his fourth brother and showered his love on Guha. Rama treated in the same friendly spirit everyone who came to him for

any help or to find an asylum. He thus stood out to the world as an ideal friend. (*SSS Vol.27 p.110*)

True friendship lies in regarding other people's comforts or joys or sorrow as your own. We have the example of the relationship between Rama and Sugriva. Their friendship was based on the fact that each could experience the suffering of the other as his own (*Samaana avastha*). The bond of friendship is drawn when there is recognition of sharing of experiences common to both (*SSS Vol.17 p.106*)

Today in the world, friends turn into enemies overnight. This is not right at all. Friendship should be enduring and last for all time. Normally it lasts as long as one has wealth and strength. But God's friendship is not like that. God is always with you, in you, behind you, around you. This is the kind of friendship that every man should experience. (*SSS Vol.27 p.111*)

Qualities of Rama's friends

As Sri Rama was a King, His friends too were kings. Jambavan, The king of the forest, was a Satwic friend. He became a friend of Rama out of sheer love for him. Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, was a Rajasic friend of Rama, who sought Rama's friendship for securing his help. It is out of desire for getting relief from his troubles and tribulations that he sought the help of Rama. Sugriva wanted his kingdom and wife to be restored to him. The third friend was Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana. He represents the Tamasic quality, as he belonged to Rakshasa family. (*SSS Vol.25 p.183*)

Vibhishana is satwic (supremely sacred) friend of Rama. Despite his long intimacy with Rama, Lakshmana was not in the same category. He was satwic brother, not satwic friend. Sugriva was a Rajasic friend. Jambavan was a Tamasic friend. Vibhishana, though he belonged to the Rakshasa brood, stands out as a satwic friend (pure and selfless). It is in this unalloyed purity that love shines. It is utterly invaluable. (*SSS Vol.29 p.219*)

An Ideal Enemy

Rama was an ideal enemy. In the world, it is common to see men resorting to all kinds of deceitful devices to foil their enemies. But Rama never stooped to such unworthy practices. Rama adhered to the noble heroic path **even** in dealing with his enemies.

For example, when Rama was engaged in battle with Ravana, Ravana could not stand up to the arrows of Rama. All the weapons of Ravana were destroyed. Rama noticed that Ravana was tired and weapon-less. In such a situation it was not proper to kill the enemy. There is no heroism in killing a weak or powerless man. The enemy should be destroyed when he is strong and powerful. Recognizing the plight of Ravana, Rama laid down his arms and told Ravana, "O, Ravana! You are tired and without weapons. You are not in a fit condition to carry on the fight. Go home, take rest and return to battle tomorrow. We shall resume the fight tomorrow." By displaying this kind of magnanimity towards his enemy; Rama demonstrated that he was an ideal enemy. (*SSS Vol.27 p.110*)

While fighting the battle against Ravana, Rama observed the principles of *Dharma*. He never took advantage of the weakness of his adversary, but, gave ample opportunity for the enemy to prove his strength. The example of Rama shines as an eternal star, even in the realm of the battlefield. (*SSB 1996 p.59*)

At last the battle between Rama and Ravana started. Rama had respect for Ravana though he was his enemy. He even praised the virtues of Ravana. He knew that Ravana was under the curse imposed on Jaya and Vijaya (*SSB 2002 p.107-108*)

Qualities of Rama's enemies

Rama had three enemies, whose qualities represent the three *gunas*. The first was Vali, a *Satwic* enemy because, at the end, he acknowledged his mistakes and accepted the punishment meted out to him by Rama. Ravana was the second enemy, who harboured hatred for Rama. He refused to acknowledge his mistake and was responsible for the downfall of his country. He was a *Rajasic* enemy because a *Rajasic* enemy never acknowledges his mistakes. The third enemy was Kumbhakarna was a *Tamasic* enemy. A *Tamasic* person is one who mistakes good to be bad and bad to be good. Rama put an end to all these enemies. (*SSS Vol.25 p.183-184*)

Nay, when Ravana, the worst enemy, was dying, a couple of moments before death, Rama asked Lakshmana to go to Ravana and learn certain principles of political administration.

“Look here, Lakshmana, Ravana is not an ordinary man. He

is a great worshipper of Lord Shiva, he is a great scholar, and he is great king. Go and learn political administration from him” (*Alarm Bells! Divine p.23*)

Duty as a King

On one occasion Sita was in an advanced family way. At that time Rama was the ruler and in Ramayana, people’s words were given great importance by the ruler. There is a conflict here between one’s duty as a husband and one’s duty as a king. When Rama contemplated and discussed within himself, “Is my duty as a husband more important or my duty as a king more important?” He came to the conclusion that His duty as a king was more important. The duty of a husband is an individual’s duty. The duty as a king is something which has to do with the community as a whole. After coming to the decision that His duty was more important, He decided to send Sita to the forest. Although the people thought that this was a harsh action. Rama never deviated from the path of dharma even under the most trying circumstances. (*SSB 1977 p.31*)

Rama said, in carrying out his duties of guarding and guiding his people, he should not cause any crisis or revolution- Then he disclosed what messenger gathered and conveyed to him- He said, “Brothers, our dynasty has suffered great infamy. Its name has been tarnished. This dynasty had a series of Kings and Emperors each one more famous than the others. Their might and majesty are known all over the world. There is none who won greater renown than they. They were ready to give up their lives, but they never acted contrary to their plighted word. Our dynasty has no taint attached to it. And when there was a

likelihood of its being tainted, he who hesitated to give up his life was certainly vile. Understand this well.....

Rama also explained to the people that the true Ruler considers his people alone as his kith and kin, and treats them alone as his friends. This, he said, is the code of Rama. He said that the Ruler should give up his own kith and kin when need arises, since his real kith and kin are the subjects over which he is placed. (*RKR V Part II p.305-313*)

Love Principle – Exemplified the Ideal of a Servant

Hanuman was a servant. Rama exemplified the ideal of a servant. Rama embraced hanuman and said: “Dear friend, Hanuman! You in your physical form belong to a different species. You are a monkey and I am a man. But the love principle is one and the same in both of us.” Caste and creed may vary. But the love principle is one. In all beings, in all counties, in all individuals love animates every one. Today the reign of this love principle has to be established all over the world. God is the Indweller in the heart. The heart is full of love. That love must be shared with others. It is only when the love is shared that old saying about equal – mindedness in joy and sorrow, in gain and loss, will be realised. (*SSS Vol.27 p.112*)

PARAGON OF ALL VIRTUES

Rama was the paragon of all virtues. “*Sarve Loka Hithe Rathah* (one engaged in the welfare of all). *Sarve Jnanopasampannah* (one who is endowed with all wisdom). *Sarve*

Samudhithagunaihi (one replete with all praiseworthy virtues)”. Rama embodied these ideals. (*DD 11-10-2002 p 8*)

His Soumya quality

Suka said: “First I shall describe the Soumya quality of Sri Rama. By Soumya, I mean his gentle, soft and mild nature. He wore a leaf- green gown and had yellow cloth round his waist; he had on, a golden diadem; but, he walked along with eyes on the ground, as if he was ashamed to look up; the scene melted the hearts of all who saw. No one caught him in the act of casting his look on others. He had always the inner, not the outer vision. Whenever anyone offered anything to him, He did not accept it entirely; he used to break off a bit or take out just a portion, in order to please them; or, just touched the offering with his fingers and gave it back to the person who brought it.

He moved with his father-in-law and mother-in-law, not as a son-in-law, but as a son. He seldom opened his mouth to speak to his sisters-in-law or their maids. He never lifted his face and cast his eyes on them.

All women older than himself, he revered as he revered his mother Kausalya. He considered all who were younger to them as his younger sisters; all of his age, he treated as if they were his stepmothers. (*Bhagavata Vahini p.176-177*)

Control of senses - ideal propagated by the great Avatar Rama.

Janaka, the great ruler and father of Sita, offering his daughter in marriage to Rama immediately after the latter broke Shiva Dhanush (the formidable bow of Shiva), in terms of

proclamation made by him. When Janaka repeatedly asked Rama to look at Sita and take her hand, Rama looked in a different direction because he should not look at a woman till he tied the wedding knot around her neck. This is the ideal propagated by the great Avatar Rama. (*SSS Vol.30 p.148*)

I will do my work myself - All are servants in this world.” All are one, be alike to everyone

There are many lessons that the Ramayana holds out for the entire world. One day Dasaratha noticed that the child Rama was massaging his own feet. He did not ask the services of the servants to massage his feet. Dasaratha, looking at Rama’s condition, sent for the servants immediately to massage Rama’s feet. Rama told Dasaratha, “I don’t want the services of these servants; I will do my work myself. These are my legs and not someone else’s. So I should massage my own legs without depending on others. All are servants in this world.” All are one, be alike to everyone. This was the ideal Rama demonstrated. (*SSB 2002 p.48*)

His supreme quality is sacrifice

Many people in Ayodhya knew that Rama was leaving for the forest. One aged and poor *Brahmana* exclaimed; “I hear Rama is going on to the forest for fourteen years. I do not know whether I will live so long.” Feeling thus, the old, Trijata by name, came all the way on foot to have a last glimpse of Rama. Eyes are given to man not to look at the world but to see God. Hence, the power of sight should be dedicated to God. With that aim, the old man, after enduring many hardships, came to Rama who was to be crowned at one moment was getting ready to go on exile to

the forest that very moment. Will any human being be able to bear such reversal of fortune with equal- mindedness? Will he be able to look upon both in the same manner? Anyone other than Rama would be plunged in grief. But Rama (before leaving for the forest) was engaged in giving away to the poor all his jewels and possessions. What should have been a moment of distress was turned by Rama into an occasion for distributing all to the people. Nothing is lasting in human life. No one can tell when life will come to an end, where, in what circumstances. Life may end in childhood, adolescence, middle age or old age. Death is certain. Hence man must learn to give up attachment to possessions..... Looking at Rama, he exclaimed; “Rama! You are indeed the embodiment of *Dharma*.”

Seeing the aged *Brahmana* Rama beckoned to him to come near and asked him. He asked him, “O noble Brahman! What for have you come?” The old man replied; “Swami! I am advanced in years. I do not know whether I may live that long. I wish to gaze your splendid face once, experience your love for at least a brief moment, touch your sacred feet, and redeem my life.” Rama asked him: “Have you no other desire? “I do not have any other desire. I have difficulty in living. But I am reconciled to what I deserve according to my *karma*. I am not concerned about it. I am only keen to have a vision of you, to speak to you and touch you”

Then Rama asked him what the benefit was from these three. “*Darshanam papa nashanam*” (vision of the Lord destroys all sins), “*Sparshanam karma vimochanam*” (touching the feet of the Lord frees one from bondage of Karma), “*Sambhaashana*

sankata nashanam” (conversing with the Lord dispels all distress). The old man said, “Swami! Man is haunted by the three problems: sin, consequences of his deeds and sorrow. To get rid of these things, I need a vision of you, contact with your feet and conversation with you.”

Rama was supremely pleased with the Brahmana’s words. He drew him close on himself, embraced him and asked him: “Does this give you joy?” Shedding copious tears, the old man said “I do not know what heaven is. I have no idea what Kailash or Vaikuntha. But in your embrace I have experienced all these, this is my heaven. Give me some alms. I shall return to my place.” Rama said, “Child! When you have offered me your love, I must offer my love in return. This is the way of love – give and take. As I have received your love, you must accept something from me.”

The old man carried a stick in his hand. Rama said: “Child! Through my touch you have received considerable strength. Your old age has gone. Cast your stick as far as your strength will permit. All wealth and the cows in that area covered by your throw will be yours.”

Rama’s touch had endowed the old Brahmana with immense strength. He felt he should act up to Rama’s command. “My life will be meaningless otherwise,” he thought, “Although I have no desire, I shall obey Rama’s command.” With that feeling, he hurled the stick with all his might. Thanks to the power of Rama, the stick traversed the banks of Sarayu and returned where Rama stood. Several mansions, buildings and cattle were within the

area, which came to Brahmana as Rama's gift. (*SSS Vol.27 p.112-115*)

The Brahmana said to Rama "O Lord! When I came solely to have a vision of you, why are you burdening me with so many possession?" (*SSS Vol.27 p.115*) My *gathi* (fate), *sthithi* (position), *mathi* (mind) and *sampathi* (wealth) are all your only. That is why I came to see you." Rama said, "Such persons as you are the pride of our society. (*SSS Vol.27 p.127*)

Rama replied "O noble Brahmana! This is the fruit of your good deeds in your previous life, this is not the reward earned in the present life. Imagine how many came to see me from far while I was preparing to leave for the forest? It is your wish, which stirred my love. But for the laws relating to the governance of a kingdom, I would have given the entire kingdom to you. My love for you is my greatest gift."

So, saying Rama gave the land to the Brahmana. Then Brahmana said: "This is a supreme example to all the people. Even at the moment when He was leaving for the forest and the whole of Ayodhya was plunged in grief, Rama displayed His love by giving away all His possessions, His supreme quality is sacrifice!" (*SSS Vol.27 p.112-115*)

He stuck severely to Truth

He surmised that if his father broke his word, the dynasty will earn great dishonour; so, in order to uphold the plighted word of his father and to maintain his reputation, he exiled himself into forests for 14 years. His father did not ask him to do so; but, he

learnt it from his stepmother, Kaikeyi. He never argued or gave a reply; He gave up his kingdom and started straight to the jungle. He acted correctly according to the words spoken by him. (*Bhagavath Vahini p.177*)

Truth and Dharma are the highest. There is no God higher than Truth. For this reason Vedas say—*Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara*- Speak the truth and uphold righteousness. God is present wherever these are upheld. Vashishta said *Ramo Vighrahavaan Dharmah*- Rama is the very Embodiment of dharma- because Rama never spoke a lie and always stuck to the path of *dharmam*. He walked barefoot in the forests and sacrificed everything for the sake of righteousness. To uphold a promise given by His father, He took great burden upon Himself. Without faltering, Rama adhered unflinchingly to *Satya* and *dharmam*. That is why He is the embodiment Divinity. (*SSB 1995 p.16*)

Rama scrupulously followed Sathya (truth), whereas Ravana resorted to *asathya* (untruth). There is no Dharma greater than Sathya.

Sathyam nasti Paro dharmah

Rama adhered to truth at all times “*Sathyam nasti Paro dharmah.*” For him observance of truth was the highest Dharma. He clung to Dharma tenaciously and believed that truth would be triumphant at the end. Rama was steadfast in his observance of Sathya and Dharma. (*SSB 2002 p.107*)

Rama took truth as His very basis and in that way, He gave up the kingdom that was rightfully due to Him. He never had any

aspirations for kingdoms. Ramachandra took truth as His foundation and based all His *karma* on the foundation of truth. There is no truth which is different from *dharma*.

He regarded *sathya* and *dharma* as the two foundation walls. He also regarded them as the two wheels for the chariot of His life. He propagated that with *sathya* and *dharma*, one can carry on one's life in this world. Rama is the embodiment of *dharma*. Rama's form is *dharma*, Rama's conduct is truth. (*SSB 1977 p.51-52*)

Always honoured the plighted word:

Rama went to forest in obedience to the command of his father. This caused sadness to the people of Ayodhya. Even great sages like Vashishta were in grief. Rama was the embodiment of righteousness and the repository of all good qualities. Though he was still young, His administrative skill was unparalleled. Bharatha and Shatrughna, on arrival at Ayodhya, learnt about Rama's departure to the forest and felt so shocked and grieved that they did not wish to stay even for a moment in Ayodhya and take up the rulership of the kingdom as he alone was the right one to rule. All the people of Ayodhya followed to reinforce them. Even Vashishta accompanied them to reinforce their efforts to bring back Rama back to Ayodhya. All of them entreated Rama to return to Ayodhya and take over the reins of administration of the kingdom.

Sage Jabali, who was a *Jnani*, argued like an atheist. He said that one has several fathers and mothers during one's various births in previous lives and such relationships are only temporary like

passing clouds. ‘In your case, the sage said, “your father is already dead and gone. There is no point in your adhering to the command of a person who is no more. By your not agreeing to rule the kingdom, you are causing a lot of distress to the people who may be led astray. You should not ignore the wishes of the living multitude in trying to honour the words of a dead person. So, I entreat you to accede to the request of the people and return to Ayodhya to take over the reins of the ruler.”’

Rama replied calmly: “Oh Sage! I thought you are a very learned savant and scholar well – versed in the scriptures. It is not becoming of you to argue in this manner. I consider it rather unbecoming on your part to ask me to ignore the command on my father because he has passed away. I have promised to carry out his command. I have given my word and I am still alive. How can I go back on my word? It is better to give up the body than to go back one’s word. One should be ever grateful to one’s parents, whether they alive or dead. A ungrateful son should be considered blind and worthless. Many pray to the Sun as *Himaghnaaya namah*. When the sun rises, the sorrow melts away. (*Hima* means snow) He is also worshipped as *Thamoghnaaya namah* that is the destroyer of *Tamas* (darkness). Darkness cannot co – exist with light. He is also called *Krithaghnaaya namah*. He is the destroyer of a person who has no gratitude. It is the Sun that gives light to the eyes to see. The Sun renders blind those who are ungrateful. I shall be the worst sinner. All people will follow me and become sinners. Do you want me to set such bad example? It is ridiculous to think that I will go back on my word?”

On hearing these words of high wisdom uttered by Rama, Jabali prostrated before him and begged his pardon. He said, “Oh Rama! I am not against Truth! There is nothing that is not known to you. I had made use of this argument only to support the people of Ayodhya, who love you, and want to return to Ayodhya to rule over them.”

Rama always set a fine example for the people to follow. He sent Sita to the forest on hearing an ordinary citizen talking disparagingly about Sita being taken back by Rama even after she had been in the custody of his enemy, Ravana, for some months Rama did this out of respect for popular opinion. Rama has established such a society to follow at all times. That is why He is hailed as *Purushottahama* (the noblest of all Purusha). In justifying his action in following the command of his father he explained to the Rishis elaborately the essence of divinity. In the Gita Krishna says:

*Kavim puraanaam Anushaasithaaram
Anoraneeyan samanusedhyah
Sarvasya dhaathaaram Achinthyaruupam
Aadhityavarnam Thanasah parasthaath.*

(The Being who is wise, ancient the ruler, smaller than the smallest, the sustainer of all, inconceivable form, resplendent like the sun and beyond the darkness of ignorance).

There is no *Kavi* (poet) other than the Lord. All that is in verse form is not poetry. “*Thrikaala vaakyam Kavi*” (The Poet is one who has a vision of the past, the present and the future). Man

knows only the past, the present. How can one know the future? How is the Divine poet able to see the future too? Because God is Omniscient and beyond time and space, He is not affected by passage of time. He is changeless and permanent. (SSS Vol.27 p.130-133)

Ramo Vighrahaan Dharmah

Sri Rama's incarnation as a human being was for the purpose of promoting peace and happiness in the world. It was as if Righteousness itself incarnated on earth, *Dharma*²⁰⁶ and Rama are inseparable. (SSS Vol.22 p.65-66)

Sage Vashishta said, "*Ramo Vighrahan Dharma*" (Rama is the personification of Dharma). Dharma itself incarnated in the form of Rama. (SSS Vol.40 p.104)

When Dharma was showing signs of decline, Rama appeared to protect *Dharani* (the earth), *Dharma Patni* (his consort) and *Dharma* (Righteousness). It was for these three- fold purposes that Rama Avatar took place. (SSS Vol.23 p.212-213)

Rama is Dharma, Dharma is Rama. The four ideals of man as laid in Vedas are *Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha*; *Dharma* is the very base. If that is given up or disregarded, sorrow will persist. Rama considered Dharma as all – important. When his

²⁰⁶ *Yuga means an era. This day is called not Samvathsaraadi, New Year day, but Yugaadi, the first day of a New Era. The era indicated is the Dharma – Yuga or the Rama – yuga, for, Rama is identified as the very embodiment of Dharma (righteousness): Ramo vighrahan Dharmah. The prime duty, of everyone who participates in this celebration, therefore is to adhere to Dharma, to support Dharma and to foster Dharma. (SSS Vol.13 p.208)*

Bharatha, overpowered by grief as his father's death, his mother's greed, and his brother's exile sought in the forest and, meeting him, rolled on his feet in terrible anguish, Rama lifted him gently and asked – what do you think he asked? – he asked him, “Are you maintaining Dharma in the kingdom of Ayodhya, respecting the subjects, the poor, the elders, the scholars, the saints and the sages?” Even when the direst calamity overtakes man, he should not stray away from the path of morality and justice. Rama was wakening Bharatha from the sleep of ignorance; the poor fellow was overcome by his own grief, as if the father, mother, brothers, kingdom, power and position – these mattered, as if they were real, eternal; Rama reminded him that they are all but instruments one must utilise for the exercise of Dharma. (*SSS Vol.5 p.14-15*)

The effulgence of the Lord is equal to that of one crore Suns. The Lord's face is beaming with the brilliance of the Sun. On being struck by the radiant effulgence in Rama's face, Sabari became ecstatic and described it as that of the blemish-less full moon. The faces of the present day men look like a jungle with dense growth of beards and sideburns. Brilliance is absent. Rama's face was spotless because his heart was pure and was filled with the feelings of sacrifice. He never did anything for himself. Wherever he did was only for Lokasmrakshana (the welfare of the world). (*SSS Vol.27 p.133-134*)

Valmiki extolled Rama, who gave up the kingdom, donned the robes of an ascetic and lived a simple life in the forest. What is the reason? It was because Rama was the very embodiment of *Dharma*. Every one of his actions

stemmed from *Dharma*. Every word he spoke was truth. Every step he trod was based on *Dharma*. Hence, Rama has been described as the very image of *Dharma*.²⁰⁷ What is the inner meaning of the fact that the great sages attached no value to wealth or possessions or intellectual abilities, but esteemed only righteousness as of supreme value? It shows their concern to demonstrate to the world the truth that the world is based on *Dharma* and that *Dharma* is vital for the life of man. (*SSS Vol.24 p.205*)

No trace of Adharma / His is Karuna Rasa

Rama appeared as *Maya - Manusha - Rupa*; He stuck to Dharma in daily practice even from His infancy. He is personification of Dharma. There is no trace of *Adharma* in Him. His Divine Nature is revealed in *Santha Guna* and *Karuna Rasa*; meditate on Him and you are filled with Prema for all beings; dwell on His Story and you find all the agitations of your mind quietening in perfect calm.

When Thataki had to be killed, He argued, hesitated and desisted, until Viswamitra convinced Him that she had to be liberated from a curse by His own arrow. That is a sign of His *Karuna Rasa*. (*SSS Vol.3 p.2*)

²⁰⁷ It is often said that Rama followed *Dharma* at all times. This is not the correct way of describing him. He did not follow *Dharma*; he was *Dharma*. What he thought, spoke and did was *Dharma*, is *Dharma* for ever. (*SSS Vol.19 p.72*)

Rama's heart is filled with Compassion

He gave refuge to anyone who took shelter in him and surrendered to him. When the *Vanaras* (Monkey hordes) and the *Rakshasas* (Ogres) were engaged in deadly combat during the battle in Lanka with the wicked Ravana, some Rakshasas changed themselves into Vanaras (Monkeys) and penetrated behind the lines. They were promptly caught by the Vanara scouts and brought before him, for drastic punishment. But Rama stopped the Vanaras from torturing them. He told them that they had come to take refuge in him and declared that it was his vow to pardon all those who surrender to him, whatever their wrongs. He had thus given refuge to the brother of Ravana and treated him as his own brother Lakshmana. 'If he says once, I am yours. He is mine forever.'

Rama announced. Rama lived Dharma and taught Dharma through his every act. He established Dharma by practice and precept. He fostered and guarded good men (*Sadhus*). He removed the sufferings of the godly. He drew them near himself. Their lives were fulfilled through his grace. He recognised no distinctions of high and low. He was a master of all the Sastras. He knew the meaning of all the Vedas.” (*Bhagavata Vahini p.177*)

“Rama transformed the world into a realm of righteousness, through his varied activities and example. During the great Horse Sacrifice that he performed, all the sages and scholars of ritual who had assembled honoured him as a great upholder of tradition and culture. His compassion and softness of heart are beyond description; no words can convey their depth and extent. He

placed the dying eagle—Jatayu—a bird, which no one will ordinarily honour—on his lap. He wiped, with his own flowing hair, the dust that had enveloped it. When it breathed its last, he performed the obsequies, even as a son does when his father dies! (*Bhagavata Vahini p.178*)

Rama's Compassion

The unique quality of Rama was His compassion for all living beings. His nature was to shower love and affection on every living being and show compassion to all being. The *Rama thathwa* was unique in the sense He showered love and affection on all and wished good for even those who did harm to Him. On one occasion, when Bharatha was finding fault with his mother for sending Rama to the forest, Rama condemned the action of Bharatha and told him that reviling one's own mother was a great sin. After killing Ravana, Rama has a vision of His late father Dasaratha in an ecstatic mood and he requested Rama to ask a boon. Sri Rama told him, "Father! I am extremely happy to have your darshan. I shall be grateful and feel happy if you can kindly forgive mother Kaikeyi and her son Bharatha and withdraw the curses you heaped on them. That is all I wish from you." Earlier when Sri Rama set himself on His journey to the forests as per the wishes of Queen Kaikeyi, Dasaratha with uncontrollable sorrow and frustration cursed her saying "Oh! Kaikeyi! May you go to hell. I will not receive the *pindam* (the oblations that are made to the deceased ancestors) at the hands of your son." Sri Rama requested His late father, King Dasaratha to withdraw these harsh words. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.30-31*)

Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah:

Be right, righteousness will save you
Practise it loyally; it will save you, sustain you,
strengthen you.

(SSS Vol.7 p.273)

`Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah'

Dharma protects those who protect Dharma

We should, however, also bear in mind a corollary of the foregoing statement; *`Dharma eva hatohanti'* (Dharma destroys those who try to destroy dharma). Thus, dharma is not only a metaphysical concept but also a powerful moral force to be reckoned with. One who deviates from the path of dharma will have to pay a price for it in the long run. *(SSB 1979 p.171)*

Dharma must be surging from the heart as the cool energising water of Prema and Shanti, Love and Peace. You can learn what exactly Dharma is from Ramayana. Rama is the very embodiment of Dharma; every word and every deed is resonant with its message. *(SSS Vol.7 p.215)*

Character, Conduct, daily behaviour, attitude towards others, these are all-important, for Dharma is essentially Social Morality. The Sruti says *`Dharma Viswasya Jagathah Prathistah'*: On Dharma, the World is installed; Dharma endows man with joy and keeps grief away. Every being in the world whether it is aware of it not is dependent on Dharma, for peace and happiness. All triumphs, whether acknowledged so or not, are earned only through Dharma. *(SSS Vol.9 p.11)*

Rama had dharma as His sword and shield

Kausalya counselled Rama at the start of his exile in the forest, “The Dharma which you are scrupulously observing will guard you.” That was the farewell she gave²⁰⁸, not a banquet of tasty dishes. The ten-headed Ravana who held the Gods in chains could not stand up to Rama, who had dharma as His sword and shield. Rama was happy when others were happy. He grieved when others were in grief. That is the trait which He wanted man to learn. So, while avoiding pain from others, be vigilant not to cause pain to others, too. Then, you attract the grace of the Lord, not when you contrive by tricks to harm others, or revel in the misery of others, or concentrate on your own happiness and progress, irrespective of the injury you mete out to others. The grief you cause others will suffocate you after getting hardened into hatred. It will recoil on our own head, with tenfold force. If you are established in *Atma tathwam*, you need not fear. Of course you must be afraid of wrong, of injustice, of cruelty, of sin. But, why fear when you have the security granted by *satya*, *dharma*, *nyaya* and *prema* – truth, righteousness, justice and love? (SSS Vol.4 p.293-294)

Cherish Dharma (the code of right conduct)

To carry out the promises of his father, Rama renounced the kingdom and chose to live in exile for fourteen years in the

²⁰⁸ She declared: "May that *Dharma* for protecting which you are going to the forest protect you always. May you have for your protection all the *raksha* (amulets) which Gouri and other great mothers gave to their sons when they went out to fight the forces of evil!" Thus Rama received the blessings of his mother, step-mother and all others when he set out for the forest to honour his father's word. (SSS Vol.24 p.64)

forest. He did not aspire for power or position. He cherished Dharma. (*SSS Vol.27 p.272-273*) Rama Upheld Dharma Even In Adversity²⁰⁹ (*SSS Vol.33p. 82*)

Looking at the body of Ravana after his death, Vibhishana expressed unwillingness to perform the last rites that are usually performed. Vibhishana thought that Ravana was a very great sinner, that he was thinking badly of Rama, the incarnation of the Lord, and that it was not right to perform the obsequies of such a person. Rama, who was an embodiment of dharma, called Vibhishana and said, “If there is any dislike for a person that should not go beyond death. Let it end with his death. All hatred should disappear with the death of the person.” Rama asked Vibhishana, “Will you, as a brother, perform the obsequies or shall I perform the obsequies?” As soon as he heard these words, from Rama, Vibhishana realised his mistake and was prepared to perform the last rites. (*SSB 1977 p.17-18*)

Sthitaprajna

Everything was ready for his coronation; but, at the last minute, when he was exiled and had to go to the forests, the populace of Ayodhya wailed in uncontrollable anguish; but Rama moved out of City and kingdom, with as much joy and equanimity as he had, when he moved towards the throne for the coronation! What greater example is need than this, for the Sthitaprajna (the person

²⁰⁹ Kausalya exhorted Rama when he went into the forest, “May the Dharma which you are upholding by this act, be your guardian when you are in the forest, as an exile.” And Rama too upheld Dharma even under most trying circumstances. (*SSS Vol.3 p.174*)

who is calm and beyond all agitations)? (*Bhagavata Vahini p.178*)

He maintained equanimity

Rama was not elated when his father proposed to enthrone him; nor was he depressed when, even as he was being led to the throne, his father proposed that he spend fourteen years as an exile in the forest! He was cool when Parasurama challenged him to battle, for having bent and broken the bow of Siva, as when he broke it and won the hand of Sita. (*SSS Vol.6 p.140*)

Demonstrated the Spirit of Equanimity –

He showed that pain and pleasure, profit or loss, victory or defeat were the same to him. In human life pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow alternate all the time. It is not a good quality to welcome pleasure and turn away pain. You must welcome the same joyous spirit in which you greet happiness. Happiness has no value unless there is also sorrow. That is why it is said: ‘Pleasure is not secured by pleasant measure.’ Pain is needed to secure pleasure. Rama demonstrated to the world the truth of this concept. (*SSS Vol.31 p.72*)

He suffered with perfect equanimity

He suffered, with perfect equanimity, grievous hardships, in order to preserve the plighted word of his father. His sincere persistence in carrying on the promise made by His father is an inspiration and an example to every son of man. (*Bhagavata Vahini p.178-179*)

Treated Vanaras with as much affection as He had for His brothers

His very appearance cast a charm on all who saw Him. Love, Beauty and Virtue emanated from Him and spread all around Him. He treated the Vanaras (monkey-tribals) with as much affection as He had towards His brothers, Bharatha, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. (*Bhagavath Vahini p.178*)

Suffered like an Ordinary man

Everyone has to face the consequences of his actions, whoever he may be. No one can know what lies ahead for him in future. But this much is sure that everybody has to reap the consequences of his actions. Even the mighty Rama suffered the pain of separation from His consort Sita and cried like an ordinary person. (Telugu poem) (*SSS Vol. 39 p.62-63*)

Atmaanandam

Today devotees tend to get elated when they experience pleasure and get depressed when they face adversity. This is the result of attachment to the body. In Rama's days, there was not this body-consciousness. People were indifferent to the body. They were immersed in Atmaanandam (the bliss of the Spirit) (*SSS Vol.30 p.95*)

Atmaabhirama and Abhinaya-rama

Atmaabhirama and Abhinaya-rama (Rama the Divine Spirit and Rama the actor). Rama acted his role without attachment to the body. (*SSS Vol.30 p.95*)

Most of the time Rama would remain in His own world, totally preoccupied. Often He would seem to be writing something in the air. One day Dasaratha summoned Sage Vashishta and asked him if he could explain the reason for Rama's strange behaviour. He sat in meditation for some time and said, 'these are the signs of Divinity. He may be conversing with the beings at times. He has attachment towards the Self.' This is the true meaning of Divinity. (*Dasara Discourses 2001 p.95*)

Sri Rama's example of an ideal life

Rama was prepared to honour a boon given by his father to his step-mother in fulfilment of an old promise. He renounced the throne at the moment of coronation and elected to go to the forest as an exile. Eminently qualified as he was to become the ruler, nevertheless he chose to go to the forest to honour his father's plighted word. This is a glorious example of an ideal life. Today people would set at nought promises given by the father and place their self-interest in the forefront. Rama demonstrated to the world that men born in the *Ikshvaku* dynasty were unflinching in honouring the pledges of the fathers. Rama was prepared to face any ordeals and troubles in upholding this sacred principle. Rama was ever active in fulfilling the wishes and responding to the opinions of the people. Highly sensitive even to the remarks of a petty washerman, Rama sent away Sita to the forest out of a feeling that the washer-man's comment might be an indication of the unspoken feelings of many others among his subjects. Rama stands out as an ideal ruler intensely responsive to the wishes of the people. *Today persons who are incompetent and unworthy are aspiring for positions of power. This is utterly wrong. This is the reason for the nation finding*

itself in the doldrums today. The disastrous decline of Bharat is entirely due to the incompetence of those in power. Men of character, who are totally free from self-interest, should occupy the seats of power. Rama demonstrated the ideal relations that should exist between the ruler and the ruled. (SSS Vol.24 p.59-60)

6.7 PATHITHAPAAVANA - TEACHINGS AND ADVICE

PATHITHAPAAVANA

God is happy when He rescues those in agony:

The Lord likes to be called *Aartha-thraana-paraayana* (protection of, and devoted to, the distressed and oppressed) more than any other name, for He is most happy when He rescues those in agony. See how He yielded to the entreaties of Sugriva who required Him to demonstrate His prowess before surrendering to Him! He wanted to rescue Sugriva, who had lost his kingdom and his queen, and so He was willing to be put to test by that apprehensive supplicant! Bharatha gave up his mother, his throne and all his wealth and power; he revelled in travail and poverty, he dwelt only in the thought of Rama in the forest and denied himself everything that his brother could not get. By constant contemplation on Rama, even his complexion changed into Rama's. (*SSS Vol.6 Second Edition p.128-129*)

Rama was the redeemer of the fallen - Pathithapaavana. He redeemed and gave salvation to three characters in the Ramayana. They are Sabari, Guha and Jatayu. Sabari was a

helpless and hapless old woman with no one to look after her. Her preceptor told her about Lord Rama. She was yearning for the arrival of Ramachandra whom she considered to be her saviour. She was deeply absorbed in the contemplation of Rama's name at all times and in all places. One day sage Matanga said to her, "O, Sabari, Lord Narayana has descended on the earth in the form of Rama. He is living in the garb of an ascetic. He will be soon arriving here. But I will not be alive at the time of his arrival. He is an embodiment of immaculate purity. Greet him and honour him with devotion".

From that day, Sabari started preparing herself for the arrival of Sri Rama. Since she thought that Rama might ask her to give him something to eat, she would gather all sorts of fruits, and to satisfy herself that the fruits were sweet, she would taste them first and keep only the sweetest ones for her Lord. That was how Sabari transformed herself into a Satwic devotee. Rama responded to her inmost prayers and Sabari in the end merged herself in Rama.

Guha, the forest chief, was another to be redeemed by Rama. Though he was a friend of Rama, his life as a forester was filled with wrongful acts; nevertheless, he never gave up contemplation of Lord Rama's name. Among the fallen, he belonged to the Rajasic category because of his worldly life.

The third pathitha to be redeemed by Rama was Jatayu. He yearned to serve Rama and was eagerly waiting for the arrival of Rama from the day Rama entered the forest, as an ascetic. A great opportunity to serve Rama's cause presented itself to him.

When he sighted Ravana carrying away Sita he fought to the bitter end to rescue Sita from Ravana. When he fell mortally wounded and succumbed to the injuries, Lord Rama performed the last rites for Jatayu, a service denied to his father Dasaratha. (*SSS Vol. 25 p.184-185*)

**God intercedes in time to save the devotees–
*Bhaktharakshana:***

Now that I referred to *Namasmarana*, I shall tell you another story. There was a merchant who was exhorted by his teacher to repeat the Name of the Lord; he pleaded he had no time to sit and repeat it: the shop took up all his time and energy. He had to go out a little away from the village every morning for answering the calls of nature. He spent about half an hour for this. So, the *Guru* asked him to use this time for the daily *smarana*. Hanuman, the great *Ramabhaktha* (a devotee of Lord Rama) was passing through the sky, when he saw the merchant defecating and heard him repeat Ram, Ram, Ram while so engaged. Hanuman was incensed at his impertinence; he was desecrating the Name by pronouncing it while unclean. So, he gave him a hard blow on the cheek and continued his journey to Ayodhya.

When he reached the Divine Presence and looked at the splendour-filled face of Rama, he noticed the swollen red print of a hand upon His cheek. Hanuman was shocked and His grief was too deep for words. Rama told him, Hanuman! Do not ask Me the name of the person who dealt this blow. I always anticipate the moment of calamity for my *bhakthas* (devotees) and I intercede in time to save them. That poor merchant, sitting outside the village, who was repeating My Name when you were

coming here, could he withstand the terrible onslaught of your angry fist? The fellow would have collapsed on the spot. So, I intercepted the blow and received it on my own cheek, my dear Hanuman. *Bhaktharakshana* (protection of devotees) is one of His main tasks. "*Yogakshemam Vahaamyaham*" (welfare and safety) is no empty assurance; it is the Vow of the Lord, and He is *Sathya-swaroop*a--very embodiment of Truth. (*SSS Vol.5 p.226*)

Rama's Vow to protect those who surrender to him:

Rama said to Sugriva²¹⁰, "My vow is to protect all those who surrender to Me. Even if the person surrendering is our enemy, to make an exception in his case is wrong. I shall not give up any being that surrenders to Me; even if it involves the sin of slaying a billion Brahmins. I shall guard him and foster him as My own life breath, if he surrenders". (*RKR Part II p.166-167*)

Rama is Anaatha as He has no Lord above Him

The most precious human life is devalued. A beggar calls himself an anaatha (one without anyone to support him), while asking for alms. This is not correct. For everyone, God is the *Naatha* (support). It is only God who is Anaatha, because there is no one above Him. Thyagaraja considered Rama as his saviour and protector and did not care for the wealth of the world. He considered service at Rama's feet as the greatest treasure. (*SSS Vol.26 p.178*)

²¹⁰ See Chapter, *Sugriva - When Vibhishana comes to Rama's Camp*:

TEACHINGS AND ADVICE

Matru devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava

When he reached the apartments of Kaikeyi, Rama learnt about what was happening, but Rama resolved to respect the wishes of his father as he knew that it was his duty to follow a path which would give happiness to his father and therefore he came back to Sita with a resolve to obey his father's commands. When He came home he found that Sita was doing puja to the Lord. Sita is herself divine and there is an inner meaning in the act of her worshipping the Lord. Great people, persons who have all the sacredness in them also do such things only because they want to set an example for others to follow.

Every man and woman looks to a leader to see what and whom he can follow. Thus, when Rama looked at Sita in worship, he asked Sita what she was doing. She replied that she was worshipping the Lord for the sake of maintaining the reputation of Rama and for the sake of happiness of the people in the kingdom. Considering that it was a good opportunity for him to give good advice for people in the world, Rama told Sita that it is not right for her to worship something which was abstract especially when father and mother who sacrificed so much to bring them up were available as living human beings. He said that one's father and mother were equivalent to living Gods²¹¹.
(SSB 1974 p.217)

²¹¹ You must understand that all life on earth is the aspect of God and in particular Father and Mother are to be regarded as living gods. If you cannot pray for the welfare of the community around you in whom God lives, how is it possible for you to worship an invisible God? The first

All mothers are Goddesses

Once when Sita was teaching how to worship God, Rama intervened and said: "Oh simple-minded one! Who is greater in the world than the mother and the father? They know our difficulties and needs. They are able to understand our feelings. They are able to fulfil all our wants. Having such known entities who take interest in your welfare, why should you go after unknown entities²¹²?" At all times, the parents are there looking after you, you have to worship them. The mother can be compared to the earth and the father to the seed. Unless the seed is sown in the earth the plant will not sprout. You cannot ignore the father and mother who are responsible for your birth and growth. Even if you become the Prime Minister you must remember you owe your birth in the world to your mother. You must develop humility and discrimination as a mark of education. You should not discard love of God at any time. If you forget God, you are not human but demonic. Money, beauty and youth will not last long. (*SSS Vol.28 p.126-127*)

Love your Motherland

The culture of Bharat has given utmost importance to mother. One refers to one's country as motherland not fatherland. Country is the mother and culture is the father. Never forget your country and its culture²¹³. (*SSS Vol.32 Part II p.147*)

thing that you have to do is to look after the welfare of the community around you. (*SSB 1974 p.218*)

²¹² All mothers are goddesses. That is why in Bharat, people follow the maxim: Esteem the mother, the father, the teacher and the guests as God. (*SSS Vol.28 p.126*)

²¹³ Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba says: Embodiments of Love: Mother is responsible for the birth of everyone. Just as Brahma is the creator of all

After the annihilation of Ravana, when Rama was requested to take over the reins of Lanka, He declared:

Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gareeyasi
(Mother and motherland are greater than heaven
itself).

One who does not have love and regard for one's own mother land, one's own mother tongue and one's own religion is a living corpse! (*SS June, 98 p.154-155*)

Sugriva prayed holding the feet of Rama after the victory and Hanuman also repeated the same thing that 'Bharatha is already ruling over the kingdom. It would be better if you take charge of Lanka and rule it and teach the Rakshasas the righteous path. Lakshmana also said the same thing. He said 'Swami, Ayodhya is being ruled by Bharatha. Lanka is golden. There is no dearth of wealth. It has surrendered to you. It is better you rule Lanka.' (*DTB8 -p.2/3*)

the created, it is the mother who is the creator of all. You should always respect this motherly feeling. This is motherland. This is mother earth. Mother and motherland are superior to heaven'. It is our responsibility to revere our mother and motherland. That is your goal of your life.

May be due to the defective educational system or the company, we have no respect for our own country while you follow other lands. It does not matter if you go anywhere. You do job in any country. You earn money anywhere but never forget your own motherland. This is my motherland. This is my mother tongue. One who cannot declare that this my motherland and this is my mother tongue is a living corpse. So, first we should not forget our motherland. This is also said by Rama.

In Treta Yuga, after the destruction of Ravana, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were ready to leave Lanka for Ayodhya. At that time Lakshmana spoke to Rama, “I doubt if we return to Ayodhya, we will get back our kingdom. Kaikeyi might have installed Bharatha on throne. We left Ayodhya for the forest in response to the command of father. Ayodhya may not be in a prosperous condition now. You know that Lanka is more prosperous than heaven itself. Would it be not better for you to be the Ruler of Lanka and enjoy all that this country can offer?” (*SSS Vol.11 p.58*)

Then Rama said ‘Mad man, for the simple reason that one is healthy and so beautiful, I cannot call anyone else as my mother. She may be weak and ugly, but my mother continues to be my mother. That is the only faith I have. Bharat may be in any condition but this country is my mother.’ Students, you should have all this moral and ethical values and follow the path given to us by the ancient Rishis and set an ideal to the rest of the society. (*DTB8 -p2/3*)

Respect for the elders

In the story of Rama, especially in His younger days, the manner in which He used to respect the elders, the manner in which he used to show affection and obedience to his mothers, and the manner in which He treated others around Him must be taken as an important lesson and as an example to all of us. These are things which young students should know very well. In Rama, we see a great amount of humility. There were many *rishis* in the forest, and Rama used to go and pay respects to them, but the *rishis* were all the time proclaiming, apparently only as a facade

for the world, that they were very wise people, and that Rama was only the son of a king. The truth is that behind this facade, in their minds, they had the greatest devotion and respect for the divinity in Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.16*)

Recognise the Divinity in the Human Form:

When Rama went to the forest with Sita, one day he told her: "Bhujjaatha! In this world there are no greater adorable deities than one's mother and father. When one has near to him a loving mother, who cares for him continually and fosters his well-being, without adoring her as Divine, how can a man contemplate on a Being that is subtle and beyond his daily experience? The Divine transcends all human understanding. How can this be recognised? People who cannot comprehend the hearts of parents who are close to them, whose love they experience in daily life, how can they comprehend the Absolute, which the Upanishads declare is beyond the reach of speech and the mind? Hence, the injunction that the mother and the father should be adored as Divine. It was my foremost duty to carry out the will of my father."

However, if we wish to understand the Divinity that transcends the human understanding, we should seek to reach a level above the human. Till that is reached, we have to experience everything at the human level alone. Living as a human being, how can one recognize That which transcends the human capacity?

Therefore, in the first instance, man must try to live as a human being. He has to recognise the divinity that dwells in the human form. Man has to cultivate faith in the truth and live accordingly.

Leading a life of dedicated service, man must enjoy the fruit of *Prema* (Divine Love). The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. (*SSS Vol.26 p.145*)

Acquire God's grace through faith

Faith in God is the guarantee of victory. Thyagaraja said "Oh Rama, if I have the benefit of your grace (Anugraha) all the nine planets (the Navgrahas) will be subject to me ". Hence if we acquire God's love, we can achieve anything in life. Love is the one all-pervading element. Everyone has to strive to make that love the basis of his life. (*D3 p.55*)

Do your duty and grace will overflow, unasked

Adugakuve O Manasa!
Adugu Koladi Adi Adugunu Padunani
Adugakunna Pani Vadigaanagunani
Adugani Sabarini Aadarinchade!

Do not ask, O Mind!
The more you ask, the lower it is placed.
Without asking, the task proceeds quickly.
Sabari, who never asked, was showered with Grace!

Dasaratha, the father of Rama, cried for Rama repeatedly and begged Him to stay near. But poor Dasaratha died a broken-hearted man, separated from Rama. On the other hand, Jatayu did not beg Rama for favours. He did his duty, to the extent that he sacrificed his life trying to save Sita Devi, Even in his last moments, Jatayu worried only about Rama's troubles, As a

result, Rama rested Jatayu on His thigh and performed his funeral rites like a son.

Many sages begged Rama for favours and waited for Him in their hermitages. Instead of rewarding them, Rama chose to go to Sabari. Sabari didn't ask Him anything directly but only through her heart. God knows what to give to whom, when, where and how. Therefore, do your duty and God's Grace will overflow, unasked. (*SSB 1995 p.24-25*)

Speak less:

In His childhood Rama spoke very little. He was conducting Himself in that manner in order to show the world the ideal that is contained in limited speech. Limited talking will always promote the divine strength in one and will also promote his memory. It creates respect for him in the community. If one talks too much, it will, to an extent, destroy one's memory. Not only this, if one talks too much, the strength in the nerves will diminish and the person will become somewhat feeble.

It is in this context that all great saints were observing the path of silence, whenever possible. By observing silence, one can get strength. Because the youth of today talk too much, it so happens that their memory becomes weak; and when they go to the examination hall, they forget what they have read. Amongst the many ideals which Rama has given to the young people, the first one is to talk less. The second one is that when you meet elders, to show them respect. The third one is to happily obey the orders of one's parents. (*SSB 1977 p.18*)

Rama expounds the rights and duties of a son:

Rama²¹⁴ said, “A son who delights in sin might act against the command. I am not such a son. Whatever Father commands, I will bow my head in reverential homage.”

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

It is the recognition by Buddhi of true nature of the Self. The man of intelligence is one who has realised his own true Self. The Buddhi thus, is not to be regarded as an ordinary aspect of mind. It could be described as an image of the Atma, a reaction and an echo of the Atma. Only after understanding the true nature of the Buddhi will the students will be able to know whether they are guided by intelligence or by the delusions

After Rama’s return from Lanka, Kaikeyi, who felt penitent about all that she had done, sought Upadesha (spiritual guidance) from Rama to atone for her wrongs. Rama did not give her the advice directly, but indicated it indirectly. This is characteristic of all Avatars from ancient times. Avatars seldom give advice directly. What they wish to convey, they give indirectly. The reason is: there is divinity present in each human being and it is by making man realise it that he should be enabled to correct himself. If the correctives are applied directly, man will never try to realise his divinity. The indirect method is used to give to man the capacity to understand his divinity. (*SSS Vol.23 p.119-120*)

²¹⁴ Under Section, *Rama*, See chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Rama expounds the rights and duties of a son:*

Rama’s deliberations with Sages and Seers

When Sri Rama had made the Panchavati his home and that he was residing there, many ascetics²¹⁵ came, with the intention of solving the doubts that pestered them, while trying to understand the scriptures, and while attempting to define and interpret the Codes of Morality or the texts on Rituals. Others prayed to Rama and sought to clarify from Him whether the ascetic practices they were following were correct and beneficial. Since Rama was master of all Dharmas and since He knew full well all the scriptures, they derived the fullest satisfaction from His answers and directives²¹⁶. Each one was filled with joyous contentment. *(RKR Part II p.22)*

Teaches Sabari the nine-fold devotion:

Rama said (to *Sabari*): Mother! Devotion is the thing I need. The rest are subsidiary. Other things like scholarship, intelligence, status, social prestige, caste, I do not pay attention to them. They are of no value in my eyes. I relish the sweetness of devotion saturated with love. I seek only that²¹⁷. *(RKR Part II p.75)*

²¹⁵ Under Section, *Rama*, See chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita -- Rama’s deliberations with Sages and Seers:*

See also Chapter, *Athri*

²¹⁶ Under Section, *Rama*, See chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita -- Panchavati*

²¹⁷ See Chapter, *Sabari* - **Rama’s Teachings and Advice on nine-fold devotion –“I relish the sweetness of devotion saturated with love. I seek only that”:**

See also under this chapter - **Rama’s commentary on Bhakthas and His Dasas:**

Rama Taught both Vishnu and Shiva should be adored alike:

Once Rama desired to install a linga of Shiva while He was going to the south for the recovery of Sita. He had asked Hanuman to bring a linga from the Himalayas within a stipulated time for performing the installation. As Hanuman did not come in time, Rama created a linga and performed the *Prahastha* ceremony. Hanuman, who adored Rama more than any other deity, threw away the linga nonchalantly.

Later, while walking, Rama's foot hit against a stone in the ground. Rama appeared as if he had lost his balance. Lakshmana asked Rama what had happened. Rama said that it was a small stone. Hanuman came forth and said that he would pull out the stone lest someone else should stumble on it. Rama was inwardly seeking to test Hanuman and teach him a lesson.

He remarked: "Hanuman! You are capable of carrying mountains. Why do you bother about this small pebble? I shall walk more carefully. It is no fault of the pebble." Hanuman, however, was determined to remove the pebble. It was a mark of his simian nature. He tried to remove the pebble with his left hand. He could not remove it. Later he used all his strength, but the pebble could not be removed. He was surprised and asked Rama: "Lord! What is this mystery?" Rama remarked: "Oh! It's nothing." He stepped forth and lifted the pebble with a toe and flung it afar. That pebble was in fact the linga which Hanuman had cast away.

An effulgence emerged from the linga and merged in Rama. And effulgence from Rama entered the linga. Rama thereby wanted to

demonstrate to Hanuman that there was no difference between Him and Shiva. He taught that both Vishnu and Shiva should be adored alike²¹⁸. (*SSS Vol.29 p.297-299*)

Bhakti or devotion to God is not enough - it must be coupled with purity of heart-

Man does not live by bread alone. He lives by the Atma. *Bhakthi* (devotion) and *Prapatthi* (surrender), and not *bhukti* (greed) and *yukti* (deceit), should form the basis for man's life and lead to the blossoming of spiritual wisdom in his heart.

Saint Ramadas was a great devotee of Rama and he composed thousands of verses in His adoration. He wanted to know which of them really appealed to Rama. However, he had no way of knowing and so he gathered the leaves of his manuscript and dropped them into the river Godavari. All but a few leaves, containing a hundred verses, sank in the water. Only a hundred appealed to Rama as they were composed with sincerity of feeling and one-pointed attention. They were the greatest compositions of Ramadas. They were spontaneous creations of a

²¹⁸ Today people have their own preferences regarding the deities they adore: Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Sai and so on. Why cherish such differences? God is one. Names and forms differ according to differences in taste. But the Divine is one alone. When you develop the feeling of spiritual oneness of all beings, you become one with the Divine.

Do not consider God as distant from you. Do not also entertain the crazy notion that if you worship Him, He will appear before you. Offer yourself to Him and in a moment you will experience Him within you. There is no need for any other severe penance. Truth is God. Wisdom is God. Everything is God. (*SSS Vol.29 p.299*)

heart inspired by sincere devotion and absolute self-surrender. The verses which sank into the water were those composed by him with pride and for pomp. Sincerity is the essential criterion of devotional poetry. *Bhakthi* or devotion to God is not enough; it must be coupled with purity of heart. (*SSB 1979 p.131*)

Teaches Tara the Principle of Atma:

Rama said. “Tara²¹⁹, why do you weep so? Do you then weep for the Atma that was in the body? That Atma is eternal. It cannot die or decay or disintegrate.” (*RKRV Part II p.106-107*)

Rama asks Lakshmana to act according to his Swadharm

Rama had Sita and Lakshmana near Him and explained to them that so long as the Individual *Jivi* does not understand aright the affinities it has to Maya and to the Supreme Brahman, it can never liberate itself and merge in the Supreme. “Act in accordance with the rules of conduct laid down for the status you have risen to and the call that has come to you (*swadharm*²²⁰-- one’s natural duties). You derive detachment thereby. (*RKRV Part II p.27*)

Rama’s teachings to Bharatha:

Rama expounded many a useful doctrine of political ethics to Bharatha²²¹.

²¹⁹ See Chapter, *Tara - Rama counsels and consoles Tara*

²²⁰ Under Section, *Rama* See Chapter - *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Rama tells Lakshmana the purpose of his avatar and gives discourses on spiritual matters:*

²²¹ See Chapter, *Bharatha - Rama tells Bharatha not to talk ill of his mother - Tells Kaikeyi to teach him the codes of governance:*

Spiritual discussions with Vanaras

Rama held spiritual discussions with the Vanara Warriors and imparted to them many great lessons. He told them to behave like the tongue surrounded by rapier – like teeth, Obstacles litter the way of an aspirant at every stage. The tongue outlasts the teeth. Wicked people will fall off like the teeth that surround the tongue. Wicked people will leave you as the teeth leave the tongue. God is your Protector. Protection by God is the talisman for you. God will do everything for you. (*SSB 1996 p.74*)

The ideal in the past – Rama taught that Artha and Kama should not over-rule Dharma:

Samartha Ramadas appeared before Shivaji, with his usual call for alms: *Bhavati Bhikshaam Dehi*. Shivaji realised that the *Guru* is God; so, he wrote something on a piece of paper and deposited it reverentially in the alms bag of Ramadas. "For the relief of hunger how can paper suffice?" asked Ramadas. Shivaji prayed that the paper may be read. The paper recorded a gift of the entire kingdom and all that Shivaji owned to the *Guru*. Samartha Ramadas replied: "No, *My dharma is Dharmabodha, the teaching of dharma*, instructing the people in the right way of life; *Kshatriyas* like you must follow the *dharma* of ruling the land, ensuring peace and content to the millions under your care." Sage Yajnavalkya too once refused a kingdom, because he cared more for the Kingdom of *Moksha*, the realm of eternal freedom. Sage Vashishta is also said to have renounced a kingdom, offered him by Rama.

That was the ideal in the past; it is only now that men pursue paths that lead them away from *Dharma*. You have allowed the

treasure that the sages gave you to drop from your grasp. Though the medicinal root that you so badly need is lying across your path and has actually tripped your step, you have no eyes to recognise it and realise the value. What a pity, this!

Look at the way Rama refused to accept the kingdom out of which he had willingly come, to carry out the wish of his mother, and the plighted word of his father, when Bharatha entreated him piteously to take it from him. Rama taught that *artha* and *kama* should not be allowed to over-rule *dharma* and the discipline of *moksha*. For, fundamentally, the objects of the world are incapable of conferring joy. (SSS Vol.4 p.289-290)

Make God your *Adhara*:

“The Rakshasas (demonic persons) had already attained liberation for they had the vision of God when they drew their last breaths. The Vanaras came down to be My instruments and so they have no death, neither are they born, except at My Command,” said Rama.

Man too must become His instrument in order to escape death and birth. He has come, imprisoned in the ego, and he has to liberate himself. This can be done only by making him aware of the Universal (*Adhara*) basis. Like a man sunk in poverty, dwelling in a hut that is raised over a vast underground treasure, man is suffering, with a spring of joy inside him, of which he is unaware, I have come to give you the key of that treasure, to tell you how to tap that spring, for you have forgotten the way to blessedness. If you waste this chance of saving yourselves, it is just your fate. (SSS Vol.42 p.44)

Rama’s commentary on Bhakthas and His Dasas:

During the Tretha Yuga, when Narada asked Sri Ramachandra about the nature and characteristics of His Dasas and of the Sadhakas or spiritual aspirants, He answered as below: “Listen Oh Narada, men who are My Dasas are full of Love; they always stand by Dharma or righteousness. They speak the Truth. Their hearts melt with mercy. They are devoid of wrong. They avoid sin. Their nature is well-founded. They will renounce everything gladly, They eat in moderation. They are engaged in doing good to others. They have no selfishness. They are worried by no doubts. They will not lend their ears to flattery. They are eager to listen to the praise of the good nature of others. They have beautiful, strong and holy character. Sadhakas are those who endeavour to acquire such qualities and possess such a character. Now, I shall tell you about those who are *priya* (dear) to Me. Anyone who is engaged in Japa (repetition of Holy Name), Thapas, and *Vratha* (observant of vows), who has *Samyama* or Self-control, *Niyama* or discipline, anyone who has faith, patience, comradeship, kindness, and joy as well as unalloyed prema towards Me, is *priya* to Me.

“Now, about My real *Bhakthas*. Whoever, with Viveka and Vairagya, and *vinaya* and *Vijnaana*, (with discrimination and renunciation, with humility and wisdom) are aware of the knowledge of Reality, whoever are always immersed in the contemplation of My *leela* (sport, play), whoever dwells on My name at all times and under all conditions, and who sheds tears of love whenever the Lord’s name is heard from any lip, they are My genuine *Bhakthas*.” Thus answered Sri Rama to Narada.

So, the Lord will protect in all ways and at all times those who worship Him in complete and uncontaminated Bhakthi—just as a mother protects her infants, a cow saves her calf from danger, and the eyelids guard the eyes, effortlessly and automatically. When the infant grows up into an adult, the mother will not pay so much attention to its safety. So too, the Lord does not pay much attention to the Jnani. The Saguna Bhaktha is like an infant of the Lord. So, it has no strength except the strength of the Lord. For the Jnani, his own strength is enough. Therefore, until one can rely on one’s own strength, one must be an infant in the Lord’s Hands, as a Saguna Bhaktha, isn’t it? No one can become a Nirguna Bhaktha, without having been a Saguna Bhaktha. So, Bhakthas should grow up like infants in the lap of the mother and thereafter, become Jnanis who can rely on their “own” strength and be free. Still, both have the same source of strength, the Mother. Those indeed are really fortunate who grasp this secret of the path of Devotion, who develop one-pointed Bhakthi and straighten the traits of their character, who transform themselves into infants in the lap of the Lord and who get everything done by him as He wishes. Therefore, those who yearn to be Dasas, Bhakthas, Priyas and *Ananya Bhakthas* should take up the corresponding path and name and act and live accordingly; the Bhaktha should develop the above-said characteristics of devotion. The Priya should follow the Prema of the Lord.

The Ananya Bhaktha has to surrender completely to the Lord. Mere reading and rolling on the tongue are of no avail. Ananda is the result of action only. This Ananda is not dependent on castes or race or sex. Even in those days, when Sri Rama came to Sabari, she asked him in the following manner, while Sri Rama

was gladly partaking of the feast of roots and fruits, selected and reserved by Sabari for him after herself tasting every individual item. “Lord! I am but a woman, in addition, I am of feeble intellect. Above all, I am low-born. How can I praise You? I do not know what to do or how!” Then, Sri Rama smiled and said, “Sabari! My mission is only the kinship of Bhakthi. I have no kinship of race or caste. Of what use is it to have status, wealth and character, without Bhakthi? Like the cloud that does not bear rain, which wanders about in the sky, these people without devotion are at the mercy of the winds, however much of status in caste, wealth, power, and fame they may possess. Bhakthas reach me through nine paths. Any one of them takes them to Me.” Then, Sabari prayed Sri Rama to tell her about the nine paths, and Sri Rama responded:

Sravanam (Listening to stories of God),
Kirtanam (Singing Name of the Lord),
Vishnusmaranam (Remembering God),
Padasevanam (Serving the Feet of the Lord),
Vandanam (Reverence toward nature and all life),
Archanam (Ritual Worship),
Dasyam (Path of dedication and surrender),
Sneham (Befriending),
Atmanivedanam (Path of surrender).

If the devotee sincerely practises any one of these paths, he can attain Me. I am bound by these nine forms of Bhakthi.

That is why you have been able to so easily obtain this opportunity of seeing, touching and speaking with Me, an

opportunity which even Yogis find too difficult to get. You have realised Life's purpose today. See! Today's Words are only the Words of Yesterday. (*Prema Vahini p. 51-54*)

RAMA EXPOUNDS ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOOD MEN AND BAD:

One day, Rama proceeded to a garden with his brothers and his dear Hanuman, in order to spend some time strolling through it. The place was replete with flowers and fruits. Rama sat on an elevated seat, with the brothers on his side. The brothers were found hesitating to ask some questions, though they had the desire within them. They looked at Hanuman and communicated their feelings to him. They knew that if Hanuman put those questions, Rama would fain give the answers. The omnipresent Rama recognised the situation. "Hanuman! What is it you seek to know? Ask," he said. Hanuman replied, "Oh Protector of the Weak! Bharatha wanted to ask you a question. But he was stricken by doubt. He is downcast with a sense of fear." He folded his palms and fell at the feet of Rama, for having answered his query so bluntly, and in thankfulness that he was commanded to speak in the presence. Rama then spoke thus, "Hanuman! You know full well my nature. There is no difference between me and Bharatha, nothing to make either feel distinct." When Bharatha heard these words, he fell at the feet of Rama, and said, "Oh Healer of the Miseries of those who surrender to you! Listen. Pardon my errors and protect me. I have no doubts lurking in my mind. I have no grieves and no attachments, even in my dreams. Of course, I owe all this to your grace and compassion. You are the treasure house of all the

virtues. I desire to learn the distinction between good men and bad.”

Rama deigned to reply. He said, “Brother, the qualities that mark out the good are endless in number, as the Vedas and Puranas say. The distinction that separates the good and the bad are as wide as that between the sandal tree and the axe. Note this; even when the axe cuts the sandal tree, the tree confers on the axe the fragrance it possesses. The axe is killing it, but the tree does only good to its executioner. Hence, the sandal is appreciated by all. The Gods love to have sandal paste on their foreheads. But see what happens to the axe that does harm to the tree that wishes it well. It is kept in fire and while red-hot, it is hammered into shape and sharpness. Wicked persons cause grief to good men in this manner. But the good always wish well and do good to the wicked, whatever harm is done to them. What is their gain? They certainly attain heaven. That is to say, they are in constant bliss. The bad persons, on the other hand, will be constantly struggling in sorrow and discontent. That is to say, they will be subject to hellish agony. Though they may appear happy to observers, they will be tortured inside by the infamy and the hatred they invoke.

Characteristics of Good Men:

“I shall tell you the characteristics of good men. Listen. They are not fascinated by sensual pleasures. They possess all the best virtues and modes of behaviour. They will be happy at the happiness of others. They will be sad when others are sad. They look upon all with equal affection. They have no enemies and they are not bothered even if foes exist. They are endowed with wisdom, knowledge of the objective world, and a deep sense of

detachment. Their hearts are tender. They have compassion towards the weak and the helpless. They adore my feet with purity of thought, word and deed. They delight in serving me. They have no concern with fame or infamy, honour or dishonour. They are always interested in serving others. They never yield to the urge of selfishness, even in dreams. Their actions are transparently simple. Their hearts are ever cool and unruffled. They yearn for opportunities to renounce. They are every moment soaked in joy. For them praise and blame are the same. Brother! Whoever has these characteristics in him, take it that he is of my own nature. He is myself, I am himself. Take that to be the truth.

Qualities of Bad Men

“Now, I shall tell you of the qualities of bad men, listen. You should avoid their company, by all means. Grief will descend upon you as a result of that companionship. Their hearts will be pained at the prosperity of others. They will delight as much in scandalising others, as in welcoming a fortune. The six foes of good men—lust, anger, greed, desire, pride and hatred are fostered by them and they are ever at their beck and call. They move about and act according to the commands of these six. Pity and charity are absent in their makeup. They pick up quarrels with others for no reason or on no provocation. They develop enmity even towards those who do good to them. Their actions are false. Their utterances are false. Their dealings of give and take are false. Their attitudes are hard. They have hearts of stone. The peacock is charming to behold. Its cry is pleasant to hear, but it kills snakes. So too wicked men are eager to harm others, and craving for others’ wives. They relish damaging the

reputation of others. They revel in evil. They are evil-minded all the time. They are the meanest among men. They have no fear of retribution. When they see or hear about the progress of another, they are possessed by so much envy that they are afflicted with unbearable headache. But when others are caught in calamity, they exult over their sufferings. When others are suffering, they are elated as if they have been crowned kings of the realm. They are dominated by the ego. They do not have any thought of helping others, even in their dreams!

Their hearts are the birthplaces of lust, anger and other passions. They have no consideration towards parents, preceptors or elders. They feel disgust at the very mention of “good personages” or “God.” Their intellects are dull. Their conduct is reprehensible. They can be observed in large numbers during the Kali Yuga.

The Essence of the Vedas:

“Brother, of all righteous acts, help rendered to those needing it is the most righteous. Of all evil acts, there is nothing worse than causing harm to others. Know that this is the essence of the teachings of the Vedas and the Puranas. This is the ideal, held forth by good men everywhere. Those who are benefited by birth as men, and yet indulge in injuring others, are degraded into lower bestial levels and have to be born and die as those beings. Or, when born again as men, they commit further evils through their ignorance and the blindness it causes. For such, I am the meter-out of Karma-consequence and it is only after a long passage of time during which they have to struggle out of the darkness, that I vouchsafe a Vision of Myself. I throw them

again and again into the vortex of life and make them experience the ups and downs so that they might be educated.

“Bharatha, the gods, the sages and the great personages do not engage themselves in acts involving dualities. They are ever engaged in adoring me in a dedicated state of mind. They engage themselves in activities without any desire or attachment to the consequence of those activities. If austerities are taken up in order to gain some ends, if activities are undertaken with a view to earn the fruits they yield, people have to be born with bodies so that they may be awarded the good and the bad which those activities deserve. When the fruits are not craved for, and acts are still done sincerely and rightly and correctly, they don't bind. On the other hand, they confer wisdom on the doer.

The person will have his devotion and dedication advanced a great deal. And as a result, he will be nearer to the Supreme and merge in the Supreme. When you are able to distinguish between the good and the bad on the basis of these characteristics, and act accordingly while choosing company, you will be able to extricate yourselves from the coils of the sea of change, the Samsara Ocean. Brother! Know that all distinctions between good and bad are basically the result of attachment and development, due to your considering the world as real, while it is neither real nor unreal. Those who have escaped this 'illusion' and this duality are the Mahatmas. They have realised that their reality is the unchanging Atma. They know that there are no two. They experience always only the One. Others are the ignorant lot.”

The brother and others who listened to this clarification attained equanimity. Their hearts were delighted with the upsurge of Love. They acknowledged the kindness of Rama by gratefully prostrating before him. This they did for each point that was clarified. Hanuman felt the ecstasy more than all others. Later, Rama proceeded to the Palace, accompanied by the brothers and Hanuman. This became the normal routine every day—conveying counsel and then, the carrying on of the duties of administration. (*RKRV Part II p.288-293*)

Teachings to the Citizens

One day, Rama desired that the citizens of Ayodhya assemble in the Palace, with the Preceptors and the Brahmins. They all met at the Durbar Hall, and were provided comfortable seats. Rama came into the Hall and addressed them thus:

“Citizens! Preceptors and Brahmins! Prostrations to you. Listen to my words in peace and to the very end. I am not discoursing to you in pride or selfish conceit. It is also not to declare that I am your monarch. Nor is it to lead you to journey along evil paths. If my words appear good to you, then, follow the path I indicate. But I must say this: those who listen to my words and walk accordingly, those alone are dear to me. They alone are my brothers. If I utter anything wrong, point it out to me instantly, without hesitation. Well, birth as a human being is hailed in the Vedas and Puranas and by wise men of all lands as the rarest chance of all. The human birth cannot be achieved unless a great deal of merit is built up in many lives previous to this. Even gods yearn for the chance and find it hard to get born as men. Birth as a human opens the door to Liberation.

It provides wide opportunities for undergoing Sadhana and benefiting by them. The human body is to be used not for enjoying sensual pleasures. It is not to be treated as an instrument for reaching Heaven and delight in heavenly toys and joys. These pleasures are all momentary. They bring you back again into the tangle of change, the toil of birth and death. Therefore, these pleasures bring about sorrow. Only fools will be led away into the pursuit of these sensual pleasures. Such pleasures are as poison to man. Is it proper to seek poison, in preference to Nectar? Those who crave for poison cannot be good men. They are like the fools who discard the Wish-fulfilling-gem (*Chintamani*) and prefer a bead of glass. Being endowed with the human body, if a person does not use it for crossing the Ocean of illusory Existence (*Samsara*) he is indeed to be pitied as unfortunate and of dull intellect. He is indeed the slayer of his own self, the enemy of his own progress. Therefore, those who are born as men have to realise that God resides in all men as the Atma within and to serve everyone as Divine, and regard that service as the most proper worship of God. Observe the dictates of God with a full heart. Carry out all activities as if you are dedicating them to God.

Citizens! Those who yearn to be happy here and hereafter! Listen to my words. Have them as your guides and your goals. Follow this path. Of all paths that lead to God and Self-realisation, the path of Devotion (*Bhakthi*) is the easiest; it is a path full of delight for the mind. The Path of discrimination and elimination of illusion (*Jnana*) is fraught with difficulties and packed with obstacles. It is well-nigh impossible to extinguish the mind. Even those who travel along the hard path of Jnana can become dear to

me only if they have devotion and love in their hearts. There is nothing equal to Bhakthi. Bhakthi is not bound, it is free. It endows man with all joys and delights. It must be emphasised that you can progress in Bhakthi only when you seek and stay in *Sathsanga*, good company.”

Continuing his discourse to the assembly Rama said, “Listen, Oh People of my Kingdom! I wish to tell you one very important Truth, often not clearly grasped by you. Do not attribute any distinction between Siva and Kesava. Believe that God is one. The Name and the Form are distinct, but the *Divyatma* (the Universal Absolute Entity) is the same. That Divyatma is in everyone in equal potency.” Hearing these nectarine teachings from the lips of Rama, the citizens bowed their heads in reverential homage. One of them came forward to express their gratitude. He said, “Lord! We are attached to you more than to our own lives. Our bodies are healthy and hardy because of you.

Our homes are resonant with joy and happiness because of you. It is all due to your Grace. You have rid us of sorrow and drawn us near you. Maharaja! Who else can teach us so lovingly as you do? Our own fathers and mothers seek from us the fulfilment of their selfish desires. That is all. Of what use are we for you? But yet, you train us for attaining the Bliss of Heaven. This gives us full contentment. You and your excellent followers have done magnificent service to the world, by destroying the demonic race. We can never acquire a Lord, a Friend, a Father, as kind and considerate as You.” The people expressed their joy and the sense of enlightenment plentifully before Rama.

Rama brightened at their loyalty and eagerness to learn more about spiritual matters. The citizens took leave of Rama and returned to their homes. They reminded themselves of the valuable truths they had been taught. (*RKRV Part II p.293-296*)

ADVICE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE:

Taught ideal lessons to Bharatha

After instructing Bharatha regarding the principles of good government, Rama told Bharatha: “You must revere parents, the preceptors and elders. If any person misbehaves within your kingdom, do not punish him. Banish him. That will be punishment enough.”

Here I wish to explain what is meant by punishment. There is no need to beat or abuse the erring person. Stop talking to him. What is the use of talking to a person who is going astray? I attach great value to my words they may not know it, but I know their value. None of my words has any selfish motive. Everything is for the welfare of all. If one has no such broad outlook and is only concerned about his personal interests, what is the use in talking to such a person? As long as one remains self-centred, he cannot understand divine. (*SSS Vol.28 p.94-95*)

Always carry out pleasant conversation

Shatrughna played an important role in ably administrating Ayodhya for fourteen long years. Bharatha was the ruler representative only in name. The groundwork was carried out

entirely Shatrughna. He alone was responsible for keeping boundaries of Ayodhya safe. During fourteen years, not even a single enemy dared to march on Ayodhya. There was no unrest amongst the citizens. Initially, there were fears about an Ayodhya without a king. Rama advised Bharatha regarding the duties of a ruler. He said, “Bharatha, you are now the king. Our father was a mighty emperor who ruled his kingdom well. After his death, it is your duty responsibility now. Do not answer back to anyone. Always carry out pleasant conversations. There must be no agitation in our kingdom.” Both Bharatha and Shatrughna received the advice and followed it faithfully. (*SSB 2002 p.96-97*)

Rama teaches lessons to Bharatha

Rama taught Bharatha how government should be carried on. "Have as your ministers only persons of character and virtue, who are tranquil in mind and devoted to truth. Don't have as ministers anyone lacking in these four qualities. Moreover, they should possess self-confidence, practise righteous conduct, and be capable of giving proper advice. These are essential prerequisites for wise administrators. Give no place for selfish persons. There should be no room in the government for persons animated by self-interest. Nor is that all. Don't allow anyone given to vices like gambling and drink to wield authority. Entertain only those who command the esteem of the people and who are respected and loved by the people. You must have daily conferences with three or four such ministers. Your talks should be in private and no outsider should know anything about them. It is only when such secrecy is observed that the nation will prosper. You will then be able to ensure peace and prosperity to

the nation. Moreover, you must send out as envoys to other countries ambassadors who are totally loyal to the king and not timeservers who practise duplicity. Only such men can convey to the king truthful information."

Rama did not stop with that. I request the women devotees not to take it amiss. Rama told Bharatha that he should not permit women to take part in affairs of state. Women have their estimable role in household affairs, but they should be kept out of state politics. "Don't employ women as ministers. The reason is: a nation's honour is based upon its women. It is only when women maintain their respect and honour that the nation will be respected. It is not proper for women to cheapen themselves by roaming in public places."

How to establish *Rama Raajya*?

Such were the sacred precepts of good administration which Rama taught to Bharatha. How does the situation in the country today compare with Rama's conception of an ideal government? The state of things today is 100 percent contrary to the ideas and ideals of Rama. How, then, can *Rama Raajya* be established here?

If we desire to establish *Rama Raajya*, there should be harmony in thought, word and deed. This applied not only to Bharat but to the entire world. All countries should have governments which conform to this principle of triple purity. Only then, the people also will reflect the character of the rulers.

Today, the people reflect the vices of the rulers. If a minister prefers one bottle, the man in the street asks for two (drinks). How can such citizens establish *Rama Raajya*? They can do so only if there is a complete transformation in their mental attitudes. Despite all the teachings they have listened to, their minds remain in the same state. Without a mental change, they are not entitled even to utter the name Rama. What, then, is the meaning of talking about *Rama Raajya*? It will be only *Rama Raajya* in name, but in reality it will only *be Ravana Raajya*. (SSS Vol.28 p.91-93)

Rama advises his sons on methods of administration

Rama advised his sons²²² about the means and methods of administration of the empire.... He also gave all sons valuable advice on political and administrative matters. (RKRV Part II p.334)

He who does not work but eats is a cheat—everyone is living off the property of God--There is a story of a dog that came to Rama, bleeding from blows. Lakshmana was sent to inquire why it was in such pain. He discovered that a Brahmin had beaten it with a stick. When asked, the Brahmin could only give as sufficient cause that the dog was coming across his path.

So Rama asked the dog, "Well, how do you want me punish this Brahmin?" The dog promptly gave the reply, "Make him the manager of a temple." "What?" said Rama. "That would be a reward, not a punishment." The dog said, "No, I was a manager

²²² See Chapter, *Lava And Kusha*

and since it is next to impossible not to mishandle or misuse or appropriate some fraction of God's money, when he is the manager, he too will get this canine birth and perhaps get beaten too."

Remember, not only that dog and that Brahmin, but every one of you is living off the property of God, for does not all this belong to Him? And what do you do in return for all the benefits you derive from the property of the Lord? You cannot eat it and sit quiet. You must at least give some physical labour in return; he who does not work but eats is indeed a cheat. Not that the Lord wants anything from you, but it will give self-respect and it will purify your heart. So teach children not to receive anything for nothing. Let them earn by hard work the things they seek.

Again, when boys play cricket or football or tennis, if they become eager to defeat the opponent, they start committing faults or fouls. Then, even if they score a goal, it will be declared not a goal; it may well be offside or out. But if they stick to the game and play it well, unaffected by the atmosphere of rivalry and lust for victory at all costs, they are bound to win. In a race, it is better to let the horse go along gathering its own speed; do not compare and compete; that will cause a fall or a slip. This lesson has also to be taught to children; that competition has to be healthy, subordinated to the proper rules of the game and free from hatred and malice.

Above all, realise that children are precious treasures; yours is the great task of rearing them up to become devoted servants of

God and sincere sadhakas on the spiritual path. (*SSS Vol.2 p.203-204*)

For the welfare of this country, you all need to minutely scrutinize how delicately, correctly and righteously Rama handled each situation. He killed all the demons and safeguarded the righteous. All these are actually small parts of a Divine master plan. It was willed that Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna take birth so that they could cause the annihilation of the demons

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

6.8 COMPARISONS

RAMA VS DASARATHA

Consider the difference between Dasaratha, the father, and Rama, the son. They are as different as earth and sky! To please his wife, to make her happy and contented, the father was prepared to bear the utmost agony. Finally, he even sent his dear son as an exile to the jungle! The son sent *his* wife into the jungle, as an exile, in order to respect the opinion of a commoner in his empire! Think of the different ways in which the two carried out their duties to the people, over whom they ruled. Dasaratha was overwhelmed by the illusion that he was the physical body. Rama was moved by the realisation that he was the Atma. (*Bhagavatha Vahini p.179*)

RAMA VS BHARATHA

Bharatha in Ramayana, for the sake of bliss, was searching for the path of Truth. He was in no way inferior to Rama. For the protection of truth, or for following of right kind of dharma or making sacrifices when they were necessary, Bharatha was equal to Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.67*)

It is said “*Brahma vid Brahmaiva bhavati.*” One who has the knowledge of *Brahman* will become identical with *Brahman*. As he was continuously thinking of Rama, he was transformed into Rama. Citizens who came to garland Rama could not recognise who was Rama and who was Bharatha. They put all the garlands on Bharatha thinking that he was Rama. Bharatha was quite smart and was quite alive to the situation. So, he was telling the citizens, please garland my brother and not me. Bharatha was so intensely devoted to Rama that people could not tell who was Bharatha and who was Rama. **(SSB 1977 p.58)**

BHARATHA AND LAKSHMANA

Bharatha was a devotee par excellence, while Lakshmana was a dependable and faithful servant of Rama²²³. Lakshmana took into consideration the physical manifestation, while Bharatha looked at Divinity without any form. Without resting his eyes even once, Lakshmana took care to see that Rama and Sita were always comfortable. He did not know what sleep was for fourteen years! Such a great renunciator was he, a worshipper of the form of the Lord.

²²³ Whereas Lakshmana was a direct devotee (*pratyaksha bhakta*) serving Sri Rama constantly in His divine presence, Bharatha was a *parosksha bhakta* (indirect devotee) constantly contemplating on Rama. Whereas Lakshmana was a *Sagunopasaka* (worshipping form and attributes of God), Bharatha was *Nirgunopasaka* (worshipping formless, attributeless God). However, the fact that both aspects of God are the same was proved by the divine experiences of Lakshmana and Bharatha. **(Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.57)**

Bharatha, who on the other hand, was a worshipper of the formless God, stayed away from Ayodhya. He set up a small Hermitage at Nandigram and constantly kept chanting the name of Rama. He focused his entire mind on Rama while Lakshmana was the one who had given up his body in Rama's service. This is the difference between them. Lakshmana prayed, "I am Your servant, to be used according to Your wish. I have no life other than this. I shall be Your sixth *praana*." Bharatha, on the other hand, prayed, "I do not have a body. I am entirely in You." With this thought, he constantly kept chanting the name of the Lord. This is what is spoken of as '*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*'—think of the Lord and the Lord you become. After constantly thinking of Rama for fourteen years, Bharatha too assumed the dark blue complexion of Rama. (*SSS 1996 p.96*)

Lakshmana's devotion was apparent and was always seen easily. Lakshmana had always attributes and qualities, whereas Bharatha was attributeless and without *gunas*. Here the form-less and the form are like the two legs. Here is an example for this. This is a pillow. There is a cloth covering the pillow. Inside the cloth is cotton. There is cotton inside and there is cotton on the outside in the form of a cloth. The cloth is the quality and has a form. The cotton is without quality. Here we see that the formless is contained within the form. In the outer cloth, cotton is contained. In *Vedantic* parlance, we can say that the cloth and the cotton are one and the same. Bharatha has demonstrated this simple truth. (*SSB 1977 p.53*)

NARA AND VANARA

Who is a *Vanara* and who is a *nara*? He who has intelligence is man (*nara*). He who has stupidity is a *Vanara*. A *Vanara* is associated with restlessness. *Nara* (man) is characterised by his steadiness. (*SSB 1996 p.97*)

RAMA AND RAVANA:

Revere and Revolt - Goodness and Wickedness

Why is it that the world reveres Rama and revolts at Ravana? Rama is not its uncle's son or Ravana, its stepmother's child! It is the kinship of the spirit, your innate goodness, responding lovingly, adoringly to the goodness in Rama and reacting revoltingly to the wickedness of Ravana.

It is not enough, nor is it essential that you should repeat the name of Rama loudly; respect it in the fullness of love and admiration. If you have no spring of Love in you, dig into your heart with external instruments like *pujas*, *sthotra* (worship and adoration), etc. and it will start to flow. (*SSS Vol.4 p.221*)

Though Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in all forms of knowledge, sage Valmiki extolled Rama as Divine and condemned Ravana as a foolish one. What is the reason? Ravana did not translate into action the knowledge he had acquired; on the contrary he used it for wicked purposes. On the other hand, Rama translated all his knowledge into action and gave joy to one and all. *Sarvaloka hithe ratah* (Rama was engaged in the welfare of all). *Sarvajnanopasampannah* (He was the master of

all forms of knowledge). *Sarvasamudhita guna ihi* (He was the embodiment of all good qualities). These are the three aspects that manifested Rama's divinity. (*SSS Vol.32 Part I p.102-103*)

Difference between Rama and Ravana

See the difference between Rama and Ravana. Both were equally eminent intellectually and were great scholars. Ravana was a great man. Rama was a good man. The difference between greatness and goodness should be understood. Ravana, out of egoism and uncontrolled desire, misused his knowledge and brought about his ruin. Rama used his knowledge for the benefit of the people and made them happy. Ravana did not digest his knowledge properly and suffered from the consequences of indigestion. The difference between Rama and Ravana was that between *Dharma* (Righteousness) and *Adharma* (unrighteousness).

Rama and Ravana are present in each human being. When a person takes to unrighteous courses, he becomes a Ravana. When people pursue the path of truth and righteousness, they become Ramas. (*SSS Vol.29 p.74*)

Ravana was a master of all sixty-four types of knowledge, but he could not receive God's grace. Since he did not put his knowledge into practice, he suffered from 'indigestion'. That resulted in the sickness of sensual desires. Rama also learnt all sixty-four types of knowledge, and He put them into practice. Ravana was interested only in aggrandizement, whereas Rama was interested in practice. (*SS 11/98 p.29*)

Precept and practice should go together like medicine and diet control. Meditating on God one should engage oneself in godly activities. It is useless to study or listen to spiritual discourses without leading a spiritual life. Righteousness means living according to the dictates of one's conscience. Acting in violation of the conscience is wrong. To realise this there is no need to study books.

The truths propounded in the Ramayana are relevant to all mankind. Rama represents the exalted state of the human heart. Rama is the treasure-house of compassion. Where can you find such truth, compassion and grace? All thoughts arise from the heart and lead to actions. Hence for all thoughts, words and deeds, the heart is the source. What should be the condition of the heart? It should be full of *Daya* (compassion). Today *Dayyam* (the devil) has installed itself in the heart. The devil in the heart accounts for all bad and for the absence of compassion. (SSS Vol.29 p.74-75)

Ravana was foolish whereas Rama was Noble

Ravana has mastered 64 categories of knowledge while Sri Rama had studied only 34 categories. Although Ravana had studied more subjects than Sri Rama²²⁴, Valmiki called Ravana a foolish one and Rama a noble one. Why did Valmiki say so²²⁵?

²²⁴ SSS Vol.22 p.77

²²⁵ Why was Ravana dubbed as *murkha*? Because despite his mastery of all skills and arts, he was a slave of his senses. The one who is a slave of his senses is a fool who has lost his reason. Rama was not dominated by his senses. He was their sovereign. The difference between Rama and Ravana can be seen in three aspects: *Sarva loka hithe Ratah* (one who rejoices in the welfare of the whole world); *Jnana sampanah* (endowed

Did he receive any favour from Rama? No. Here, Rama and Ravana can be compared to a cuckoo and a crow respectively.

The crow did not steal anybody's property but the people hate the very sight of a crow.

The cuckoo did not do any favour to anybody, but still it is loved by one and all.

One is respected if one's speech is good.

[Telugu Poem]

Though both look alike, people eulogise the cuckoo and criticise the crow. They throw stones at the crow when it caws, but feel joyous listening to the mellifluous singing of the cuckoo. Similarly, though Rama and Ravana were equally well-versed in all forms of knowledge, Rama set an ideal by practising what He learnt, whereas Ravana suffered from 'indigestion', since he merely acquired knowledge without practising it. (*SSS Vol.32 part I p.135*)

with all wisdom); *Sarve Samudita Gunaihi* (one who is filled with all the virtues). Rama promoted the welfare of the world by adhering to Truth and setting an example in righteous conduct. Hence, the supreme importance of upholding truth should be recognised. Everyone should try to keep his promise and live up to what he says. The simple motto: "Truth is vital to speech", contains a profound message. All of you tend to speak a great deal. How much truth is there in your speech? This is the first lesson students have to learn. Without truth, what you speak has no value. Moreover, truth has to be spoken for the welfare of the world. (*SSS Vol.22 p.77-78*) Ravana has none of these qualities. Ravana stands for all pomp, ego, show and exhibitionism. He considers he is the ultimate and that there are none beyond him. (*DTB8 p.1-2*)

Wherein lies the difference between the two? Rama utilised all the knowledge he had gained for noble purposes and the welfare of all. He had mastery over the senses. He gave up his rulership. He was pledged to the upholding of truth. Dedicating his knowledge to the cause of truth, to set an example of ideal life to mankind, he dedicated his life to the welfare of the country. Rama exemplified human perfection by his sacrifice, his adherence to truth and his spotless character. On the other hand, Ravana²²⁶ utilised all his knowledge for enjoying sensuous pleasures. He became a slave of his senses and brought ruin upon himself and his country. (*SSS Vol.25 p.378*)

All Bharatiyas will be representing these three things, *Kama*, Desire, *Krodha*, anger and *Lobha*, greed. Ravana was highly powerful. He was one of great penance - '*Tapasvi*'. There is no other person greater than Ravana. Ravana, who has got all the physical and intellectual strength, is put to ruin because of his desire.

What is the use with all the rest? Ravana is so powerful physically and all standards of norms - '*Loukika, Bhautika, Dharmika, Adhyathmika*'.

The vessel may be of gold but if there is a hole in it, the whole contents will be drained out. Ravana has got everything in plenty and prosperity, the entire Lanka is made of gold but he has

²²⁶ Ravana lacked three important qualities which Rama had. They are working for the welfare of entire humanity, possessing the supreme knowledge and having great virtues. Ravana was only a slave of the senses. (*SSS Vol.27 p.262*)

ruined himself because of desire. Everyone considered him as a wicked man. We pay obeisance to Rama. Ravana is a demon. What is the reason? They got these names based on their actions. Rama stands for truth. Rama has three qualities. He teaches what is good for all the three worlds and follows what is good for the entire universe. The second is -. He taught wisdom which is most important in the entire universe. He has got the principle of equanimity. So, He was worshipped as God.

Sita declared²²⁷, “My Rama has to destroy this vile demon who tortures me. Ravana... came like a thief in a false form and stole me from my Lord. But Rama is the embodiment of Righteousness. He observes the norms of right behaviour. He honours the spoken word.” (*RKRV Part II p.138*)

Eternal warfare between Righteousness and unrighteousness, Truth and untruth

Ravana sought wealth and gratification of desire, utterly violating the principle of *dharma*. Ravana was a scholar par excellence. He had mastered the sixty-four disciplines of learning whereas Rama had mastered only thirty-two disciplines of knowledge. However, Rama put them into practice and thereby digested them, whereas Ravana failed to digest them. The indigestion on the part of Ravana arose in the form of *Kama*, which ultimately destroyed him.

²²⁷ See Chapter, *Hanuman - Sita refuses to return on the back of Hanuman saying that one has to keep the dharma of pathivratha*

While Rama was the Embodiment of *Dharma*, Ravana remained as the embodiment of *Kama*. Thus, there arose a conflict between Righteousness and the unrighteousness. Rama transformed Himself into the embodiment of *Sathya*, since He followed the principle of *dharma*. Since Ravana violated *dharma*, he became the embodiment of *Asathya*. There is an eternal warfare between righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and untruth. It is the duty of everyone to follow and practice the twin principles of truth and righteousness. *Sathya* and *dharma* are verily the Embodiment of Divinity, and there is no God other than these two. (*SSB 1996 p.16*)

Importance of Character and Right Conduct:

At the time when Ravana lived, there was no other individual who had access to property and wealth any more than Ravana had. Ravana had all the position which one could command. He had all the authority that one could have. In spite of that, the fact that Ravana was subjected to great difficulties towards the end and that he lost his life in battle is noteworthy. We should compare this with what happened to Rama. Rama intentionally and willingly gave up all his property; he gave up his kingdom, and he went into the forest for several years. Ultimately, he was given the honour of having maintained *dharma* in this country. From this difference between Ravana, who had all the property, position and authority and Rama who willingly gave up all the property, position and authority, we should conclude that we cannot attach any importance to property, position or authority. We can only attach importance to character and to the pursuit of right conduct. Thus we conclude that money comes and goes whereas morality comes and grows. It is only in this context that

we often say, “*Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah.*” This simply means that those of us who safeguard *dharmo* will be safeguarded in turn by *dharmo*. This is the essence of Indian culture. (*SSB 1972 p.19-20*)

Ravana – insignificant as a blade of grass

In spite of all his learning, valour and wealth, Ravana was as insignificant as a blade of grass when compared to Rama, because he lacked character. Rama was one of noble character. (*SSS Vol.41 p.171*)

Difference between Satwic and Rajasic Mahatma - Rama Vs. Ravana

Ravana is a mahatma; Thataka, described as an ogress is also a mahatma! That is to say, they had superhuman prowess, and mysterious powers. All are Divine; God is the inner motivator of everyone. They are mahatmas not only in the sense that all mahatmas; they are *Rajasic* mahatmas, enslaved by their emotions and passions, quick to hate and slow to forget the slights inflicted on them. Rama and Lakshmana are Satwic mahatmas, embodiments of prowess and powers that righteousness and virtue can endow. A red hot iron hammer can be hammered into shape, by a cold iron hammer, can't it? So too, a person red hot emotion and passion can be hammered by the hammer that knows no heat of anger or hate. That is the reason Rama was able to defeat Ravana and destroy him. Why? The very word *Satwa* means strength, power, vigour, vitality. For, virtue is power, goodness is power. A person is angry, because he is weak; he is a bully, because he is a coward, he utter lies,

because he is sure he deserves to be punished and he is too weak to welcome it gladly. (*SSS Vol.7 p.83*)

Dhurgathi

Ravana met with a *Dhurgathi* (bad end). Rama achieved a *Sadhgathi* (glorious destiny). Ravana had *Dhurmathi* (a wicked mind). Rama's was a *Sumathi* (pure mind). Rama's words were righteous. Ravana's words were evil.

Hence, people should strive to have pure minds. People take any number of births but there is no transformation of their minds. Without such transformation all spiritual practices are utterly useless. The Rama principle offers to the people a sacred path to God-realization. (*SSS Vol.30 p.96*)

VIBHISHANA AND SUGRIVA

The portraits of two personalities are very striking in the *Ramayana*. They are those of Sugriva and Vibhishana. Vibhishana went in quest of Rama, while Rama Himself went in search of Sugriva. Sugriva realised Rama's greatness and goodness only after meeting Him, while Vibhishana knew of Rama's excellence even before he met Him. (*SSB 1996 p.69*)

SUGRIVA VS HANUMAN

Sugriva was one such person. In his heart he felt that Rama was divine; yet, he had to test Rama's skill in archery – there were doubts in his mind; the mind and the heart were not in harmony. Hanuman provides a striking contrast to Sugriva in such matters.

From the moment he first set eyes on Rama, there was never even an iota of doubt that Rama was God Himself. It is the so-called educated ones who become plagued with all sorts of doubts. This is what is happening today. Man is totally preoccupied with the acquisition of worldly skills and worldly knowledge, completely ignoring basic values and the necessity for the cultivation of virtues. (*SSB 2000 p.125*)

The Three clashes of Ramayana:

There are three clashes amongst brothers mentioned in the *Ramayana*. They are: (1) the clash between Vali and Sugriva (2) the clash between Ravana and Vibhishana and (3) the ‘clash’ between Rama and Bharatha. Vibhishana protested against the evil actions of his brother Ravana and incurred his anger. When Ravana banished him from Lanka, Vibhishana sought refuge at the feet of Rama. He helped Rama against Ravana. Rama crowned him as the King of Lanka after killing Ravana. Sugriva sought the help of Rama to kill Vali; he then became the King of Kishkinda.

In the first two cases, one brother became the King by standing against his own other brother. But the ‘clash’ between Rama and Bharatha was of a different kind! Neither of the brothers wanted to become King of Ayodhya! Bharatha told Rama, “Rama, you are the eldest and you alone have the right to become the king.” But Rama protested, “ I will not step into Ayodhya as I want to respect the promise given to my father. You have to rule over the kingdom, as it is mother’s wish”. Thus Rama refused to yield to the request of Bharatha and rule over the Kingdom. Both brothers wanted to convince each other to rule over Ayodhya.

Rama adhered to truth at all times “*Sathyaanasthi Parodharmah*”. For him observance of truth was the highest Dharma. He clung to Dharma tenaciously and believed that truth would be triumphant at the end. Rama was steadfast in his observance of Sathya and Dharma. (*SSB 2002 p.106-107*)

Hatred Vs Pure Love

While there is hatred between brothers like Vali and Sugriva, Vibhishana and Ravana there was pure love between Rama and Lakshmana (*SSB 1996 p.53*)

THE RAMAYANA, THE MAHABHARATHA AND THE BHAGAVATHA

Consequences of lust, hatred and greed

The Ramayana, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavatha* are three monumental works which point out the disastrous consequences which result when one is a victim of *Kama* (lust) or *Lobha* (greed) or *Krodha* (hatred). In the *Ramayana*, Ravana exemplifies lust. The entire *Ramayana* story happened because of Ravana's lust. Rama's advent as *Avatar* was for the purpose of destroying Ravana. In the *Bhagavatha*, Hiranyakasipu is the personification of hatred---hatred towards Hari. He went about asking: "Where is that Hari? There can be none greater than myself." Because of this hatred for Hari, the Lord appeared in the form of Narasimha (Man-Lion) to destroy Hiranyakasipu. The Lord vanquished the demon of hatred.

In the *Mahabharata*, Duryodhana symbolises greed. As a result of his greed his entire clan was destroyed.

Ravana, Hiranyakasipu and Duryodhana are examples of the disastrous consequences of lust, hatred and greed. Besides containing these warnings, the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavatha* and the *Mahabharata* indicate what is *Dharma* and how it is to be honoured and adhered to. (*SSS Vol.27 p.88*)

The Wars of Ramayana and Mahabharata:

The Kurushetra war lasted for eighteen days, but the war between Rama and Ravana lasted for seventy- five days. Though the warfare, in a physical sense, lasted for seventy-five days at Lanka, the inner war between Rama and Ravana, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, truth and untruth, and righteousness and unrighteousness is being fought endlessly in the human heart. No one can tell for certain when the conflict and the clash between the positive and the negative forces will come to an end.

Perverted intellect ruins man

It is stated in the *Mahabharata* that the Pandavas spent twelve years in *aranyavasa* (exile) and one year in *ajnavasa* (incognito), i.e. living amidst people without revealing their identity.

Likewise, though there are infinite powers in man, they are not revealed. These are known as *ateeta Shakti's* (transcendental powers). These are psychic in nature and have been termed so by scientists. Man is thus a repository of enormous energy of various kinds, viz. light energy, electric energy, radiation energy,

and above all energy of the Self (*Atmic Shakti*). But for this energy, man cannot eat, drink, move, laugh, or do anything for that matter. Man, though blessed with such powers, is forgetting the latent divinity and is leading the life of an animal. The reason for this is the perversion of *Buddhi* (intellect). Our ancient epics like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Bhagavata* give many instances to illustrate this.

Krishna went to Hastinapur as an emissary to bring about a compromise between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Duryodhana, due to the perversion of his *buddhi*, did not pay heed to Krishna's counsel. Though he knew what *dharma* was, he did not put it into practice. What happened to him ultimately? He ruined himself. Similar was the case with Ravana. Though he was one of great penance and wisdom, he did not pay heed to the good counsel of his wife, Mandodari, and the teachings of Narada and other saints and sages. Ultimately, he too ruined his life.

The same can be said of Hiranyakasipu. He was a great scientist. Modern scientists could reach only the moon, but Hiranyakasipu could go even beyond the sun and the stars. Such a great scientist did not adhere to *dharma* and ultimately met his doom.

Vali, on being questioned by the sages as to why he banished his own brother, Sugriva, from the kingdom, gave a concocted version of the truth, magnifying Sugriva's mistake and concealing his own. Again, the reason was perversion of his *buddhi*.

In the *Mahabharata*, Amba put the entire blame of her predicament on Bhishma, ignoring her own folly, and developed hatred toward him. Similarly, Viswamitra developed enmity with Vashishta for no fault of the latter. (*SSS Vol.32 Part II p.51-52*)

RAMA AND KRISHNA

But today, these divine and demonic forces are battling in each human being. This is the mark of the *Kali* age. In *Tretha Yuga* Rama fought the battle in person. In *Dwapara Yuga* Krishna played the role of a witness, using others as His instruments. He did not engage in the battle Himself. In *Kali Yuga* because the two opposing factors are in each individual, the Lord plays the role of a witness and as the conscience. Man has to use the power of discrimination given to him to fight the evil forces within him. He has to foster the divine elements in him by his own efforts and listening to the voice of his conscience. The freedom to choose has been given to man for this purpose. This freedom is to be used to discriminate between right and wrong, good and evil and to foster divine qualities. This is the unique feature of the *Kali* age. In this age, each individual has to fight against the demonic forces himself and vanquish them. When this is accomplished man's inherent divine nature will manifest itself of its own accord²²⁸. (*SSS Vol.20 p.123-124*)

²²⁸ Realise that no special Sadhana is needed to experience the Divine in you. You must get rid yourself of impure thoughts and actions. Sanctify every action you do and make it a *Sadhana*. The Divine is not a created object. It is self-effulgent and present in everyone. (*SSS Vol.20 p.124*)

"*Rama*" means, he who pleases, attracts, and attaches himself through pleasing attributes. Krishna means the same thing; he who attracts. "*Hah*" means he who robs you of yourself, your ego and reveals Himself as you. To attain Him you have to climb, and climbing from the animal to man and from man to *Madhava* is a hard struggle with the forces that pull you downward. (*SSS Vol.4 p.108*)

The distinction between Krishna and Rama

Where was he (*Krishna*) born? In a prison. What were his possessions? Nothing. Born in a prison, he was taken to the house of Nanda and then he went to Mathura. He owned nothing. But he became the greatest figure in the world. What does this show? Worldly possessions are not the secret of greatness. Krishna's greatness consisted in his permanent state of *Ananda* (bliss).

If you recognise the distinction, between Krishna and Rama, you will appreciate better the nature of Krishna. Krishna always smiled at the outset and carried out his task later. For Rama, the deed came first and then the smile. Krishna made women cry. Rama wept for the sake of women. Rama went into the battle only after-having a strong cause for it. Krishna first provoked the conflict and then determined its outcome.

The Krishna principle revels in delight. The Rama principle is based on the concept of *badhyatha* (obligation). The Ramayana is intended to promote the reign of Truth and Righteousness on earth. The Krishna *Avatar* was intended to give a perennial message to the world. He sought nothing for himself. He kept

nothing for himself. He gave away everything to the people. He slayed his maternal uncle, Kamsa. He installed on the throne Kamsa's: father Ugrasena. He did not covet the Kingdom. He befriended the Pandavas, defeated the Kauravas and crowned Dharmaja as the emperor. He did not make himself king. He was a king without a crown. He was the king of kings. He had no kingdom of his own. But he ruled over the hearts of the millions. It is this profound truth that is proclaimed by the *Krishna-Thathwa* (Krishna principle). (SSS Vol.29 p. 287-288)

Kalas

Krishna-avatar is a *Sampoorna Avatara*, the Lord appearing with all the 16 *kalas* (distinctive marks); whereas Rama shared the *kalas* with other brothers. Rama appeared as if He was associated with *gunas* (qualities), or as having qualitative behaviour, whereas Krishna was above and beyond such. Krishna never prayed, even in the direst crisis! But, Rama does so, to *Adhithya* (Sun God), for instance; the intent of that *Avatara* was different. Krishna was unaffected by the *gunas*. His relationship with *gopis* was pure. A person like Dharmaraja selected Him above all the sages and saints of the day for special worship at the *Rajasuya* sacrifice. (SSS Vol.4 p.128)

The Lord manifests in different Avatars

In the *Rama Avatar*, for instance, Rama conducted himself as if he was subject to *Maya*, but *upheld Dharma* for promoting the welfare of the world. The *Krishna Avatar* was different. Keeping *Maya* under control, He manifested His *leelas* (miraculous deeds). This was why Vyasa, in his *Bhagavatha*, characterised Krishna as "*Leelamanusha Vighrahah*" (The Divine manifesting

as man for performing His *Leelas*). The *Bhagavatha* has described in detail the *leelas* of Krishna and proclaimed His glory to the world.

In the *Krishna Avatar*, Krishna not only performed many marvellous deeds, but also taught the Supreme Wisdom to the world. He was one who had transcended the *gunas*, but, for the sake of regeneration of the world, behaved as if He was influenced by the *gunas*, and delighted the world by His deeds. Whatever Krishna did was for the welfare of the world. Krishna did everything, whatever He spoke or whatever action He did, for the good and well-being of the world. But some people, not understanding this truth owing to their own limitations, attributed wrong motives for some of Krishna's actions. In this they reflected their own feelings. (*SSS Vol.23 p.205-206*)

In the *Treta Yuga*, Rama came as the very embodiment of *Sathya* and *Dharma* (Truth and Righteousness). In the *Dwapara Yuga*, the Lord incarnated as Krishna, the embodiment of *Shanti* and *Prema*. (*SSS Vol.23 p.207*)

Rama showed man how to bear suffering while Krishna taught him how to overcome it. (*SSS Vol.4 p.21*)

Rama came to feed the roots of *Sathya* and *Dharma* and so, Sita joined Him through correct orthodox rites. There was no *Sita-apaharanam* (abduction of Sita). In the *Krishna Avatara*, the task was to foster *Shanti* and *Prema* (*SSS Vol.4 p.21*)

Each Avatar has its own relevance

In the understanding of the role of *Avatars*, the easiest, and the sweetest means was revealed by Krishna *Avatar* to the largest extent. This does not mean that the *other Avatars* are irrelevant. *Each Avatar* is appropriate for the time of its advent. This may be illustrated by a small example. When there is a petty quarrel in the street, a policeman's intervention is enough. When there is riotous crowd, a Police Inspector may be necessary to deal with it. In an insurgency, the Inspector-General of Police will have to take charge of the situation.

By the time of Krishna *Avatar*, the forces of wickedness had grown to greater proportions. Krishna was not concerned much about the earth or the wife. His main concern was with *Dharma*. When *Dharma* is firmly established, the earth and the *Dharma-Patni* are also duly protected.

In this context, Rama is described as "*Maya manushya vigrahavan*" (*Maya* in human form). In the story of Rama, it is related that Rama lamented over the loss of Sita. In *Krishna Avatar* the picture is different. Women were in distress for the sake of Krishna. In *Rama Avatar*, Rama was provoked to take arms against evil-doers. In *Krishna Avatar*, Krishna provoked the conflict and fought the evil-doers. In *Rama Avatar*, Duty comes first and joy later. In *Krishna Avatar*, Joy comes first and then duty. Looked at in this way, the difference between the *Maya avatar* of Rama and the *Leela avatar* of Krishna will be apparent. Krishna was always immersed in bliss. Whether it was a burial ground, or a battlefield or a haven of peace, he remained the same. Krishna .was standing between two immense opposing

armies and He sang a song. That is the *Gita*, which means song. Would it be possible for anyone to sing in such a situation? One sings only when one is happy. Krishna, because He was the embodiment of joy could sing even on the battlefield. (*SSS Vol.23 p.212-213*)

RAVANA VS NARADA

Man is really not different from Indweller, and the individual is God Himself. Goodness lies in seeing *Narayana* (God) in *Nara* (man). On the other hand, man today revels in seeing God as just man. Such perception arises from an utter lack of faith, and is considered to be height of intellectual reasoning. People think that it is important to achieve greatness; it is far more important to be good than to be great. The truly good one sees God in every human being. The evil one, on the other hand, reduces even the Divine to mundane levels. Such a one can be described as Ravana. Ravana mistake God to be an ordinary human, quite in contrast to Sage Narada who always saw *Narayana* in *Nara*. Every individual has Divine power latent within. (*SSB 2000 p.80-81*)

RAMA VS BHISHMA

Rama is extolled as the ideal son, who acted according to his father's wish, regardless of his own happiness. But, Bhishma is a better example in this respect. He acceded to a whim of his father and in so doing made even a greater sacrifice than Rama. Dasaratha made Rama an exile in the forest for fourteen years to satisfy the claims of Truth while Shanthanu made his son give up

the throne as: well as a wedded life to satisfy a sensual desire of his senile body. As a matter of fact, it is not the obedience to the father's whim; that is important; it is the adherence to *sathya* and *dharma*, which is Rama's forte. (*SSS Vol.4 p.23*)

Rama took a vow and gave His word to the *rishis* that from that time, He would undertake the task of exterminating the *rakshasas*. In this vow of Rama's Sita noticed what is usually referred to as the vow of Bhishma. Sita came and cautioned Rama that He was taking a vow, which was very difficult to fulfil. Then Rama answered by saying that the Himalayas can give up the ice on them, that the moon can give up its brightness and the oceans may flow beyond their boundaries, but Rama will never give up His vow unfulfilled.

From that day onwards, Rama saw to it that the *rakshasas* in the Dandakaranya were removed from their positions of strength, and He has been protecting the *rishis* from the hands of those *rakshasas*. He spent ten years in the forest fulfilling His vow and the task He took upon Himself. (*SSB 1977 p.13*)

VIBHISHANA VS BHISHMA

Vibhishana is greater than Bhishma. Vibhishana tried to put his brothers on the right path but ultimately left them, since they did not pay heed to his good counsels; whereas, Bhishma did not even make an attempt to counsel the Kauravas and continued to live with them, being fully aware of their evil designs. (*SSS Vol.31 p.363-364*)

Give Up Hatred:

When *Vibhishana* failed to correct Ravana, he gave him up, joined the forces of *dharma*, and surrendered himself to Divinity. *Vibhishana* stands superior even to *Bhishma* in this respect. Though *Bhishma* was a virtuous one, he did not give up the Kauravas when they resorted to foul and unjust ways. In fact he became a party to sin and unrighteousness, by becoming the commander-in-chief of their forces. Hatred is the cause of war, and desires are the cause for hatred. Anger arises if desires are not fulfilled. Ego arises if desires are fulfilled. Hence, an effort should be made to cut down one's desires, give up one's hatred, and strive for Divine Grace. This, for man, is the foremost duty. *(SSB 1996 p.68)*

A comparison of Bhishma and Vibhishana

In the *Mahabharata*, we have the heroic figure of *Bhishma*. He was a great sage, a *Jnani* (man of supreme wisdom) and a person of unshakable determination. He stood foremost in honouring his plighted word. Such a person knew quite well that what he was allowing the Kauravas to do was manifestly wrong. He knew that the Kauravas were indulging in evil deeds. He was aware that they were following unrighteous and untruthful ways. Nevertheless he was too weak to correct them or prevent them from pursuing their evil courses. Not was that all. He accepted the role of Commander-in-Chief of the Kauravas armies. This was a blemish in his character. He was unable to act up to the dictates of his *Antharvani* (conscience). Therein lay his weakness.

Compare Bhishma's failure with the conduct of Vibhishana. He was of demonic lineage and lived and moved among Rakshasas. He was aware that what his elder brother (Ravana) had done (by kidnapping Sita) was wrong. Knowing this, he warned Ravana in various ways. He repeatedly told Ravana: "This is wrong. You should not do this. It is not good for you." Vibhishana felt that it was his duty to warn Ravana (against his evil ways). Ultimately, failing to convince Ravana, he chose to give up his brother and seek asylum with Rama.

When we compare the attitudes of the two, we find that Vibhishana is greater than Bhishma. Despite his knowing the wicked ways of the Kauravas, Bhishma was unable to intervene. Vibhishana, on the contrary, chided Ravana. He turned away from the wicked and found refuge in God²²⁹. Thus, in the practice of sacred actions, Vibhishana emerges as a greater figure than Bhishma. This is the lesson taught by the epics. (*SSS Vol.27 p.78-79*)

It is interesting to study the conduct of Bhishma and Vibhishana in similar situations. It is clear Vibhishana is a greater person than Bhishma. Why? Knowing that the Kauravas were committing a grievous wrong, Bhishma remained silent without condemning them. Moreover, he accepted the role of Commander-in-chief of the Kauravas armies in the Kurushetra battle. Vibhishana acted differently. He roundly condemned the

²²⁹ Ultimately he renounced everything and sought surrender at the Feet of Rama. Lanka had many such high-minded persons besides Vibhishana. But cowed down by the wickedness of the Rakshasa, they were unable to protest against the bad persons. (*SSS Vol.29 p.145*)

wrong action of his brother. He advised Ravana to return Sita to Rama. Ultimately he renounced everything and sought surrender at the Feet of Rama. Lanka had many such high-minded persons besides Vibhishana. But cowed down by the wickedness of the Rakshasa, they were unable to protest against the bad persons. (SSS Vol.29 p.145)

VALMIKI, VYASA AND POTHANA

Ratnakara, a robber, on being advised by Narada started chanting the name of Rama incessantly, as a result of which the radiance of Rama was seen on his countenance and he became sage Valmiki. Rama is *Lokadata* (the giver of the world) and Valmiki became *Shlokadata* (composer of the holy hymns). There is no difference between the giver and the composer.

The *Vedas* declare, *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* (the knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* himself). So, you should always think good, do good, talk good, and hear good. Only then you can become good. A true human being is one who is good. A wicked person can never be called a human being. (SSS Vol.32 Part I p.104)

How did a highwayman like Ratnakara become the immortal author of the great epic Ramayana? By continuous chanting of the name of the lord, as taught to him by the *Saptarishis* (seven great sages), his face acquired a new effulgence and he could become the sage Valmiki, who is immortalized as the author of the Ramayana. He composed his work to please the Lord. He did everything in a spirit of dedication to the Lord.

Take the case of Sage Vyasa. He was the author of eighteen *Puranas* (ancient spiritual epics). He wrote the Mahabharata and many other great works. But it was only when he was filled with divine fervour and wrote the Bhagavatham that he became enshrined in the hearts of the people. Valmiki and Vyasa have become immortal through their devotion.

We have Pothana, the author of the Telugu Bhagavatham. He began writing his Bhagavatham with an invocation in which he declared: "What is being composed is Bhagavatham. The one who inspires the writer is Ramachandra. What is written by me will be redemptive. I shall write, as there is no greater story to tell." Pothana began composing his magnum opus with the feeling that everything he was doing was by the will of Sri Rama. So, when you think of Bhagavatham, you are reminded of Pothana. By his great work he has installed himself in the hearts of the devout. (*SSS Vol.29 p.14-15*)

GOODNESS VS GREATNESS

A good man by his good conduct achieves greatness. Ravana sought to achieve greatness, but did not strive to lead a good life. Rama's career is different. He aspired only to be good man and did not seek greatness. (*SSS Vol.30 p.91*)

Man is one who sees the human in God. But the one who sees the human is a good man. The mark of goodness is to see the divinity in every man. There is no use in acquiring greatness without goodness. You must seek goodness and not greatness. Today there are many 'great' men in the country. What is the

benefit the country had derived from them? Ravana was a great scholar. Rama was equally great scholar. But he was much more than that. He was a good man. Ravana performed rigorous penance and mastered a vast knowledge. The result was ignorance arising from indigestion. Unable to control his desires, he brought ruin on his clan and kingdom. All his studies did not save him from his evil qualities, which brought ruin. The only desire all should cherish is to win *Daiva preethi* (the grace of God)

Rama was devoted to truth and righteousness. Hence He became a good man and not a mere great man. After thousands of years, the very name Rama evokes veneration. Rama manifested divinity in the human. To see humanness in Rama is nothing special. Being human yourself you see the human traits in others. What you must see is the divine in human beings.

You must realise that greatness related to power, position or wealth is transient. It is lost when power and position go. But goodness is respected always. Therefore, dedicate your lives to goodness. What is goodness? It is living according to Dharma and justice, to love all and cherish faith in God, to help the needy and raise the lowly - all these constitute goodness. (*SSS Vol.30 p.125-126*)

GOOD AND BAD

Good and bad are intricately mixed and it is not possible for anybody to entirely disentangle them. The same kind of connecting and contrasting relationship that exists between a

bright face and a crown of black hair exists between good and bad. If Ravana never existed, Rama's reputation would not have been so popular and widespread amongst people. Ravana was no ordinary person. (*SSS Vol. 34 p.78*)

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You are in this body, in this receptacle, in order to realise the God you really are. This body is the cocoon you have spun round yourselves, by means of your impulses and desires. Use it while it lasts, to grow wings so that you can escape from it!

You came into this world crying, announcing your grief at being thrust into it, grief for having lost hold on God. Having come with grief, decide not to go with it, from here. Get rid of it in this life itself.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

